

# ISLAM EMBEDDED

The Historial Development of the  
Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951 - 2003)

*Volume I*

FARISH A. NOOR



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The Historical Development of the  
Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951-2003)

VOLUME 1

by

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*To Christele*



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Preliminary research for this book began in late 1999, just before the general election of December that year and was completed in mid-2003, shortly after the American-led invasion of Iraq. By the time the book was finished, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) had become the biggest and most important opposition party in Malaysia — having won control of two states and poised to take over a third — and it had undergone a series of shifts in its outlook, appearance, tactics and discourse.

When I began working on this book I was based in Germany, as a member of the working group on Modernity and Islam organised under the auspices of the Wissenschaftskolleg of Berlin. Thanks are due to my friends and colleagues in Germany with whom many long hours were spent discussing the nature of the subject in question and the various approaches that could be used to explain the party and its development. In particular, I would like to thank Gudrun Kraemer, Angelika Neuwirth, Anna Wuerth, Dale Eickelman, David Wasserstein, Georges Khalil, Christian Troll, Dieter Senghass, Alexander Horstmann, Claudia Derichs, Ulrike Freitag, Ahmed Chanfi, Dietrich Reetz, Ingrid Wessel, Jacques Waardenburg, Mathias Diederich and Thomas Hartmann who provided me with ample opportunity to discuss the subject at length.

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But as this work is focused on the history of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party of Malaysia, it was in Malaysia that most of the field-work, research, interviews and fact-finding were done. This book would not have seen the light of day had it not been for the help of numerous leaders, members and supporters of PAS themselves. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Abbas Elias, Ustaz Yusof Rawa and Tuan Guru Hadi Awang — the second, fifth and seventh Presidents of PAS, respectively — for the information they provided me over the course of several interviews from 1999 to 2002. Also, former PAS Deputy President Mustafa Ali, Drs. Hatta Ramli and Dzulkifli Ahmad of PAS's research and analysis bureau and Zulkifli Sulong, editor of PAS's official media organ *Harakah* proved to be helpful with additional contacts, official papers, documents and reports that helped to explain many of the policy positions that PAS has assumed in its later years. Thanks are also due to the ordinary members, workers and supporters of the party whom the author had the opportunity to meet and interact with at numerous PAS rallies, meetings, demonstrations and General Assemblies. I would like to state that from the outset the members and supporters of PAS proved to be helpful and accommodating in every way, and the courtesy that was shown to me — as well as other external observers — at the party's official functions was touching, to say the least.

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Farish A. Noor,  
Berlin,  
October 2003

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*Caption cover:*

'A typical PAS *markaz* (camp, headquarters) located at Kampung Pulau Melaka, south of Kota Bharu, Kelantan. The painted image mounted on the front of the shop carries the image of the *Murshid'ul Am* (spiritual leader) of PAS, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. Photographed by the author in 2000.'

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## ABBREVIATIONS

(For Volume I & Volume II)

ABIM	<i>Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement)
AKIM	<i>Angkatan Keadilan Insan Malaysia</i> [Justice for Mankind Movement Malaysia]
AMDA	Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement
AMSEC	ASEAN Muslim Secretariat
AMSS	Association of Muslim Social Scientists
API	<i>Angkatan Pemuda Insaf</i> [Conscious Youth Movement]
APU	<i>Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah</i> (Muslim Unity Front)
ASN	<i>Amanah Saham Nasional</i> (National Unit Trust)
AWAS	<i>Angkatan Wanita Sedar</i> [Conscious Women Movement]
BATAS	<i>Barisan Tani Sa-Malaya</i> (Malayan Farmers' Front)
BBMP	<i>Barisan Bersatu Mughideen Patani</i> (United Mughideen Front of Patani)
BERJASA	<i>Barisan Jemaah Islamiyyah Se-Malaysia</i> [All-Malaysian Muslim Front]
BIPP	<i>Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani</i> (Islamic Liberation Front of Patani)
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BMA	British Military Administration
BMF	Bumiputra Malaysia Finance
BMLO	Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation
BNM	<i>Bank Negara Malaya</i> (Malayan National Bank)
BNPP	<i>Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani</i> (National Liberation Front of Patani)
BRN	<i>Barisan Revolusi Nasional</i> (National Revolutionary Front)

## ABBREVIATIONS

BTRK	<i>Barisan Tindakan Rakyat Kelantan</i> (Kelantan People's Action Front).
CAO	Civil Affairs Office
CAP	Consumers Association of Penang
CCA	Christian Conference of Asia
CCC	Chinese Consultative Councils
CFM	Christian Federation of Malaysia
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DDII	<i>Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia</i> (The Council of Indonesian Islamic Propagation)
FAMA	Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority
FKAWL	<i>Forum Komunikasi Ahlu Sunnah wal-Jamaah</i> [Communication Forum for the Sunnites]
FMS	Federated Malay States
FRU	Federal Reserve Unit
FSF	Federal Security Force
GAGASAN	<i>Gagasan Rakyat Malaysia</i> [The Malaysian People's Forum]
GAM	<i>Gerakan Aceh Merdeka</i> (Free Aceh Movement)
GAMPAR	<i>Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya</i> (United Greater Patani Malays Movement)
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
Gerakan	<i>Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i> (Peoples' Movement Party of Malaysia)
GERAM	<i>Gerakan Angkatan Muda</i> [Movement of the Youth]
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
HAMIM	<i>Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia</i> [Malaysian Hizbul Muslimin]
HSC	High School Certificate
ICMI	<i>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia</i> (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals)
IHR	Institute for Historical Review
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations
IIIT	International Institute for Islamic Thought
IJT	<i>Islami Jami'at-i Tulaba</i> (Pakistan)
IKD	<i>Institut Kajian Dasar</i> (Institute of Policy Research)

## ABBREVIATIONS

IKIM	<i>Institut Kemahiran Islam Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Institute for Islamic Research)
IMET	International Military and Educational Training
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMP	Independence for Malaya Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRC	Islamic Representative Council
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence agency
ISTAC	International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation
ITM	Institut Teknologi Mara (Mara Institute of Technology)
ITO	International Trade Organisation
JI	<i>Jama'at-e Islami</i> (Pakistan)
JIM	<i>Pertubuhan Jama'ah Islah Malaysia</i> [a Malaysian organisation for Islamic revival]
JUI	<i>Jami'at-ul Ulema-i Islam</i> (Pakistan)
KBI	<i>Kelab Buruh Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Workers' Club)
KIDU	Kolej Islam Darul Ulum (Darul Ulum Islamic College)
KMM	<i>Kesatuan Melayu Muda</i> (Young Malays Association)
KMM	<i>Kesatuan Mujahidin Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Mujahideen Movement)
KMS	<i>Kesatuan Melayu Singapura</i> (Malay Union of Singapore)
KRIS	<i>Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung</i> (Union of Indonesian and Peninsular Malay Peoples)
KSITM	<i>Kesatuan Siswazah Institut Teknologi Mara</i> (Mara Institute of Technology Students Union)
LME	London Metal Exchange
LUTH	<i>Lembaga Urusan Tabung Haji</i> (Hajj Pilgrims Management Fund)
MABIMS	<i>Menteri Hal Ehwal Agama Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia dan Singapura</i> (Ministers of Religious Affairs of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore)

ABBREVIATIONS

MAGERAN	<i>Majlis Gerakan Negara</i> (National Operations Council) (NOC)
MAIK	<i>Majlis Agama Islam Kelantan</i> (Islamic Council of Kelantan)
MAK	<i>Makhtab al Khidmat lil Mujahideen al-Arab</i> (Afghan-Arab Service Bureau)
Maminco	Malaysian Mining Company
MAPEN	<i>Majlis Perundingan Ekonomi Negara</i> (National Economic Consultative Council)
MARA	<i>Majlis Amanah Rakyat</i> (Council of Trust for Indigenous People)
MARDEC	Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation
MAS	Malaysia Airlines
Masjumi	<i>Majlis Shura Muslimin</i> [An Islamic political party in Indonesia]
MATA	<i>Majlis Agama Tertinggi</i> (Supreme Religious Council)
MAYC	Malaysian Youth Council
MBC	Malaysian Bar Council
MBM	<i>Majlis Belia Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Youth Council)
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCE	Malaysian Certificate of Education
MCKK	Malay College, Kuala Kangsar
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MCPML	Malayan Communist Party Marxist-Leninist Faction
MCPRF	Malayan Communist Party Revolutionary Faction
MCP SMB	Malayan Communist Party South Malayan Bureau
MDI	<i>Ma'ahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah</i> (Institute of Propagation and Leadership)
MGLU	Malayan General Labour Union
MIAI	<i>Madjlis Islam A'laa Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Islamic High Council)
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MIM	Moro Independence Movement
MNDYL	Malayan New Democratic Youth League
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front

## ABBREVIATIONS

MPABA	Malayan People's Anti-British Army
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MPAJU	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union
MPH	Multi-Purpose Holdings
MPLF	Malayan Peoples Liberation Front
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
MSA	Muslim Students Association
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
MSS	Malayan Security Service
MTN	<i>Majlis Tertinggi Nasionalis</i> (Nationalist Supreme Council)
MTS	<i>Majlis Tertinggi Sementara</i> (Temporary Supreme Council)
NASMA	<i>Parti Nasionalis Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Nationalist Party)
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation
NEAC	National Economic Advisory Council
NECC	National Economic Consultative Council
NOC	National Operations Council
NU	<i>Nahdatul Ulama</i> [Biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia]
NUS	National University of Singapore
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
Pakemas	<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia</i> (Social Justice Party of Malaysia)
PAP	People's Action Party
PAPERI	<i>Partai Persatuan Islam</i> (Islamic Brotherhood Party)
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party)
PBI	<i>Partai Buruh Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Workers' Party)
PBM	<i>Parti Buruh Malaya</i> (Labour Party of Malaya)
PBMUM	<i>Persatuan Bahasa Melayu Universiti Malaya</i> (Malay Language Society of UM)
PBS	<i>Parti Bersatu Sabah</i> (United Sabah Party)
PCP	Philippine Communist Party

## ABBREVIATIONS

PDI	<i>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia</i> (Democratic Party of Indonesia)
PEKEMBAR	<i>Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu</i> (United Malay Nationalists)
PERNAS	<i>Perbadanan Nasional</i> (National Corporation)
PETA	<i>Pembela Tanah Air</i> (Defenders of the Homeland)
PIM	<i>Pembantu Indonesia Merdeka</i> (Supporters of Independent Indonesia)
PKB	<i>Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa</i> (National Awakening Party)
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKMM	<i>Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya</i> (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya)
PKPIM	<i>Persatuan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia</i> (National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PMCJA	Pan-Malayan Council for Joint Action
PMIP	Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PMS	<i>Persatuan Melayu Selangor</i> (Selangor Malays Organisation)
PMUM	<i>Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Malaya</i> (Universiti Malaya Students Union)
PNI	<i>Partai Nasionalis Indonesia</i> (Nationalist Party of Indonesia)
PPM	Patani People's Movement
PPMK	<i>Persekutuan Persetiaan Melayu Kelantan</i> (Union of Kelantan Malay Loyalists)
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PPP	<i>Partai Persatuan dan Pembangunan</i> (Development and Unity Party)
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PRB	<i>Partai Rakyat Brunei</i> (People's Party Brunei)
PRI	<i>Partai Republik Indonesia</i> (Republican Party of Indonesia)
PRM	<i>Parti Rakyat Malaya</i> (People's Party of Malaya)

## ABBREVIATIONS

PRRI	<i>Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia</i> (Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic)
PSRM	<i>Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia</i> (Socialist People's Party of Malaysia)
PULO	<i>Pertubuhan Perpaduan Pembebasan Patani</i> (Patani United Liberation Organisation)
PUM	<i>Persatuan Ulama Malaysia</i> (Association of Malaysian Ulama)
PUTERA	<i>Pusat Tenaga Rakyat</i> (People's Movement Centre)
PWIC	Psychological Warfare Interrogation Centre
RMPF	Royal Malayan Police Force
RRE	Restrictive Residence Enactment 1933
RSS	<i>Rashtriya Swayamserak Sangh</i> (National Volunteers Society)
S46	<i>Parti Melayu Semangat '46</i> (Spirit of '46 Malay Party)
SAM	<i>Sahabat Alam Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Friends of the Earth)
SDM	<i>Suara Demokrasi Malaya</i> (Voice of Malayan Democracy)
SF	Security Forces
SS	Straits Settlements
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
TNI	<i>Tentera Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian National Army)
TRI	Technology Resources Industries
UCCA	University and University Colleges Act of 1971
UGM	Universitas Gadjah Mada (University of Gadjah Mada)
UI	Universitas Indonesia (University of Indonesia)
UIA	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (International Islamic University)
UIFO	Union of Islamic Forces and Organisations
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia)
UM	Universiti Malaya (University of Malaya)

## ABBREVIATIONS

UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UMS	Unfederated Malay States
UNAIR	Universitas Airlangga (University of Airlangga)
UNDIP	Universitas Diponegoro (University of Diponegoro)
UNSC	UN Security Council
UPM	Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (University of Agriculture Malaysia)
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia (Putra University of Malaysia)
UPN	Universitas Nasional Veteran (National Veterans' University)
UTK	<i>Unit Tindakan Khas</i> (Special Forces Unit)
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (University of Technology Malaysia)
VOMR	Voice of Malayan Revolution
WTC	World Trade Center
WTO	World Trade Organization

## GLOSSARY

(For Volume I & Volume II)

Author's note: The spelling of terms in Malay, Arabic, Urdu and other languages in the original texts from they were taken has been retained. Please note that the spelling of Malay words has changed extensively over the past five decades.

<i>adab</i>	customs/good manners/decency
<i>adat law</i>	customary law
<i>ad'l</i>	justice
<i>Ahad</i>	the one; the singular; God Almighty
<i>ahl al-kahf</i>	people of the cave
<i>ajaran sesat</i>	deviationist teachings
<i>akhlak</i>	moral conduct
<i>al-falak</i>	astronomy
<i>al-jihad al-Islamiy</i>	great Islamic struggle
<i>al-li'an</i>	sworn accusation of <i>zina</i> by a husband against his wife (or vice-versa)
<i>al-yamin</i>	oath
<i>'alim pl. ulama</i>	man of knowledge; knowledgeable persons
<i>amanat</i>	edict
<i>anak watan/bumiputera</i>	sons of the soil
<i>aqidah</i>	faith and belief
<i>aqliyyah Islamiyyah</i>	Islamic worldview
<i>aqliyyah musta'marah</i>	hybrid/contaminated worldview
<i>asabiyyah</i>	clan or tribal loyalty; communalism; ethnocentrism
<i>athar</i>	relics, antiquities, traditions

GLOSSARY

<i>awam</i>	the masses
<i>baju kebaya</i>	Malay dress for women
<i>baju kurung</i>	Malay dress for women
<i>baju Melayu</i>	traditional Malay shirt
<i>bangsawan</i>	traditional Malay performer/thespian
<i>ba' yat</i>	oath of allegiance
<i>bid' ah</i>	unlawful innovation, heretical doctrine
<i>bomoh</i>	witchdoctor/shaman
<i>cawangan</i>	branch
<i>ceramah</i>	lectures
<i>darah keturunan Arab (DKA)</i>	Malays of mixed Malay-Arab stock
<i>darah keturunan Keling (DKK)</i>	Malays of mixed Malay-Indian stock
<i>daulah islamiyyah</i>	Islamic rule
<i>daulat</i>	authority
<i>da' wa, da' wah, dakwah</i>	(missionary) activities
<i>derhaka</i>	treason
<i>din</i>	way of life, religion
<i>diyat</i>	blood money
<i>do' a</i>	prayer
<i>do' a qunut nazilah</i>	a specific prayer for victory
<i>emir</i>	leader; king; ruler
<i>emir-ul mukminin</i>	leader of the faithful
<i>fajr</i>	(dawn) prayers
<i>fanatik agama</i>	religious fanatics
<i>fardhu kifayah</i>	collective religious obligations
<i>fardhu 'ain</i>	personal religious obligations
<i>fasiq</i>	evil one, sinner, adulterer
<i>fatwa</i>	rulings
<i>fikrah</i>	worldview, concept, idea
<i>fikrah maddiyyah</i>	materialism

GLOSSARY

<i>fiqh</i>	science, discipline (often used in reference to Islamic law), jurisprudence
<i>firaun</i>	pharaoh
<i>fitnah</i>	social chaos; slander, strife, dissension
<i>ghuluw</i>	excessiveness
<i>golongan revolusi</i>	revolutionary group
<i>gugur syahid</i>	martyr's death
<i>hadarah Rabbaniyyah</i>	Islamic (divinely inspired) civilisation
<i>haj</i>	pilgrimage
<i>halaqah</i>	study circle (often in mosques, <i>madrasah</i> )
<i>haq</i>	truth
<i>harakah islamiyyah</i>	Islamic movement
<i>haram</i>	that which is unlawful in Islam
<i>harus</i>	that which is good, commendable
<i>hijab</i>	veil
<i>hijrah</i>	emigration
<i>hirabah</i>	robbery
<i>hisbussyaitan</i>	party of the Devil, those on the side of the Devil
<i>hizbullah</i>	party of God, those on the side of God
<i>hudud</i>	lit.: law of the limit/extreme (from the root 'h d d '), meaning limit, border, frontier
<i>ijazah</i>	certificate
<i>ijtihad</i>	method of religious texts interpretation
<i>imam kolot</i>	backward/conservative imams
<i>iman</i>	faith
<i>insaf</i>	repentance, fairness, equity

GLOSSARY

<i>insya-Allah</i>	God willing
<i>irtidad</i>	apostasy
<i>islah</i>	reform
<i>isti'mal al-muruah</i>	sense of honour
<i>ittiyān albahimah</i>	bestiality
<i>ittiyān almaitah</i>	necrophilia
<i>jahili</i>	ignorant, (pre-Islamic) pagan
<i>jahiliyyah</i>	ignorance, (pre-Islamic) paganism
<i>jama'at, jama'ah</i>	community, commune
<i>janggal</i>	beard
<i>jawatankuasa</i>	committee
<i>jawatankuasa agung</i>	executive committee
<i>jawi</i>	Malay in Arabic script
<i>jihād</i>	struggle
<i>jihadi</i>	those engaged in struggle
<i>jubah</i>	robe
<i>kafir</i>	non-believer
<i>kafir-mengkafir</i>	conflict between Muslims accusing each other of being non-believers
<i>kalimah</i>	Muslim recitation/credo of faith
<i>kampung</i>	village
<i>kenduri</i>	feast
<i>kerajaan</i>	lit. 'to live under a raja', traditional Malay term for government/governance
<i>ketidakadilan</i>	injustice
<i>kezaliman</i>	cruelty
<i>khianat</i>	treason
<i>khittah amal</i>	working guidelines, operation/work plan
<i>khurafat</i>	un-Islamic, superstition
<i>kopiah</i>	skullcap
<i>kuasa</i>	power

## GLOSSARY

<i>kufr</i>	denial of faith/state of unbelief in God
<i>kuliah</i>	classes; religious lectures
<i>kuliah Jumaat</i>	Friday lectures
<i>kuliah malam</i>	evening lectures
<i>lajnah tarbiyyah</i>	mode of communal study/study circle
<i>lalang</i>	type of long grass regarded as a nuisance by farmers
<i>lebai kolot</i>	backward/conservative religious elder
<i>liwat</i>	'unnatural' sex involving anal intercourse, i.e. sodomy
<i>maddiyyah</i>	materialist culture
<i>madrasah</i>	Islamic seminary
<i>majlis</i>	meeting/conference; assembly
<i>mamak</i>	derogatory term for those of mixed Malay-Indian ancestry
<i>markaz</i>	camp/base
<i>mati shahid</i>	martyr's death
<i>maulvi</i>	conservative religious teacher/leader
<i>mazhab</i>	schools of thought
<i>mencarut</i>	curse/to curse
<i>mesyuarah</i>	consultation
<i>mufti</i>	senior religious functionary
<i>mujaddid</i>	revivalist
<i>mujahideen</i>	fighters in the cause of Islam/Muslims
<i>muktamar</i>	assembly
<i>muktamar am</i>	general assembly
<i>mullah</i>	see <i>maulvi</i>
<i>munafik, pl. munafikin</i>	hypocrite
<i>murshid'ul am</i>	spiritual guide/leader
<i>murtad</i>	apostasy
<i>musahaqah</i>	'unnatural' sex between women

GLOSSARY

<i>mushrikin</i>	idolaters/deviants
<i>muslimat</i>	Muslim women
<i>mustad'afin</i>	oppressed people
<i>mustakbirin</i>	oppressors, ruling elite, haughty
<i>musyawarah</i>	open debate/consultation
<i>mutlaq</i>	absolute
<i>nafiri</i>	traditional musical instrument played during important events such as the birth or death of a monarch
<i>nas</i>	ruling, text
<i>nasyid</i>	religious song, hymn
<i>nechari</i>	naturalist
<i>orang kampung</i>	village folk
<i>pak lebai</i>	traditional term for rural religious elder
<i>panglima jihad</i>	commander of <i>jihad</i>
<i>pawang</i>	shaman
<i>pemimpin agama</i>	religious leader(s)
<i>pendakwah bebas</i>	independent missionary(ies), free missionary(ies)
<i>penghulu</i>	traditional head of village community
<i>penjajah kafir</i>	infidel oppressors; colonialists
<i>pesantren</i>	Indonesian traditional religious school
<i>politik akhirat</i>	lit.: politics of the hereafter
<i>pondok</i>	traditional village religious school
<i>pribumi</i>	native sons of the soil
<i>priyayi</i>	Indonesian traditional-feudal elite class
<i>purdah</i>	seclusion of women from public; now also used to refer to the practice of wearing the veil

GLOSSARY

<i>qazaf</i>	wrongful accusation of <i>zina</i>
<i>qiamat</i>	day of resurrection
<i>qisas</i>	revenge killing
<i>realisma baru</i>	new realism
<i>riba</i>	interest, usury
<i>riddah</i>	apostasy
<i>rukun iman</i>	pillar of faith
<i>rukun Islam</i>	pillar of Islam
<i>sahabat</i>	companions; usually refers to the companions of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Salafiyya</i>	followers of Islamic orthodoxy
<i>salasilah</i>	lineage
<i>sandiwara</i>	play-acting
<i>sariqah</i>	theft
<i>sastera Islam/sastera dakwah</i>	Islamic missionary literature
<i>sasterawan negara</i>	national laureate
<i>sekularisme</i>	secularism
<i>sembahyang hajat</i>	special prayers
<i>serambi Madinah</i>	porch/balcony of Madinah
<i>serambi Mekah</i>	porch/balcony of Mecca
<i>serban</i>	turban
<i>shahadah</i>	recitation of the Muslim credo
<i>shariah</i>	Islamic codified law
<i>sheikh'ul Islam</i>	master/teacher of Islam
<i>Shia</i>	minority group of Muslim people
<i>shirk, shirik</i>	heretical
<i>shirk fi'l nubuwwa</i>	false association with the Prophet
<i>shura</i>	meeting
<i>siasah</i>	politics
<i>siasah shariyyah</i>	<i>shariah</i> -guided political conduct
<i>silat</i>	a form of traditional Malay martial arts
<i>songket</i>	silk and gold-thread Malay cloth

GLOSSARY

<i>songkok</i>	traditional black velvet cap worn by Malay men
<i>subhanallah</i>	praise the Lord
<i>sukun</i>	peaceful
<i>sunnah</i>	traditions following the example of Prophet Muhammad
<i>Sunni</i>	majority current of Islam
<i>surau</i>	small traditional prayer house, smaller than a mosque
<i>syaitan besar</i>	the great Satan
<i>syuhada</i>	martyr
<i>syurb</i>	intoxication or consumption of liquor
<i>taat setia</i>	absolute loyalty
<i>tadarruj</i>	gradualist
<i>tafsir</i>	exegesis of the <i>Qur'an</i>
<i>tajdid hadhari</i>	true vision/civilizational, revival/renewal
<i>takfir</i>	Muslims accusing other Muslims of being unbelievers, infidels and hypocrites
<i>taklif</i>	duty
<i>taklif wa'la tashrif</i>	moral responsibility
<i>takzir</i>	punishments, those not fixed by the <i>Qur'an</i> , such as jail sentences and fines
<i>talib, taliban (pl.)</i>	student(s)
<i>talqin</i>	funeral prayer
<i>tanattu'</i>	meticulous/ostentatious religiosity
<i>taqlid</i>	blind imitation
<i>taq'sub</i>	blind deference to authority
<i>tarbiyyah</i>	study circles, instruction, bringing up
<i>tariqa, tarikat, tarikah</i>	'the way', common term to denote Sufi brotherhood
<i>tasawwuf, tasawuf</i>	tradition of Islamic mysticism

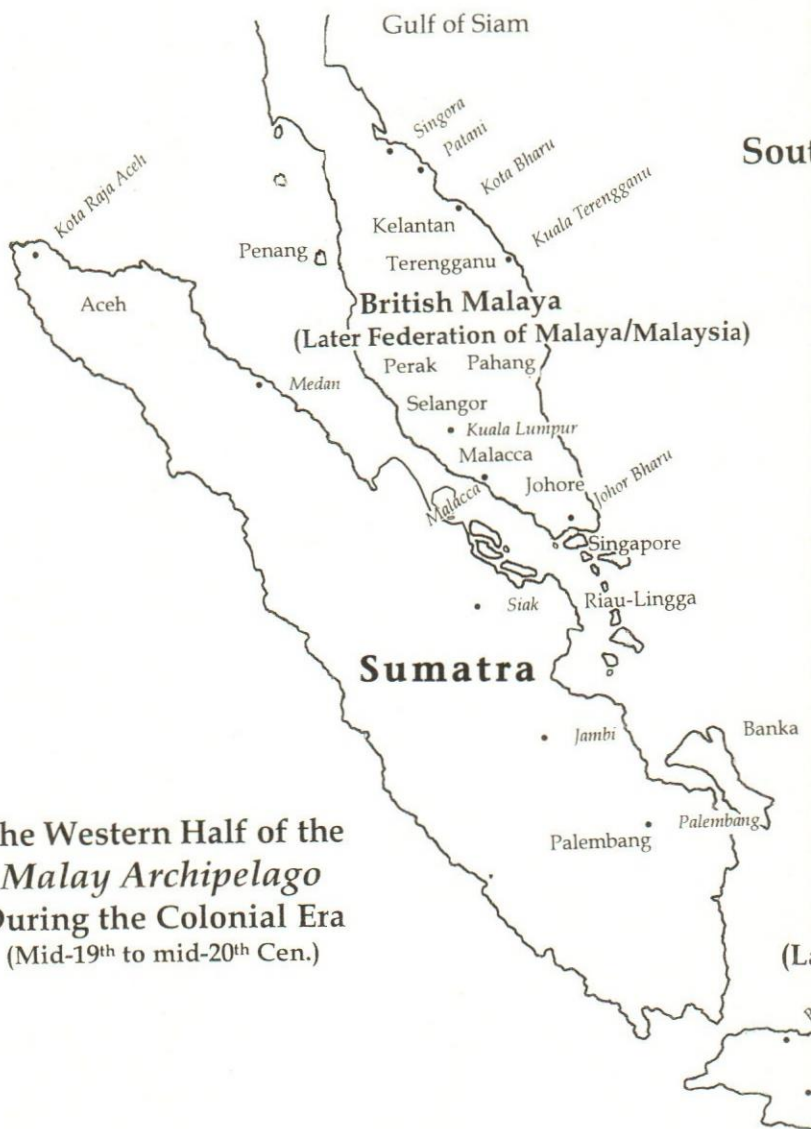
GLOSSARY

<i>tasbih</i>	prayer beads used by Muslims, glorification of God
<i>tashdid</i>	excessive austerity
<i>tauhid</i>	unity of God
<i>tazkiah syuhud</i>	ritual testimony
<i>theep</i>	angel
<i>towkay Cina</i>	Chinese merchants
<i>tudung</i>	headscarf; veil
<i>ukhwah</i>	solidarity; fellowship
<i>ulama</i>	plural of <i>alim</i> /' <i>alim</i>
<i>ummah</i>	the Muslim community
<i>usrah</i>	group meeting; study circle, family
<i>ustaz</i>	teacher
<i>usul</i>	foundations; essentials
<i>velayat-e fakih</i>	vice-regency of jurists
<i>wadah</i>	vessels
<i>wajib</i>	that which is obligatory in Islam for all Muslims, duty
<i>wala'</i>	allegiance
<i>wang ehsan</i>	development aid
<i>waqf</i>	Muslim endowment property
<i>wayang kulit</i>	traditional shadow puppet play, popular in Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia, Indonesia and southern Thailand
<i>wehdatul amal</i>	singular action
<i>wehdatul fikri</i>	singular vision or thinking
<i>zakat</i>	tithe (not taxes, as often stated) paid by Muslims; an obligation for all Muslims who have the means to afford it
<i>zina</i>	unlawful sexual intercourse



# Peninsula Malaysia, Sumatra and Southern Thailand





The Western Half of the  
*Malay Archipelago*  
During the Colonial Era  
(Mid-19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> Cen.)

China Sea



Dutch East Indies  
(Republic of Indonesia)





## INTRODUCTION: READING AND WRITING THE MANIFOLD HISTORIES OF PAS

Men make history, and the leading members of the revolutionary generation realised that they were doing so, but they could never have known the history they were making. ... What in retrospect has the look of a fore-ordained unfolding of God's will was in reality an improvisational affair in which sheer chance, pure luck — both good and bad — and specific decisions made in the crucible of political crises determined the outcome. ... If hindsight enhances our appreciation for the solidity and stability of the (historical) legacy, it also blinds us to the stunning improbability of the achievement itself.

Joseph J. Ellis,  
*Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*<sup>1</sup>

This is a book about the *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS) which is, in the opinion of this author, the most remarkable political party in the history of Malaysia.

It is an attempt to explain and understand the phenomenal emergence, rise and development of a political party that has been on the scene in Malaysia for more than five decades and which was the first Islamist party in Asia to come to power via constitutional means. It is written from the point of view of both a political scientist as well as a scholar of what has come to be known as discourse analysis. As such, the book attempts not only to recount the institutional and organisational development of PAS as a party, but also

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, New York: Vintage Books, 2002, pp. 4–5.

attempts a close critical reading of the discourse of the party itself to deconstruct the workings of its ideology. It is a historical account of the development of a political organisation, but is meant to be an inclusive history that also charts the parallel developments and intertwined trajectories of other organisations, movements, agents and actors who knowingly or unwittingly helped or hindered the rise of PAS to its present position.

Writing this book was a laborious task that took more than three and a half years to complete. During that time the book developed to become something far bigger than the author initially intended. It began as a humble monograph to chart the rise of PAS from the 1950s to 1999, when PAS won control of two states — Kelantan and Terengganu — in the federal election of that year.

Coming swiftly after the East Asian economic and financial crises of 1997–98, PAS's sudden resurgence in 1999 left many journalists and political analysts dumbfounded and confused. The author was forced to withstand a barrage of questions from foreign journalists who had never heard of this party and who could not understand how and why it had managed to score so great a victory. The monograph was meant to put these questions to rest once and for all.

But as I began to work on the monograph, additional material was offered by fellow academic colleagues. Rustam A. Sani was particularly helpful in providing rare documents and copies of books by early PAS leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy. It was then that I decided to embark on something more ambitious: a comprehensive history of PAS, its leaders, political organisational structure and its discourse from the very beginning till the present.

During the writing of this book many unforeseen events interrupted the flow of the work and forced me to revise earlier observations and conclusions. The initial text was scheduled for completion by November 2001 — exactly fifty years after the birth of PAS. However, on 11 September 2001, an event of global proportions irreversibly altered the writing of the book. The attacks on the United States of America on that date forced me to pause and take stock of the developments within PAS and the country as a whole. The catastrophic consequences of 11 September were felt most of all in the Muslim world, and the Islamist movement

worldwide suffered in the following weeks and months. Completion of the book had to be postponed as I observed the rapid repositioning of PAS *vis-à-vis* the Malaysian government, the other political parties of the country and the Western world at large.

Just when the first draft was completed in late 2002, the untimely death of PAS president Ustaz Fadzil Noor and the sudden announcement of the resignation of Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad caused the book to be put on hold once more. I was forced to look closely at PAS as it re-oriented its ideology and trajectory according to the worldview of its latest president, Tuan Guru Hadi Awang. The final draft of the book was finally completed in mid-2003.

To describe this book as a history of PAS itself would be misleading. It is fundamentally a history of the ideas and agents that have helped to shape the form and content of the country's main opposition party today. There have been numerous attempts to write a history of PAS, but many have been found wanting in several respects. Too often, talk of PAS and its politics in Malaysia has been distorted by the unstated biases and prejudices of the commentators and analysts themselves.

Particularly in the wake of 11 September and in the present age of the 'war on terror', talk of political Islam is treated with scorn or suspicion. Some have dismissed the entire Islamist project *in toto*, labelling it a form of obscurantist politics that is fundamentally regressive, oppressive and/or totalitarian in its ambitions. Yet superficial generalisations and criticism of this sort do little to shed light on the appeal of Islamism to its adherents and supporters, and fail to explain just how and why Islamism today has developed to become the main — if not the only — anti-systemic and anti-hegemonic force in the developing Muslim world.

The other drawback faced when working on parties like PAS is that the historical accounts of the party's development written by its own members are often devoid of any self-reflection or auto-critique of the Islamist project itself. Faced with constant harassment and opposition from without, too many Islamist movements and organisations — and PAS is no exception — have only been able to produce laudatory hagiographies for their own internal

consumption. Much of this in-house writing also has a teleological ring to it, giving the mistaken impression that the development of PAS always followed a linear path. This book tries to show that the development of PAS was often shaped, altered and redirected by unexpected socio-political variables. I have also tried to highlight the marginalised and subaltern voices and undercurrents within the party, many of which have been relegated to the margins within the body of its official historiography.

Both PAS and its detractors have tried to present a simple and static image of the party. Yet the difficult and, at times, confounding development of this party was always a complex process, shaped by internal and external variable factors that it could not control or predict. PAS's supporters have been keen to present an image of a fundamentally united and homogeneous party, while its adversaries have tried to utilise that same static image to paint a negative picture of the party as being a 'militant' or 'fundamentalist' threat to itself and the country as a whole. Both these readings of PAS are fundamentally flawed for no such homogeneous entity has ever existed. PAS is simply too complex, too diverse and too dynamic to be quarantined within such neat epistemological categories.

The 'truth' (and I am aware that this word is being used in an age marked by the Post-Structuralist revolution) is often somewhere in between: tucked within the subaltern and counter-discourses that run as crosscurrents beneath the seemingly unobstructed flow of history. PAS's history is complex, as is the party and its membership. The party has evolved over time and has adapted itself in many ways to the realities and vicissitudes of the age in which it found itself. Its leaders have taken the party in several directions and, as a result, PAS has experienced several different incarnations — the latest avatar being that of the modernist Islamist party championing human rights and democracy while also calling for the introduction of an Islamic state in Malaysia.

Having stated the complexities of the task, I need to lay out the parameters and co-ordinates of this work. This book attempts to chart the historical development of PAS, its ideas and discourses, but PAS cannot and should not be studied on its own, outside its proper historical context. It is for this reason that the book begins

with a cursory overview of the state of normative Islam and Islamic activism in the Malay archipelago at the turn of the 19th century. I have tried to draw out the historical antecedents that existed long before PAS came on the scene to give greater historical depth to the subject of my research and also to show that PAS's appearance on the political stage of Malaysia was neither novel nor unexpected.

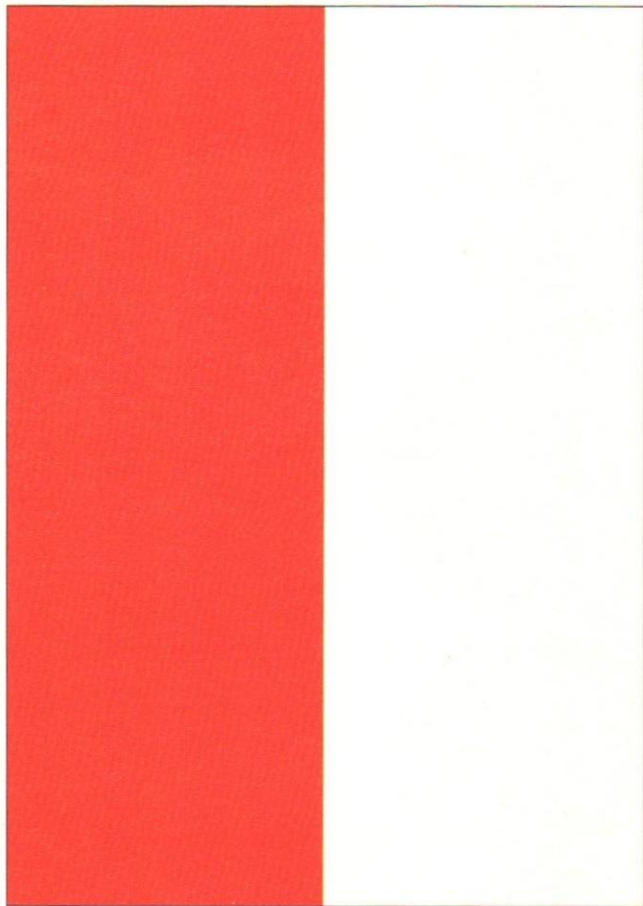
In the following chapters I have tried to show how PAS's development was very much a complex relational process where its own internal politics, discourse and priorities were set according to the political terrain in which it found itself — which was constantly changing — and its relationship with other movements and parties in Malaysia and abroad. From the outset I have tried to locate PAS within the wider current of global Islam, in order to remind ourselves that the developments in Malaysia throughout the 20th century were never isolated. PAS's development within the country reflected the concerns and ambitions of Islamism worldwide, and in this respect PAS can, and should, be read as a local symptom of a greater global tendency which still endures.

Finally, it should be noted that much of this book is as equally concerned with the discursive contents of PAS's politics as it is with the organisational structure. Working on the premise that reality is discursively constructed, I have tried to argue that PAS's understanding of the world and its relationship with its constitutive *Other* have been very much shaped by the discourse that it carries along with it. Over the years, PAS has experienced a number of significant discursive shifts that have in turn altered its worldview, value system and political priorities. This does not mean that PAS has in any way abandoned or discarded the discourse of political Islam or its message, but rather that that discourse has altered and evolved over time, along with its articulators and audience.

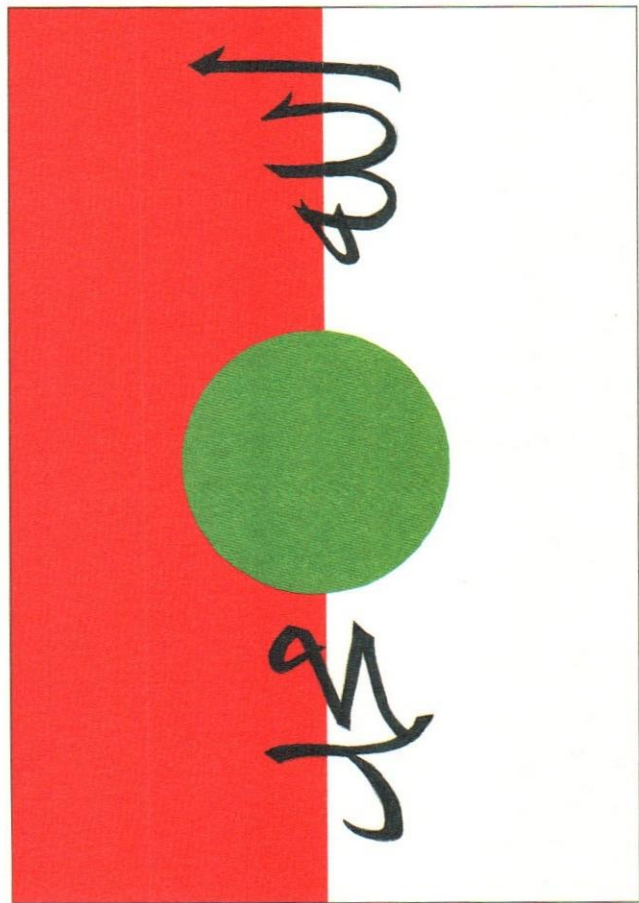
All that is left now is to begin telling the story of PAS. This will be a long, complex and at times even confounding narrative, replete as it is with the contradictions and ironies that have always prevailed in Malaysian politics.

However, it is nonetheless a story worth telling, even more so now, as PAS charts its path and carves its place in Malaysian

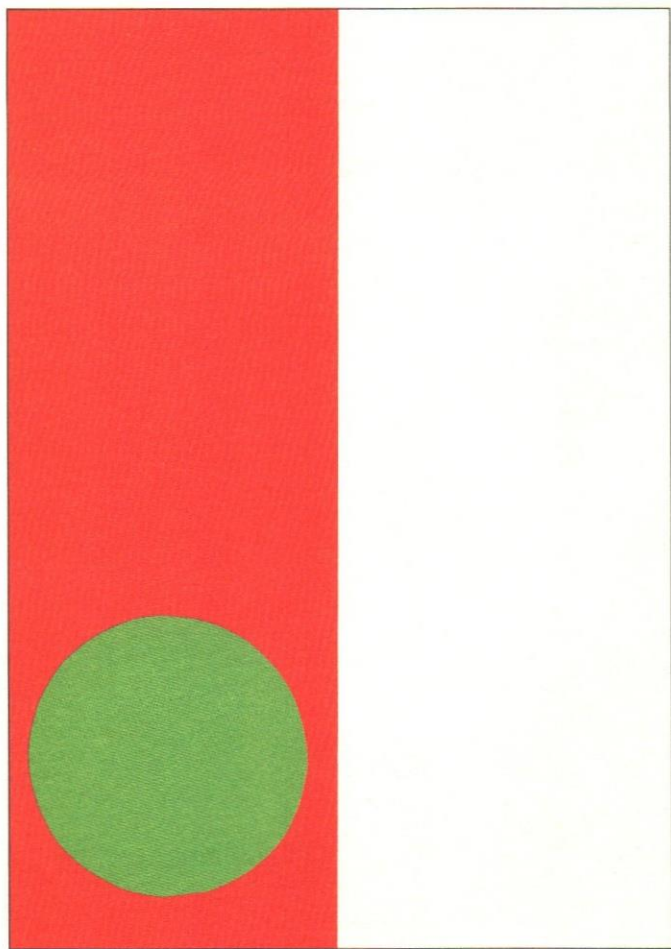
history. It is a story about how a fledgling Islamist organisation with only a handful of members grew to become the most powerful opposition party in the country. It is also a story of how the post-colonial legacy of Malaysia was ultimately compromised and sold out, opening the way for a radical critique of the prevailing *status quo* from a position radically outside the political mainstream of the country. Ultimately, it is a story about Malaysia itself, and how Islam became embedded in its society, politics, economics and culture in ways that its forefathers could scarcely have imagined.



1. The flag of the first Malayan Islamic party, the *Hizbul Muslimin*, that was formed (and banned) in 1948. Note that the *Hizbul Muslimin*'s flag was identical to the *Sang Seka Merah Putih* (Red and White) flag of the nationalists of Indonesia. This reflected the close ties between the Malayan nationalists and Islamists and their counterparts in neighbouring Indonesia. The Malay nationalists of the PKMM also used the same flag for their party.



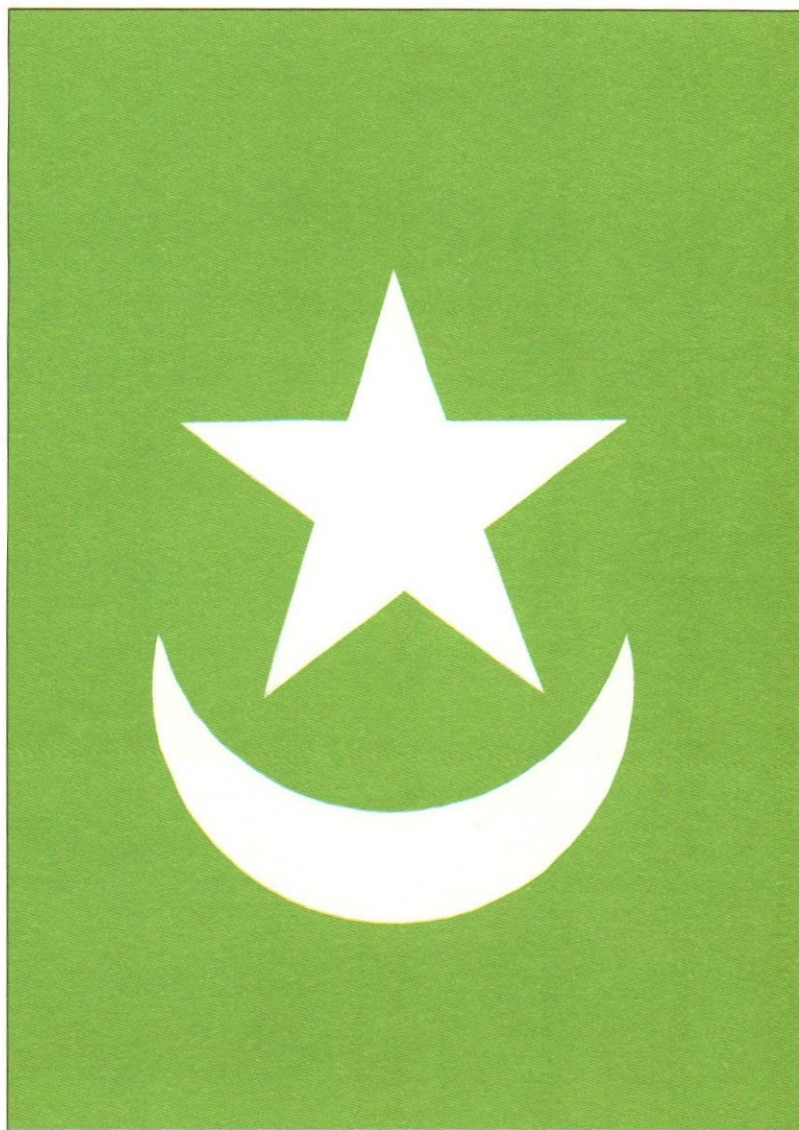
2. One of the variations of the first flag of PAS (then known as the *Persatuan Islam Sa-Malaya*), pre-1957. Other variants included a version with the green moon in the top left-hand corner of the flag and the words *Allah* and *Muhammad* in the centre and right, respectively. (Interview with Dr. Abbas Elias, Osman Adullah and Ustaz Yusof Rawa.)



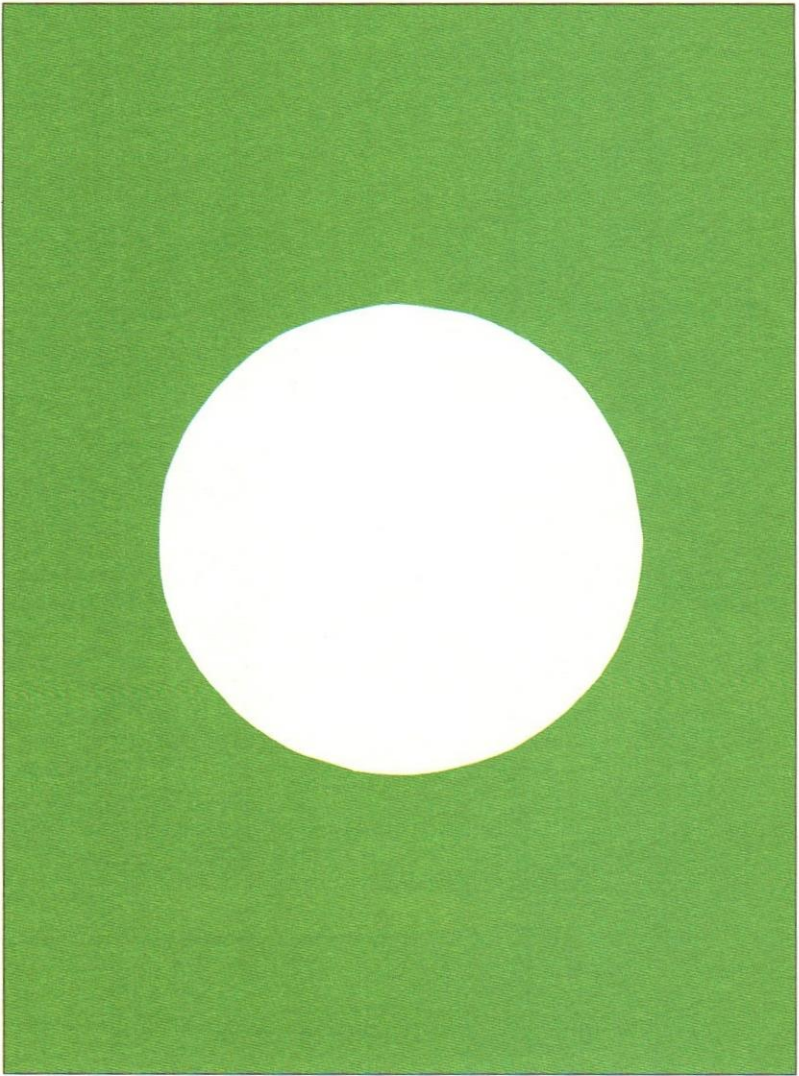
3. The flag of the *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (post-1957) after the controversy over the words *Allah* and *Muhammad* on the flag. The government banned the earlier version of the flag on the grounds that the use of these words was contrary to constitutional principles and cited it as an example of the deliberate politicisation of Islam.



4. PAS's first electoral emblem, which was used in the 1955 elections. The '*tangan terbuka*' (open hand) was meant to symbolise PAS's open invitation to all Muslims to join the organisation. Their opponents in UMNO claimed that it alluded to what would happen if PAS ever came to power — i.e. that PAS would impose *hudud* punishments, including the amputation of the hands of thieves.



5. PAS's electoral emblem from the mid-1950s to the 1970s, the *bulan bintang* (star and crescent). At that time the party was often referred to as *Parti Bulan Bintang*.



6. PAS's current electoral emblem, the full moon set against a green background.



7. The Malays being run over: A cartoon published in *Majlis* (1948) laments the fate of the Malays who have been overrun by foreign capital in their own country. The popular belief then was that the Malays needed special protection (by the colonial authorities) so that their status and position in the country would not be diminished. (Zakiah Hanum, *Senda, Sindir, Sengat: Karikatur Melayu Silam*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbitan Lajmeidakh, 1989.)



8. The rise of the Malay conservatives and the eclipse of the traditional Malay rulers: A cartoon in *Majlis* (1947) depicts the figure of the Malay conservative nationalist in the foreground as the new 'protector' of the Malay race, holding the sword of politics (*siasah*) and the shield of UMNO with the slogan 'hidup Melayu' (long live the Malays). The figure of the Sultan on his throne is dwarfed in the background. (Zakiah Hanum, *Senda, Sindir, Sengat: Karikatur Melayu Silam*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbitan Lajmeidakh, 1989.)



9. The final reminder: A cartoon in *Majlis* (1948) displays the popular UMNO slogan of the time: 'Raja itu rakyat, Rakyat itu raja'. (The sovereign is of the people, and the people are sovereign.) (Zakiah Hanum, *Senda, Sindir, Sengat: Karikatur Melayu Silam*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbitan Lajmeidakh, 1989.)



کھندق ۲ اورغ ملايو هاري اين

10. UMNO's struggle on all fronts: The cartoon in *Majlis* (1948) depicts the overall aim of UMNO then: to win control in areas of politics, defence and economics. (Zakiah Hanum, *Senda, Sindir, Sengat: Karikatur Melayu Silam*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbitan Lajmeidakh, 1989.)



11. Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif Gunung Semanggul, one of the centres of Islamic learning that was the focal point of the radical nationalists and Islamists. It was the birthplace of the *Hizbul Muslimin* party. The *madrasah* is now a government boarding school for Muslim boys. (Photograph by the author, 1999.)



12. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (left), the founder and leader of a number of radical nationalist organisations including the PKMM and *Hizbul Muslimin*, and later the third president of PAS. He was regarded as the most progressive Islamist intellectual in the country and the man most qualified to lead PAS. On the right is Encik Che Teh, the author's grandfather. Both men were medical practitioners. (Author's collection.)



13. Nadrah (Maria Hertogh), who became the centre of the 'Nadrah controversy' of 1950–51. The decision of the British colonial government to render her marriage to her Muslim husband Mansoor Adabi (right) and repatriate her to the Netherlands sparked off violent protests in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and gave the Islamists the opportunity they sought to mobilise the masses against British colonial rule. (Author's collection.)



الرئيس جمال عبد الناصر لشعب مصر : يجب أن تكون الكفتان متعادلتان كي نحقق التقدم والإزدهار .

14. Dr. Burhanuddin's hero, the 'modernist Muslim' Gamal Abdel Nasser. In this cartoon by the Egyptian-Armenian cartoonist Alexander Saroukhan the towering Nasser tells his people: 'we must balance the scales to achieve progress'. (Harent Keshishian (ed.), *Alexander Saroukhan: His Life and Times*. Cairo, 1998.)

PEACE, JUSTICE & PROSPERITY

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WHAT THE  
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GREATER NATIONAL WEALTH  
MORE INDIVIDUAL EARNINGS

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1959 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION MANIFESTO

15. *The Alliance Promises*: cover of the Alliance coalition's manifesto presented to the Malayan people issued prior to the 1959 elections. Despite the promises, the Alliance was in for a shock — PAS managed to gain control of the states of Kelantan and Terengganu in the elections, and became the first Islamic party in Asia to win power via constitutional means.



16. The human cost of the Emergency: The war against the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was waged in the rural interior and often innocent civilians (most notably the Chinese villagers) were the victims. This photo was taken after the fighting at Batang Kali village, where British troops committed numerous atrocities, including cutting off the heads of their victims and keeping them as trophies. (Photo: *Nanyang Siang Pau*.)

MUSLIM VIEWPOINT(S) ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

# IMPACT INTERNATIONAL

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London, 14-27 May 1982  
19 Rajab-3 Sha'ban 1402



17. The great hope: Dr. Mahathir Mohamad comes to power in 1981 as the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia. Islamist movements all over the world hoped that he would help to create the world's first modern Islamic state. Two decades later Dr. Mahathir's image and standing in the eyes of Muslims abroad would remain as strong as ever, though his own Islamic credentials in Malaysia would be severely compromised. (From the cover of *Impact International*.)



## Chapter 1

### 1900–1956: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ISLAMIST POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN MALAYA AND PAS'S FIRST STEPS INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA

*Ia berada dalam kandungan ibunya, ketika ayah-bundanya sedang bertelengkah. Kemudian ia lahir dalam suasana yang tidak semua orang gembira padanya. Sejak kecil, ia dibesarkan dalam lingkungan serba tiada menurut nilai hidup yang telahpun serba mengalami derita dan sengsara. Itulah dia PAS dalam menginjakkan kakinya menjelang kemerdekaan negara ini ....<sup>2</sup>*

Bachtiar Djamily,  
*Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*

#### *The Roots of the Struggle: The Role of Islam in the Development of Modern Malay-Muslim Political Culture*

**H**istorical narratives have a tendency to portray the past as inevitable and irrevocable, but the vicissitudes of the present should remind us of the contingent and arbitrary nature of the flow of time. The history of the Malay-Muslim peoples of the Malay Archipelago would have been very different indeed had the trade winds blown another way at the decisive moment. But as it happens, the winds that blew through the Straits of Malacca and

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<sup>2</sup> Translation: It was still in its mother's womb, when its parents were quarrelling. When it was born, it emerged into a world where not all around it were happy with its coming. From its early days it was brought up in an environment where it felt life's harshest blows. That was PAS, as it took its first steps when this country approached its independence.... (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, Petaling Jaya: Cerma Rafleswaty, 1976, p. 7.)

the South China Sea brought with them successive waves of Indian and Arab Muslim traders and Sufi mystics bent on commerce and missionary work, not warfare. These itinerant merchants and mystics also brought a new creed: Islam. In the wake of its arrival, the Malay world — once the seat of mighty Hindu and Buddhist empires — was reinvented. The lands once referred to as *Suvarnabhumi* in Sanskrit texts were brought into the fold of the Muslim world, and became the furthest frontier of *Dar'ul Islam*.

By the 14th century, Islam had begun to take root in various parts of the archipelago and by the end of the 18th it was firmly entrenched in practically all parts of the Malay world save the northern Philippines and the largely Hindu-influenced island of Bali. I do not intend to dwell at length on the early process of Islamisation of the Malay Archipelago. Much has already been said and written by others.<sup>3</sup> My concern here is to look at the role

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<sup>3</sup> For further elucidation and analysis of the subject, refer to the following sources: On Islam's early arrival in the Malay world, see S. Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia*, Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963; Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1963; S. Hussein Alatas, 'On the Need for a Historical Study of Malaysian Islamisation', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 4(3) (1963); and Russell Jones, 'Ten Conversion Myths from Indonesia', in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*, London: Holmes and Meier, 1979. On the topic of contemporary developments in the Malay-Muslim world, see: Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti Press, 1987; Sharon Siddique, 'Conceptualising Contemporary Islam: Religion of Ideology?', in Sharon Siddique, Ahmad Ibrahim and Yasmin Hussain (eds.), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1985; Judith Nagata, *The Reflowering of Malaysian Islam*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984. For a comparative approach which situates Islamic resurgence in Malaysia within a global context, see Chandra Muzaffar, 'Islamic Resurgence: A Global View', in Taufik Abdullah and Sharon Siddique (eds.), *Islam and Society in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. For an insight into the ideas and philosophy of one of the foremost Islamists and defenders of Islamisation in Malaysia, see Syed Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Kuala Lumpur: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, 1978.

played by Islam in the formation of Malay-Muslim political culture in one particular part of the region: the Malay Peninsula.

The Malay Peninsula became the domain of the Muslim Malaccan Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. During this period, the courtly culture of Malacca, previously shaped and influenced by Hindu-Buddhist ideas and values, gradually felt the impact of Islam, which brought with it new understanding of law, rights and the social contract between the ruler and his subjects.

Later, the Malaccan kingdom and its dominions came under the control of Portuguese, Dutch and, finally, British colonial powers. While the Portuguese and Dutch colonial presence was confined mainly to Malacca and the adjacent territories, the British effectively extended their control and hegemony over the rest of the peninsula by the late 19th century. Due to their desire to extend their control over vital resources such as tin, pepper and rubber, both the British and Dutch colonial powers exercised control over the economic, political and cultural affairs of the indigenous Malay and Indonesian Muslims. This fateful encounter between modern colonialism and Islam eventually served as the catalyst for the development and evolution of modern Islamic thought and political activity in the Malay archipelago and led to the rise of a plethora of Malay and Indonesian Islamist movements that would one day turn against their colonial masters and patrons.

During the colonial era, the development of Islam in the Malay archipelago was both hindered and facilitated by the intrusion of the British, French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Siamese and, later, American powers.<sup>4</sup> The Malay world of *Nusantara* was carved up by competing colonial powers in search of new dominions to add to their share of the spoils of war. Even the kingdom of Siam joined the race and extended its imperial grip southwards after taking over the Malay kingdoms of Patani, Yala, Satun and Narathiwat.

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<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive view of the differences in the development of Islam in Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and other Southeast Asia countries during and after the era of colonialism, see Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation-States*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Having entrenched themselves in strategically important positions within the colonial setting, the Western (and non-Muslim) colonial authorities were in a privileged position to view the workings of the Malay world as if its captive inhabitants resided within a *rumah kaca* ('glass house' — to borrow the phrase made famous by Pramoedya Ananta Toer). In Indochina, the French colonial authorities were able to prop up the ailing Nguyen dynasty while positioning themselves as the real power behind the throne. Similar tactics were employed by the British, Dutch, Spanish, Siamese and Americans in their respective colonies and protectorates, though, unlike their French counterparts, they were forced to deal with another factor — Islam.

The policies adopted by the Europeans and Americans towards the management and policing of Malay-Muslim affairs reflected, in various ways, their own concerns, attitudes and prejudices about Islam and Muslims. This heterogeneity of approaches towards Islam also accounts for the myriad of policies and laws that governed the religious and political life of the Malays of the archipelago. As a consequence, the development of Islam in British Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and the southern Philippines grew worlds apart.

The Americans, being the last of the *arriviste* powers to descend on Southeast Asia, had little experience in dealing with Muslim colonial subjects. America's involvement in the Philippines began soon after the Spanish were defeated and forced to leave their colony in 1898. By 1899, American leaders such as William McKinley were openly declaring that the US had the right and obligation to intervene in Filipino affairs. McKinley even went as far as justifying America's imperial adventure by citing divine providence.<sup>5</sup> The US government under McKinley openly spoke of

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<sup>5</sup> In 1899, President McKingley spoke thus: 'I walked the floor of the White House ... and I am not ashamed to tell you, Gentlemen, that I ... prayed (to) Almighty God for light and guidance ... . And one night late it came to me this way ... (1) That we could not give them [the Philippine Islands] back to Spain ...; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany — our commercial rivals in the *continued p. 7*

the virtues of imperialism when addressing the Philippine question. ('Imperialism' was not a dirty word then, as Blum has noted.<sup>6</sup>) The Philippines was bought from Spain for US\$20 million, and 50,000 American troops were dispatched to the country to 'restore law and order', American-style. They soon encountered fierce resistance from the Moros of the southern Philippines, who did not take kindly to the idea that they had been 'sold' by Spain and 'bought' by the Americans.

America's attempts to bring the Moro Muslims into the fold of Filipino colonial society resulted in a string of mishaps and adventures that incurred a terrible human cost on both sides. In 1901, the Moro leader of Sulu, Panglima Hassan, declared a *jihad* (holy war) against the Americans, whom he regarded as a threat to his own power. This *jihad* attracted the support of other traditional *datu* (Moro leaders) from Sulu and Jolo. In 1902, the Maranao Sultans declared their own *jihad* against the Americans which led to the Battle of Bayan. The Sultan of Bayan was supported by soldiers of the Sultan of Pandapatan and the Datu of Binadayan. Though the Moros were defeated in all these encounters, they showed just how far they were prepared to go in defence of their religion and political independence. The Americans' treatment of the Moros hardly improved, and when the Philippine Republic finally proclaimed its independence on 4 July 1946 the new post-colonial government invariably inherited the 'Moro problem' that the Americans (and the Spanish before them) had helped to create.

In the Dutch East Indies, resistance to colonial rule was often couched in Islamic terms as part of the Muslims' *jihad* against infidel oppressors. From the militant fervour of leaders such as Pangeran Diponegoro of the Java War (1825-30) to the fanatical

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n. 5 continued

Orient ...; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves — they were unfit for self-government — and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them ... ' Quoted in William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions since World War II*, Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

zeal of the *hajjis* of the Minangkabau Padri Wars (1821–38); from the sporadic Muslim peasants' revolts of Banten in 1888 to the organised modernist Islamic economic and political movements at the end of the 19th century, Indonesian Islam offered formidable resistance to the colonising forces of the Dutch. Finally, the devastating Aceh War of 1873–1912, with its staggering cost in both human and financial terms, was the watershed that almost crippled the colony's economy and brought it to the brink of bankruptcy. The Dutch were, therefore, understandably worried about the potential of Islam as a rallying point for their colonial subjects, and sought ways and means to tame it.

The Dutch colonial authorities' approach to Islam — political Islam in particular — was very much shaped by the views of the Dutch Orientalist school. With the exception of a few experts who understood the depth and subtlety of Malay Islam such as Snouk Hurgronje, most Dutch Orientalists and Islamic scholars held the opinion that Islam in Indonesia was largely a surface phenomenon and that most Indonesians remained fundamentally Hindu-Buddhists or pagan animists. Although the Indonesian courts (particularly in Sumatra and Java) had been patrons to generations of Muslim *ulama*, legal experts, jurists and artists, and the libraries of these courts contained more books on Islam than on any other subject, the Dutch Orientalists insisted on placing even greater emphasis on the pre-Islamic era of Indonesian history.

This Orientalist bias was shared by the Dutch colonial functionaries, who began to inject similar themes and concerns in their administrative work. Worried about the growing importance of Islam as a discourse of resistance and delegitimisation levelled against the colonial establishment, Dutch legal experts began to promote traditional *adat* (customary) laws as an alternative legal framework. This led to the Dutch *adatrecht* policy and the deliberate, concerted effort to marginalise the role and influence of Islam in almost all areas of Indonesian life.<sup>7</sup> In time, the Dutch won over a significant number of

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<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that this policy was not unique to the Dutch East Indies. French colonial authorities had attempted similar ventures in their Muslim colonies and dependencies such as Morocco and Tunisia.

the local *priyayi* élite who later served as their agents or compradores. This did not, however, stifle the growth and development of Islam as a political and economic force in the colony: it merely drove it underground. In the early 20th century, the forces of Indonesian Islamism returned to the political scene with a vengeance.

In neighbouring British Malaya, the development of Islam was influenced in part by the policies of the British colonial authorities. The British Orientalists and colonial administrators were more cautious than the Dutch about their approach and treatment of Islam and their Muslim subjects. Their own experience in other Muslim countries such as India, Afghanistan and Sudan had also taught them how *not* to treat Muslims. By intervening too much in the affairs of Muslims in India and disempowering them, the British had provoked a violent response, leading to the bloodbath of the Indian revolt in 1857 and the emergence of Indian Muslim reformers and activists such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Muslim League in 1906.<sup>8</sup> Fearful of similar developments in Malaya, the British opted for the more subtle mode of indirect rule.

From the beginning, the British never doubted the role and impact of Islam in the development of Malay culture and civilisation. British colonial intervention had met with strong resistance from the Malays who, like their Indonesian counterparts, regarded the *jihad* against the infidels as part of their *fardhu kifayah* (social obligations). As early as 1791, Sultan Abdullah of Kedah had declared a *jihad* against the British after the loss of Penang to Sir Francis Light of the British East India Company. In 1821, Islam once again served as the rallying call for the Malays when Siamese forces marched southwards and began a devastating campaign to subdue and conquer the Malay-Muslim kingdom of Kedah.

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<sup>8</sup> In 1906, the Muslim League of India was formed in Dacca at the annual general meeting of the Muhammadan Educational Conference founded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (founder of Aligarh University) in the late 19th century. Its first leader was the Aga Khan. Initially, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was opposed to the idea of the Muslim League because he did not believe in the idea of a separate Muslim electorate for India. He only became its leader in 1935, after his return from London.

After the Siamese conquest of Kedah, the nature of Malay resistance to foreign rule adopted a more militant and religious character. As Andaya and Andaya have noted, Sultan Ahmad's efforts to rally his forces 'took on the character of a holy war against a regime which was not only non-Malay, but *kafir* (infidel)'.<sup>9</sup> The war lasted up to 1842, and despite the humiliations inflicted upon the Malays by both the Siamese and their perfidious British 'allies', the Malays of Kedah and the northern Malay kingdoms prevailed and retained not only control of their territory but also their sense of identity and religious beliefs.<sup>10</sup> In 1831, the British were forced to fight the Naning War as a result of encroaching beyond their territory in Malacca.

In 1874, the British attempted to gain the upper hand against the Sultan of Perak and his nobles through the lopsided and ill-conceived Pangkor Treaty. Trouble brewed, and in time British resident J. W. W. Birch was killed by the forces of the Dato' Maharaja Lela and other Malay nobles who refused to accept the

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> British indifference to the plight of the Malays was partly due to the 1826 Anglo-Siamese Treaty. Although the British did not formally accept Siam's claims over the Malay kingdoms of Patani, Kedah (renamed Muang Saiburi by the Siamese), Kelantan and Terengganu as its vassals, they did not intervene in its expansionist moves. As a result of the 1826 treaty, the Malays of Kedah were forced to rely on themselves and their allies from the other Malay kingdoms. In 1832, the Sultans of Kelantan and Terengganu sent their troops to help Patani in its revolt against the Siamese. With the tide of war turning against them, the Siamese called upon the British to honour their commitments in the treaty and help them defeat the Malays. In 1838, the British navy enforced a blockade on Kedah, as part of its obligations under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty. This allowed Siam to attack Kedah with a force of 15,000 men. Sultan Ahmad was forced to flee after his kingdom fell to the Raja of Ligor. Despite this victory, the Siamese forces were not able to hold onto their conquered territory. Resistance from the Malays forced them to disperse their troops and they suffered heavy losses because of the nature of guerrilla warfare waged by the Malay defenders. In 1842, the British finally intervened in Kedah by restoring Sultan Ahmad to the throne.

terms of the treaty with the British. Sultan Abdullah was subsequently forced to vacate his throne by the British, and was exiled to the Seychelles. Despite such demonstrations of force, the British colonial authorities were unable to subdue the resurgent forces of Malay-Muslim opposition. In 1892–94, the Pahang uprising caused much consternation amongst the colonial officials, and when they attempted to negotiate with the King of Siam to gain control of Kelantan, the Sultan of Kelantan made a direct appeal for help to the ruler of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid.

The British were, therefore, careful not to repeat their own mistakes or emulate the errors of other colonial powers. While Siamese rulers such as King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh only incurred the wrath of the Malays of Patani, Satun, Yala and Narathiwat with their ill-conceived assimilationist policies,<sup>11</sup> the

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<sup>11</sup> Patani resistance to Siamese hegemony began almost as soon as Bangkok tried to re-establish its grip on the Malay kingdoms. In 1903, Patani Malay aristocrat Tengku Abdul Kadir Qamaruddin revolted against Bangkok. He was defeated and imprisoned for nearly three years. On his release he planned another insurrection against Siamese rule. By then the Patani Malays were angry with Bangkok for trying to impose Siamese laws on them and refusing to recognise traditional Malay and Islamic laws in the region. After another failed revolt in 1915, Tengku Abdul Kadir retreated to Kelantan (then under British indirect rule) and attempted to regroup his forces with the help of Sultan Muhammad IV. In 1922, Tengku Abdul Kadir launched his biggest campaign against the Siamese government, in response to the new education policy making it compulsory for all Patani Malays to attend Thai government schools and learn the Siamese language. Tengku Abdul Kadir regarded this as a deliberate and calculated attempt to erase Patani-Malay identity and to convert the Patani Malays to Buddhism. (W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*, Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990, pp. 63–64.) The rebellion ended in failure with a number of prominent Malay rulers either killed or captured. Despite their victory, the Siamese government realised the need to revise its policy towards the Patani Malays. King Chulalongkorn's successor, King Vajiravudh, introduced new guidelines to assimilate them into the local administrative structure, to give them a sense of commitment and investment in Siamese policies. In *continued p. 12*

encroachment of British colonial rule into the Malay states was carried out slowly and in stages: first through the creation of the Straits Settlements (SS) in 1826, then the formation of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1896 and finally the Unfederated Malay States (UMS) in 1909. In 1867, control of the Straits Settlements was passed to the Colonial Office in London. As the British extended their influence and control over the territory, they chose to leave Islam and Muslim concerns in the hands of the local Malay Sultans, nobles and the religious élite. This approach, formalised in the Pangkor Treaty signed by Sultan Abdullah of Perak on 20 January 1874, led to the systematic division between religion and state in the Malay world, something that was totally unprecedented in the annals of Malay religio-political history.

Having divided the Malay world in two, the British colonial functionaries began to concentrate on the practical needs and demands of managing their colony. Most of their time and energy went into development programmes designed to create a lopsided import-substitution economy typical of most colonial dependencies. Islam and Malay beliefs and customs were relegated to secondary concerns and left in the hands of traditional Malay Sultans and *ulama* who helped to man the British-sponsored religious bureaucracy. By creating these religious institutions and offices, the British effectively elevated themselves to the status of patrons to the traditional religious élite. In the process, they also helped to create a powerful alliance between the traditional élite and traditional Islam and further bolstered the Sultan's own power and authority over his subjects. By 1904, no Malay-Muslim living in the 'protected' Malay Sultanates was allowed to teach or lecture on the subject of Islam outside his own home without written permission from the Sultan himself. By 1925, this restriction had been extended to the field of printing and publishing.<sup>12</sup>

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*n. 11 continued*

time, Bangkok began offering limited concessions to the local Malay rulers, and attempted to co-opt them into the administrative framework of the Patani government.

<sup>12</sup> Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1999, p. xiii.

Political Islam, therefore, developed in fits and starts during the colonial era. The traditionalist religious élite found they could entrench themselves and consolidate their influence even further by working within the British bureaucratic network. The Islamist reformists, on the other hand, found that their activities faced fewer restrictions while they worked under the British (secular) civil law of the Straits Settlements. In time, a vibrant and heterodox body of Islamic and Islamist discourse developed. The differences between these schools of thought finally came out into the open with the confrontation between the *Kaum Tua* (older generation of traditionalists) and the *Kaum Muda* (younger generation of modernists) in the 20th century.

*Confrontation between the Old World and the New:  
the Kaum Muda versus Kaum Tua*

Traditionalist: 'Brother! You who are called Modernists, do you think you have invented our religion all by yourselves?'

Modernist: 'God forbid! We have never tried to do anything like this, nor will we ever do. Praise God, our religion is Islam and our instruction comes from the *Qur'an*.'

Traditionalist: 'But why then do you call yourselves Modernists?'

Modernist: 'We are called Modernists for two reasons: The first reason is that we wish to lift Islam out of its state of disgrace, and to restore it to its original state in a progressive and civilised way. Secondly, in keeping with the times, we also want to teach every kind of modern knowledge. It is for this reason that we are called Modernists.'<sup>13</sup>

Behbudi of Bukhara,  
*Munazara-yi Qadimi ba Gadidi*  
(*Dialogue between the Traditionalist and the Modernist*, 1914)

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from Behbudi al-Bukhara's *Munazara-yi Qadimi ba Gadidi* (*Dialogue between the Old Traditionalist and the New Modernist*), a modernist-Islamist text written in 1914 in Bukhara.

The struggle to create an Islamic polity in Malaysia predates the emergence of PAS as the country's main Islamic party. Long before the Islamists organised themselves and formed their own political movement, the pace of reform and political mobilisation was speeded up by the efforts of a generation of progressive Malay-Muslim thinkers who looked abroad to countries like Japan for solutions to their own predicament as colonised subjects living under foreign imperial rule.

Apart from looking to positive examples of developed Asian nations like Japan, Malay and Peranakan Muslim reformers of the Malay Archipelago also turned to other cosmopolitan Muslim leaders and intellectuals such as Jamaluddin al-Afgani and Muhammad Abduh as their role models. Following the example of Muslim reformers of the Western Muslim world, Malay and Peranakan Muslim reformers of the archipelago paved the way for the development of modernist and reformist *madrasah* (Islamic seminaries) and the emergence of a vernacular Islamist press. Through instruments such as the press, the bonds of the Muslim *ummah* were effectively strengthened and the Malay-Muslim world brought even closer within the orbit of radical reformist thinking developing elsewhere. The Malay-Muslims began to realise that they were not alone and the plight of the Muslim *ummah* was a universal one.<sup>14</sup>

Developments in the Malay-Muslim world were not restricted to British Malaya. In the neighbouring Dutch East Indies, a number of important Indonesian Islamist movements also came to the fore. In 1908, the *Budi Otomo* (Noble Endeavour) movement was formed by Dr. Waidin Sudira Usada and a group of prominent Javanese

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<sup>14</sup> Anxiety over the fate of the Muslim *ummah* was apparent in the Malay-Muslim press by the end of the 19th century. Developments in eastern Europe and the Balkans were of particular concern to Malay-Muslims, who believed that the Ottoman Empire was being systematically carved up by Western powers bent on destroying the most powerful Muslim power in the world. Vernacular Malay papers like *Neraca* (The Scales) and *Tunas Melayu* (The Budding Malay) described the Balkan war as the 'new Crusade' against Islam with the Ottoman Porte as its main target. *Neraca* also gave extensive coverage to the war effort of the Ottomans in North Africa.

intellectuals, merchants and community leaders.<sup>15</sup> In 1911, the *Sarekat Dagang Islam* (Islamic Co-operative) movement was begun by Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto (the future father-in-law of Soekarno) and Haji Agoes Salim.<sup>16</sup> *Sarekat Dagang Islam*, from the very beginning, catered exclusively to the interests of Indonesian Muslims. It sought to develop the economic and social well-being of Muslims in the East Indies, and within a few years it opened branches in the Malay Peninsula.<sup>17</sup> In 1912, *Muhamadijjah*, a

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<sup>15</sup> Most of *Budi Otomo's* members were Javanese officials and intellectuals. The movement's aim was to promote local education to contribute to the social and economic welfare of Indonesians. Its philosophy and tactics were based on the ideas of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, but its efforts were hindered as it was a mainly Javanese organisation with little appeal for non-Javanese Indonesians. In time, other sectarian groupings emerged to defend and promote the interests of their own ethnic constituencies.

<sup>16</sup> *Sarekat Dagang Islam* was founded on 11 November 1911 as an offshoot of Islamic activism among Muslims in Java and Sumatra. Intended to serve as a co-operative venture to organise and mobilise Indonesian Muslims and assist them in economic development, it became a strong force after the economic boycott against the powerful Indonesian Chinese trading community and anti-Chinese riots in Surabaya. However, its main aim was to slowly work towards political independence by first winning economic independence for Indonesians. In this respect, *Sarekat Islam* regarded as their main opponents not only the Dutch colonial authorities but also the 'priyahi' Indonesian élite whose hold on Islam was judged to be weak. Tjokroaminoto later became the religious 'guide' and mentor to Indonesia's nationalist leader and first President, Soekarno. His text '*Islam dan Sosialisme*' became the guidebook for most 'progressive' Indonesian Muslims during the anti-colonial era, and it later inspired those who tried to reconcile the differences between the Islamic and communist camps of the Indonesian nationalist movement. In time, *Sarekat Islam* was infiltrated by reformers and leftists and a 'merah' (red) faction developed. In 1921, most leftist-radical elements were expelled after a major split in the movement and it lost a considerable degree of support. By 1929, *Sarekat Islam* abandoned its goal of Pan-Islamism and changed its name to *Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia*.

<sup>17</sup> By the 1920s, *Sarekat Islam* had spread to the Malay Peninsula. In Terengganu, it was led by Syed Abdul Rahman of Siak, whom the *continued p. 16*

modernist and reformist Muslim organisation, was founded by Kyai Haji Dahlan.<sup>18</sup> The conservative-traditionalists followed suit by forming their own organisation, *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU), in 1926; the leader was Kyai Hashim Asyari of Surabaya.<sup>19</sup>

The rapid emergence and rise of these Islamist movements reflected the growing concern among Muslims of the Dutch East Indies that they were being marginalised in the economic, political and cultural fields in their own homeland. The fear of being

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n. 17 *continued*

Dutch had expelled from the Dutch East Indies. The leader in Pahang was Sayyid Muhammad Hadap, the ex-Qadhi of Johor; in Kelantan the leader was Haji Omar of Bachok. The only Malay state which refused to allow *Sarekat Islam* to operate was Johor, whose Sultan wished to retain good ties with the British and Dutch and also wanted to maintain the state's status as a sovereign Malay state. (Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali, 'Sarekat Islam di Trengganu', *Malaysia in History*, XX(11) (1972).)

<sup>18</sup> *Muhamadijajah's* primary goal and political objective was education. It sought to modernise the standard of Islamic education in Indonesia. It formed a women's section under the name *Aisiyah*. *Muhamadijajah's* followers were keen to develop a modern, progressive outlook towards Islam which would help Muslims cope with the challenges of living under modern colonial rule. They opposed the syncretic and dogmatic trends within Indonesian Islam, and hoped to renew the spirit of Islam by encouraging a return to the fundamental principles of Islam found in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

<sup>19</sup> NU was, from the beginning, seen as a traditionalist movement which gained most of its initial support from the rural élite and communities in central and eastern Java. A conservative grouping, its main source of membership and support was rural *pesantren* (religious schools), still functioning as decentralised centres of religious teaching; their attraction lay in the charismatic appeal of their individual *ulama*. NU's main aim was not to work towards independence or political mobilisation of the masses. Instead, it regarded the 'threat' of modernisation as its primary concern. In the following years, NU adopted an instrumental and pragmatic approach to politics. It later supported the independence movement without engaging directly in political activities. In the post-independence period NU was fervently anti-communist. It later pulled out of political involvement altogether and only re-entered the political arena in the 1990s.

swamped and overtaken by both European and Chinese political and business interests was a key factor in the mobilisation of Indonesian Muslims in the early 20th century. Organisations like *Sarekat Islam* and *Muhamadijah* played a vital role in generating awareness among Indonesian Muslims of their economic and political condition, and harnessing the meagre resources at their disposal to form a cohesive bloc against both European and Chinese dominance in the East Indies.

In British Malaya, the underlying problem was the same, but on an even greater scale and degree of seriousness. From the mid-19th century, British colonial authorities had encouraged mass migration of labourers and coolies from China and southern India to meet the demands of the tin and rubber industries, the main sources of income in the lopsided import-substituting colonial economy. Malay community leaders had little, if any, influence or control over immigration into the peninsula. The Chinese and Indian communities were given the freedom to elect their own representatives — such as the powerful Hakkanese merchant Yap Ah Loy<sup>20</sup> — and they owed their allegiance and loyalty to the British crown, not the local Malay Sultans and Rajas.

In time, a plural economy (quoting Furnivall's phrase) was formed, with ethnic divisions coinciding with economic and

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<sup>20</sup> Yap Ah Loy was a Hakkanese Chinese migrant who arrived in the Malay Peninsula in 1854 at the request of his uncle. He began working in Kuala Lumpur, then a tin-mining colony populated mainly by Chinese and Malay miners and traders. Yap developed his own reputation as a merchant and local community leader and was eventually elected by his community as the third Kapitan China of Kuala Lumpur. As the town developed, it became a hotly contested territory between rival Chinese factions and Malay rulers. When the Malay rulers fought for control, Yap fought for Tengku Udin of Kedah (grand-uncle of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Malaya's first Prime Minister). After the territorial disputes were settled and law and order restored, Yap was among the few Chinese merchants able to expand and consolidate his business holdings. He later became a magistrate and state councillor. After his death a Chinese temple was erected in his memory. The temple still stands, close to the central market district of Kuala Lumpur.

political cleavages. Malayan society was formed along vertical cleavages of power and authority as members of each ethnic and religious group could only look to their own for protection and succour. As the Malays found themselves marginalised in the fields of commerce and industry, they were forced to fall back on traditional modes of production such as fishing and agriculture. The 'myth of the lazy native' was developed to explain how and why the Malays could not compete with European and Asian business interests; it also served to rationalise the perpetuation of the plural economic system where the Malay share of the economy dwindled year by year.<sup>21</sup>

By the turn of the century, however, the contradictions in the Malayan model had become so evident that even the British colonial authorities could no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the crisis they had unwittingly engineered. The colonial census of 1911 revealed that the Malays were on the verge of becoming a minority in their own country, as a result of the unregulated influx of Asian migrants. Moves were made to reverse the situation, but the Aliens Ordinance which was meant to reduce the entry of migrant workers only came into effect in 1933. (By then the Malays were already a minority, making up 49% of the population (see Table 1.1).)<sup>22</sup> Under such conditions, the Malays became

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<sup>21</sup> The phrase 'myth of the lazy native' comes from the work by Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*, London: Frank Cass, 1977. This is undoubtedly the most thorough and substantial study into the ways and means by which the imperial ideology of colonial-capitalism constructed an image of a deficient and disabled native *Other* to justify and rationalise the introduction of colonial rule into Malaya.

<sup>22</sup> The 1911 census revealed that the Malays comprised only 51% of the population. This caused an uproar among the Malays and considerable embarrassment among the British, who had promised to safeguard the interests of the Malays, whom they recognised as the peninsula's natural inhabitants and 'sons of the soil'. By 1931, the Malays had fallen to 49.2% of the population, and by 1947 had increased only slightly, to 49.5%. New regulations, such as the Aliens Ordinance, were introduced to restrict the number of foreign workers (mainly Chinese) entering the country.

increasingly agitated about their own fate. The challenge of genuine social reform and political mobilisation was seized by the new generation of Malay reformers and modernists who came to be known as *Kaum Muda*.

The *Kaum Muda* reformers were mostly Malay and Peranakan Muslims who had grown up in the British colonial settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. The inheritors of a different intellectual tradition that went back to the time of Munshi Abdullah Abdul Kadir, they viewed the condition of the Malays in the Malay sultanates from a radically different perspective. Unlike the native subjects of the Malay kingdoms, these urban-based Malay and Peranakan Muslims did not live under the influence of courtly protocol or traditional *adat* law. They were shaped by the values and lifestyle of a modern, cosmopolitan mercantile community where economic and political success was the key to survival.

Among the influential figures of the *Kaum Muda* were Sumatra-born Sheikh Mohamad Tahir Jalaludin al-Azhari and Malacca-born Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi. Both were regarded as representatives of the *Kaum Muda* generation and they were very attracted to the reformist and modernist ideas then in vogue in the Muslim world. Like other important reformers of the Malay world, men like Sheikh Mohamad Tahir had travelled to the Arab lands and studied in Mecca and at al-Azhar University in Cairo.<sup>23</sup> The spread

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<sup>23</sup> Sheikh Mohamad Tahir Jalaludin al-Azhari was born at Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra in 1869. Orphaned as a child, he was brought up by relatives, who later sent him to study in Mecca. After 12 years in Mecca, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir went to al-Azhar University, Cairo in 1893 to study *al-falak* (astronomy). During his four years there he was exposed to the teachings of Muhammad Abduh, and became friends with Muhammad Rashid Rida, a disciple of Abduh. When Rida launched his journal *al-Manar* in 1898, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir contributed to it. After receiving his diploma from al-Azhar, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir taught in Mecca for two years before returning to Southeast Asia. He settled in Singapore, and joined the active circle of Malay and Peranakan Muslim reformers. In 1906, he started the reformist magazine *al-Imam* together with Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi. In 1909-11, he held several positions at the *shariah* courts of *continued p. 20*

of modernist ideas was facilitated by the advances in modern transport and communications made possible by the opening of the Suez Canal. Malay and Indonesian Muslims could travel to and from the Holy Land with greater ease and frequency. (By then the journey from Singapore to Cairo took only two weeks.) With other prominent Malay-Muslim reformers such as Sheikh Muhammad Basyuni Imran of Sambas, these reform-minded Islamists studied with Malay-Muslim *ulama* and scholars already based in Mecca (such as Sheikh Umar al-Sumbawi, Sheikh Uthman al-Sarawaki and Sheikh Mohammad Khatib al-Minangkabawi) as well as modern reformist thinkers like Egyptian scholar and disciple of Abduh, Rashid Rida.<sup>24</sup>

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n. 23 *continued*

Johor and Perak. When Sultan Idris Shah of Perak travelled to London, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir accompanied him. In 1914–18, he taught in Johor religious schools and became the state inspector of religious schools. Because of his modernist outlook and reformist tendencies, the conservative *ulama* regarded Sheikh Mohamad Tahir as dangerous. His application for the post of Mufti of Johor was rejected by the *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister), who was wary of his modernist ideas. (William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, p. 75.) He was also passed over by Sultan Iskandar of Perak for the post of Sheikh'ul Islam (*Ibid.*). Despite these setbacks, he taught at Madrasah al-Mashoor set up by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang. One of his students was the young Burhanuddin al-Helmy, later the third PAS president. In 1927, he was arrested by the Dutch while travelling in Sumatra on suspicion of working with the communists. He died in 1957.

<sup>24</sup> Sheikh Muhammad Basyuni Imran was born in 1885 in the kingdom of Sambas in West Borneo. His family served as *ulama* to the court of Sambas and his father, Muhammad Imran, was the *maharaja imam* (great imam) of the state. Muhammad Basyuni was taught by his own father; at the age of 17 he went to Mecca, where he studied with Malay teachers such as Sheikh Umar al-Sumbawi, Sheikh Uthman al-Sarawaki and Sheikh Ahmad Khatib of Minangkabau. In 1906, he returned to Sambas, and subscribed to the reformist journal *al-Manar* published by Cairo's al-Azhar University. Attracted to the reformist ideas of Rashid Rida, Muhammad Basyuni travelled to Cairo and enrolled as a student of Rida at Madrasah Dar al-Da'wa wal-Irshad. *continued p. 21*

Through the educational efforts of Sheikh Mohamad Tahir, the radical ideas and methods of the new generation of Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida were introduced to the Malay-Muslims of the peninsula. On 23 July 1906, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir established his own reformist magazine *al-Imam* (The Leader), modelled on the reformist publication *al-Manar* (The Beacon) published in Cairo by Rashid Rida. Like other reformers, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir condemned many traditional practices and institutions of the Muslim world as essentially un-Islamic and remnants of the pre-Islamic past. Sheikh Mohamad Tahir's work was taken up by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, who was both a prolific writer and founder of numerous modern reformist *madrasah* (Islamic seminary) all over the peninsula.

During his lifetime, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi<sup>25</sup> was regarded as the '*Khalifa Kaum Muda*' (or sometimes the '*Khalifa Kaum Wahhabi*') by

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He returned to Sambas in 1913 and took up his father's position as *maharaja imam*. He then opened his own reformist school, *Madrasah Sultaniyyah* of Sambas. Muhammad Basyuni continued to propagate the ideas of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida at his *madrasah*, and translated many of their works into Malay. Many of his own writings were published in Penang and Singapore. He also continued to contribute to *al-Manar*. In the 1940s, he took part in Masjumi's political activities, but the economic and political development of Sambas was much slower than other parts of Indonesia after independence in 1945. Sheikh Muhammad Basyuni passed away in 1953.

<sup>25</sup> Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi was born on 22 November 1867 in Kampung Hulu, Malacca. His mother was Malay while his father, Syed Ahmad ibn Hasan ibn Saqaf al-Hady al-Ba'alawi, was a Peranakan Arab of Hadrami descent. In his youth he was adopted by Raja Ali Kelana of the Riau Sultanate and grew up in the royal household. There he studied theology and Arabic at the *madrasah* of Raja Ali Haji. He was one of the founders of *Persekutuan Rashidiyyah*, a Muslim study circle active in Malacca and Singapore in the 1890s. He travelled widely to the Arab countries and studied in Mecca, Beirut and Cairo. At al-Azhar, he came under the influence of Muhammad Abduh. Back in Malaya, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir Jalaludin al-Azhari exposed him to the reformist ideas of Abduh and Rashid Rida. With Sheikh Mohamad Tahir, Sheikh Mohamad Salim al-Kalili and *continued p. 22*

his conservative-traditionalist critics. He was particularly interested in reforming the institution of the *madrasah* and *pondok*, for he believed that modern Islamic education was the key to solving many (if not all) of the problems facing the Muslims. Syed Sheikh al-Hadi was aided in this task by other Malay-Muslim reformers such as Haji Abbas Mohamad Tahar and the Acehnese Sheikh Mohamad Salim al-Kalili, as well as prominent Arab and Indian Muslim reformers, including Sheikh Abu Jabir Abdullah al-Ghadamisi.<sup>26</sup>

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n. 25 continued

Haji Abbas Mohamad Tahar, he started the reformist magazine *al-Imam* in Singapore in 1906. On 4 February 1908, he opened Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah in Singapore. William Roff (*The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, p. 63) has noted: 'Although not an *alim* of the calibre of Sheikh Tahir, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi nevertheless had a very lively and able mind eminently suited to the polemicist and propagandist role he carved for himself.' In 1909-15, he served as an attorney at the Johor Bahru *shariah* court. In 1915, he returned to Malacca and opened Madrasah al-Hadi (with Haji Abu Bakar Ahmad). However, the Malays of Malacca regarded his teachings as too radical and controversial. In 1919, he moved to Penang to open Madrasah al-Mashoor, which became perhaps one of the most famous of the radical 'reformist' *madrasah* of the colonial era. Together with other radical new reformist *madrasah* such as Madrasah al-Hadi of Malacca, Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah of Singapore and Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif of Gunung Semanggul, Madrasah al-Mashoor was instrumental in educating young reformist Muslim thinkers and activists such as Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy. In 1927, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi left the teaching profession and opened the Jelutong Press in Penang which became one of the leading reformist publishing houses. The press published his own translation of the *Qur'anic tafsir* (exegesis) of Muhammad Abduh as well as many other important reformist articles and books. In 1926, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi launched *al-Ikhwān*, a monthly journal, and in 1928 a daily newspaper, *Saudara*. One writer for *Saudara* was Abdul Rahim Kajai. Syed Sheikh al-Hadi passed away on 20 February 1934. (Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*; William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*.)

<sup>26</sup> Sheikh Abu Jabir Abdullah al-Ghadamisi was born in Ghadamis, Libya in 1892. Coming from a long line of *ulama*, the young  
continued p. 23

In his writings, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi attacked the traditional *ulama* as well as the Malay ruling élite for manipulating and abusing Islam to suit their own needs and intentions. Apart from his emphasis on modernisation and development of Malay and Islamic studies, Sheikh al-Hadi's views on women were also radically different from those of the traditionalists and conservatives.<sup>27</sup> He argued in defence of women's education and equal rights, and constantly brought up the topic of women's welfare in his magazine, *al-Ikhwan* and his two novels, *Hikayat Faridah Hanum* and *Hikayat Puteri Nurul'ain*.<sup>28</sup> Reform of the Islamic educational system meant, for al-Hadi, reform of the Muslim mind itself. Along with modern subjects like history and science, he also wanted to create a new generation of young Muslims able to address the social, economic and political challenges they faced with confidence and determination. Among the numerous *madrasah* he set up were Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah in Singapore, Madrasah al-Hadi in Malacca and Madrasah al-Mashoor al-Islamiyyah in Penang. (Madrasah al-Mashoor was destined to play a major role in the development of political Islam for here a young student

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Sheikh Abu Jabir was sent to study at Taif and then Mecca. Later, he was invited to Malaya by the al-Saqqaf family of Singapore. In 1916, he began to teach *fiqh* and Arabic literature at Madrasah al-Mashoor in Penang. In 1929, he moved to Perak to teach at Madrasah al-Idrisiyyah, but this venture failed due to problems with the Perak royal family. He returned to Penang and helped to re-open Madrasah al-Amirah Mariah. In 1930, he opened his own *madrasah* in Penang, Madrasah al-Huda al-Diniyyah li'l-Banin wa'l-Banat, which admitted both male and female students. In Penang he worked closely with Syed Sheikh al-Hadi and helped him to eradicate the deviant Sufi order, *Tariqa Taslim* (also known as *Tariqa Matahari*). When Syed Sheikh al-Hadi started the *Persatuan Sahabat Pena* (Penpals Association), Sheikh Abu Jabir became an executive adviser. In 1946, he finally returned to Mecca. In the following years, he travelled and taught in other countries, including India. He died in Mecca in 1974.

<sup>27</sup> Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change: The Kaum Ibu UMNO of Malaysia 1945-1972*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 20-21.

<sup>28</sup> William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 82-83.

named Burhanuddin al-Helmy received his early education under the tutelage of Sheikh Tahir. Burhanuddin later became the third president of PAS, from 1956 to 1969.)

The reformers' main instruments were their network of reformist *madrrasah* and the progressive journals, magazines and newspapers they published. Among the more popular and influential of the journals were *al-Imam* (published by Sheikh Mohamad Tahir and Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Singapore), *Al-Ikhtwan* (published by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang), *Seruan Azhar* (published by *Kesatuan Jamiah al-Khairiah* (Malay Students Association of al-Azhar, Cairo)), *Pilihan Timur* (published by Indonesian students at al-Azhar, Cairo) and the teachers' magazine, *Majalah Guru*.

While the traditional establishment looked on in horror, the reformers collected around them a number of young followers who later took on the cause of reform and modernisation in the Malay world. In response to the tide of change from abroad, the *ulama* of the Malay states and courts issued countless *fatwa* against the reformers and their teachings. The *mufti* and *sheikh'ul islam* of the Malay states condemned the reformers' ideas and teachings on the grounds that they were irreligious, *kafir* and /or influenced by Wahhabi and Kadiani (Qadiani) ideas.

The *Kaum Muda* faction was not, however, free from its own internal contradictions and weaknesses. One of the most obvious discrepancies was the domination by Muslims of non-Malay ancestry. Until then, leadership of the Malay-Muslim community had been mostly in the hands of the traditional Malay ruling élite and prominent Malay-Muslim *ulama*. Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, Sheikh Abu Jabir al-Ghadamisi and others were of mixed or pure Arab or Indian stock, and thus not seen as 'pure' Malays. The economic, political and social divisions between the Malays and Muslims of Arab or Indian origin (made all the more acute by the colonial system's policy of divide-and-rule and its pluralist economic model) made it imperative for the Malays to seek a new form of leadership from their own community.

Fed up with being treated like second-class Muslims by the Arabs and Indians, and fearful of being reduced to a politically weak and economically backward minority in their own homeland, the Malays began organising themselves into various Malay

ethno-nationalist bodies and organisations. In the Unfederated Malay States (UMS) of Johor, Kelantan and Terengganu, new political and religious bodies were formed to defend and promote the interests of Malay-Muslims. The *Majlis Agama Kelantan* (Kelantan Religious Council) was formed in 1915, but it and many similar bodies soon came under the leadership and patronage of traditional Malay rulers more interested in protecting the interests of the traditional ruling élite than of the ordinary Malay masses.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the attacks against *Kaum Muda* activists, the reformers' objective were achieved in more ways than one. The Malay and Peranakan Muslims of the peninsula began thinking seriously about their economic, social and political condition and they sought ways and means to better their lot. By the early 20th century, the Malay-Muslims had begun establishing modern socio-political movements. In 1926, the first Malay-Muslim political organisation, the *Kesatuan Melayu Singapura* (KMS) (Malay Union of Singapore) was formed at the *istana* in Kampung Gelam, Singapore, once the seat of the royal capital of the Johor-Riau sultanate.<sup>30</sup> The KMS was led by Muhamad Eunus Abdullah, who was also the first Malay member of the Straits Legislative Council. His appointment reflected the concern among Malay-Muslims that

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<sup>29</sup> The *Majlis Agama Kelantan* (MAK) was formed at the initiative of the conservative Kelantanese élite led by Haji Nik Mahmud who wished to gain control over religious affairs in the state. Dominated by the élite, the Majlis soon became a tool for aristocratic patronage and dominance. It focused its attention on tax and revenue collection, via *zakat* contributions. The MAK fulfilled some of its traditional duties as patron and benefactor to Muslim concerns (like building mosques, *surau* and religious schools), but its real aim was the perpetuation and reproduction of aristocratic power. It built a school for the (male) children of the Kelantanese élite, based on the model of British colonial schools so children of the élite could later proceed to British colonial schools and then enter the colonial civil service. The dominance of the MAK was resented by ordinary Kelantanese, who switched their support to the *ulama* and radical nationalists. Similar attempts at institutional reform in other Malay kingdoms like Terengganu and Johor only ended up serving the interests of the ruling élite.

<sup>30</sup> William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 190-195.

their interests were being defended by too many Peranakan Muslims of Arab or Indian descent.

The KMS was formed at a time when the Malay and Peranakan Muslims felt that the entire Muslim world was on the verge of a major political crisis. Like Muslims in the rest of the Islamic world, the Malay-Muslims were witnesses to the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate. In 1924, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk had deposed Sultan Abdulmecid, the last Ottoman Sultan, and officially abolished the Ottoman Caliphate, bringing an end to the longest-serving dynasty in the history of Islamic civilisation.

As the last Ottoman Sultan was taken into exile on board the British vessel HMS *Malaya*, Muslims the world over regretted the loss of the Caliphate and felt that the Muslim world was bereft of its spiritual, cultural, economic and political centre. Secular-minded leaders such as Mustafa Kemal Ataturk of Turkey, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlevi of Iran and King Amanullah of Afghanistan pursued their own policies of rapid modernisation, secularisation and Westernisation of their respective societies with brutal determination. This eventually conflated modernity with dislocation, alienation and oppression in the eyes of their own people. In the following years, numerous attempts were made by successive Arab leaders to revive the Caliphate in the Arab lands, but these efforts proved fruitless as the Arab states began to engage in their own internecine struggles against each other. The Malay and Indonesian Muslims of the Far East were left homeless and abandoned.

In the wake of the Caliphate crisis, the Malay world witnessed a number of radical developments. The 'fever of nationalism' caught the imagination of Malays throughout the archipelago. In neighbouring Dutch East Indies, nationalist leader Soekarno founded the *Partai Nasionalis Indonesia* (PNI) (Nationalist Party of Indonesia) in 1927. Though Soekarno was arrested in 1927 and jailed the following year, the PNI rapidly became a major political force and soon also gained a loyal following among the radicals in Malaya. The Indonesian Islamists were not to be outdone. In 1937, the biggest Muslim organisations in Indonesia — *Muhamadijjah*, *Sarekat Islam* and *Nahdatul Ulama* — came together to form the *Madjlis Islam A'laa Indonesia* (MIAI).

In British Malaya, the Malays began forming various social, economic and political organisations to mobilise themselves. Branches of the KMS were formed in Penang and Malacca. The *Persatuan Melayu Perak* was formed in 1937, and in 1938 other organisations were launched in Pahang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. The *Persatuan Melayu Johor* was set up in 1939. Most of these organisations were formed with the specific intention of promoting greater Malay participation in politics and economics and to defend the position of the Malays *vis-à-vis* the non-Malay communities in the country.<sup>31</sup> By then the Malay-Muslim community had become apprehensive about the growing influence of the non-Malays, the Chinese in particular. Their fears were intensified when the colonial census of 1931 revealed that the Malays were no longer the majority in their own country.

Like the *Majlis Agama Kelantan*, Malay organisations of the 1930s drew their leadership from the traditional Malay aristocracy and were generally conservative. No organisation was politically radical or confrontational in outlook. Even the KMS was never an explicitly anti-British or anti-colonial organisation. However, other nationalist groupings were forming via less visible means. When Muslim reformist Syed Sheikh al-Hadi launched the *Persatuan Sahabat Pena* (Penpals Association) in 1934, he indirectly opened the way for the meeting of minds among the younger generation of Malay nationalists.<sup>32</sup> The *Sahabat Pena* soon attracted thousands of

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<sup>31</sup> The first Pan-Malayan meeting of associations was held in Kuala Lumpur on 5-6 August 1939, at the initiative of the Selangor and Singapore associations. The meeting discussed the need to further strengthen the associations and the objective of helping the Malays in their economic development. A second Pan-Malayan meeting was held in Singapore on 25-26 December 1940.

<sup>32</sup> The British authorities grew wary of the *Persatuan Sahabat Pena* and began to infiltrate it. By 1937, moves were made to discredit the association by labelling it a 'secret society' with subversive intentions. The British also promoted divisions between the Malay-Muslims and Peranakan Muslims who headed the organisation, causing a leadership split. By 1940, *Sahabat Pena* was practically defunct, but other nationalist organisations had come to the fore (Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, p. 98 n. 22).

young Malays keen to communicate with each other and to share their common concerns about the fate of the Malay-Muslims. Among those who joined was Tunku Abdul Rahman, later the first Prime Minister of Malaya. Out of such informal links grew the first radical nationalist organisation of the country, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda*.

### *Against the Kaum Tua: The Kesatuan Melayu Muda's Challenge to the Status Quo*

He who sees himself as totally helpless to do anything to uplift his people and country is a *kafir* [unbeliever], devoid of the gift of reason and deprived of the excellent nature of Man whom God has exalted several echelons above animals.

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi,  
'Teriak Sa-Benar', *al-Ikhwan*, 1926<sup>33</sup>

While many Malay-Muslim organisations formed in the early 1930s were decidedly conservative, the same could not be said of the organisations formed in the predominantly non-Malay urban settlements. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw the birth of a number of radical organisations and movements in the west coast metropolitan centres. The South Seas Communist Party (SSCP) was formed in Singapore in 1928, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) (illegally) in 1930<sup>34</sup> and the Malayan General Labour Union

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<sup>33</sup> Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, 'Teriak Sa-benar', *al-Ikhwan*, I(2) (16 October 1926): 1-4. Quoted in Alijah Gordon, *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady*, p. 187.

<sup>34</sup> The MCP was officially launched on 30 April 1930 at Buloh Kasap in Johor. The date of its official launch was postponed by one day due to the heavy presence of British Malayan Security Service (MSS) operatives around the original launch venue (Kampung Dioh near Kuala Pilah, Negeri Sembilan). Despite the secrecy surrounding the event, Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior: Tan Sri Dr. C. C. Too*, Batu Caves: Interpress Printers, 2000, noted that the launch was witnessed by at least one important communist leader destined to play an *continued p. 29*

(MGLU) in 1934.<sup>35</sup> (The British colonial establishment reacted to the emergence of these radical organisations with typical efficiency and ruthlessness. In 1933, the Restrictive Residence Enactment (RRE) was introduced to combat the spread of such associations and to monitor the movement of their members.)

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important role in the communist struggle in Southeast Asia: Quyen Ai Quoc @ Ho Chi Minh (who stood as the Eastern representative of the COMINTERN). MCP's ideology was summed up by its 'eight great postulates' and 'ten great guiding principles' taken from the Communist Party of China (Ibid., p. 68). MCP leaders were keen to adopt strategies similar to those of the Chinese communists, such as the concept of 'people's war' and encirclement of cities. Among the early MCP leaders were Foo Tah Ching (first party secretary), Loi Tek @ Cheong Hong (senior MCP leader, disappeared in 1947), Chin Peng @ Ong Boon Hua (later secretary-general), Yeung Kuo (deputy secretary-general), Ah Kuk (head of MCP South Malayan Bureau (SMB) in Johor), Chan Tien (head of MCP propaganda wing), Soon Kwong (head of MPAJU), Eu Chooi Yip (head of MCP Singapore wing), Chong Chin Nam @ Haji Hashim (head of MCP's 10th Malay regiment), Ng Heng (MCP central command), Chew Yong Pin @ William Chew (commander, 1st MPAJA regiment), Tang Fook Loong (commander, 2nd MNLA regiment), Ng Chin Ki @ Ah Shek (commander, 12th MNLA regiment), Liew It Fan, Liu Yau, and Toh Kah Lim (MCP's internal party commissar and chief liquidator). A number of Malay communists and sympathisers also played an active part in the formation and development of the MCP. They included Mokhtaruddin Lasso (later president of PKMM), Musa Ahmad (MCP commissar, MCP chairman in 1955), Abdul Rashid Mydin (second-in-command of MCP's 10th Malay regiment), Ibrahim Mohamad (also active in 10th Malay regiment), Osman China (propaganda chief of 10th Malay regiment), Abdullah Cet Det and Shamsiah Fakeh (formerly of AWAS and MNP/PKMM).

<sup>35</sup> Hua Wu Yin (*Class and Communalism in Malaysia*, London: Zed Books, 1983, p. 63) has noted that 'the workers' struggle in Malaya began with the progressive unionisation from the 1930s onwards and reached its peak between 1948-60, during the 'Emergency'. The colonial state perceived the real threat to Western imperialist interests in Malaya as the working-class anti-colonial movement. Of particular interest is the clandestine status of these early movements, 'because of employers' hostility and the general isolation of the workers'.

In 1938, the *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (Young Malays Association, KMM) was formed by a group of young Malay radical nationalists, including Ibrahim Yaakob (president),<sup>36</sup> Onan Haji Siraj (vice-president), Abdul Karim Rashid (secretary), Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, and Sultan Djenain, who served as the link between the KMM and MCP. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy joined in 1939.

The *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* was literally that: none of its founder members was above the age of thirty. Both Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Ibrahim Yaakob were 27 years old; Ishak Haji Muhammad<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibrahim Yaakob was born in Temerloh, Pahang in 1911. His early education was at the Malay school and later Sultan Idris Training College, established by the British to develop a new generation of Malay teachers for the local vernacular schools they had set up. He eventually turned against the colonial establishment and entered the world of Malay journalism; he rose to become the editor of *Majlis*, a Malay newspaper. KMM was an underground movement that tried to bring down the colonial establishment from within. Its leaders were inspired by, and co-operated with, both the radical nationalists of Indonesia and later the Japanese military authorities during World War II. The Japanese promoted Ibrahim to the rank of commander-in-chief of the local Malay militia, PETA (Defenders of the Homeland). After the war, he was forced to flee to Indonesia, where he used the assumed name of Iskandar Kamel Agastja. He helped to co-ordinate anti-Malayan activities of the radical Malay nationalist party (PKMM) in exile. He never returned to Malaya, and died in Indonesia. His writings include: *Melihat Tanah Air*, Kuantan: Perchetakan Timur, 1941, and *Sedjarah dan Perdjjuangan di Malaya* (1948). The latter, written in exile, was published under his assumed name.

<sup>37</sup> Ishak Haji Muhammad was born in 1910 near Temerloh, Pahang. He was educated at both Malay and English schools, and entered the Malay Administrative Service of the British colonial government. Unable to work with the colonial government, he left and entered the world of journalism. In 1938, he helped to form KMM. During the Japanese occupation he worked as a journalist and edited *Berita Malai*, a Malay newspaper bought and financed by the Japanese, who sent him to Tokyo for a time. After the war, he re-entered Malay politics and was one of PKMM's founders; he became president in 1946. When PKMM was banned during the Emergency, Ishak and many others were detained by the British under the Internal Security Act  
*continued p. 31*

was 28, while Ahmad Boestamam<sup>38</sup> was only 18. A majority of KMM members were products of British colonial vocational education — mostly students from Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), Kuala Lumpur Technical School and Serdang Agricultural College.

The KMM's emergence was an indicator of how far the radical and progressive Malay-Muslim camp had evolved over the years. The movement's radical agenda was set by men such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Ahmad Boestamam, articulate writers and propagandists for the Malay cause. They were helped by other writers and journalists like Abdul Rahim Kajai,<sup>39</sup> who actively supported the KMM. The movement's

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(ISA). After his release, he re-entered politics, and became founder-president of *Parti Buruh Malaya* (PBM). In 1957, PBM merged with PRM to form the *Fron Sosialis Rakyat Malaya*. His writings include: *Putera Gunung Tahan* (1937).

<sup>38</sup> Ahmad Boestamam (Abdullah Sani Raja Kecil) was born on 30 November 1920 in the village of Behrang Ulu near Tanjung Malim, Perak. His parents were Minangkabau immigrants from West Sumatra. He studied at the Anderson School, Ipoh and then began a career in journalism. He wrote for a number of local newspapers before writing for Kuala Lumpur-based *Majlis*; the editor was radical nationalist Ibrahim Yaakob. Boestamam was one of KMM's founders. In 1941, he was arrested by the British for anti-government activities, and released by the Japanese during the occupation period. Boestamam returned to active politics in 1945 and took part in the formation of PKMM, becoming head of API, its militant youth wing. After his detention by the British during the Emergency (1 July 1948–28 June 1955), Boestamam was persuaded to found PRM. During the period of *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia, Boestamam was placed under detention by the Malaysian government. He was the first Malaysian member of parliament detained under the ISA. In 1966, Kassim Ahmad was elected PRM leader while Boestamam was in detention. Boestamam left PRM in 1968 and founded the *Parti Marhaen*. His writings include: *Testamen Politik API: Merdeka dengan Darah* (1951); *Pengetahuan Politik untuk Rakyat* (1960); *Api dan Airmata* (1967); *Api itu Masih Membara* (1967); *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Malaya Raya*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Kejora, 1972; and *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979.

<sup>39</sup> Abdul Rahim Kajai was born in Selangor in 1894. He attended the Setapak Malay school, and later studied Islamic law and theology in continued p. 32

aim was to struggle for independence and to work towards closer links with the Malay peoples of Indonesia. Men like Ibrahim Yaakob and Burhanuddin al-Helmy envisaged the eventual creation of a vast Malay bloc that they called *Malaya-Raya*, encompassing the Malay Peninsula, Dutch East Indies, Borneo and the Philippines.

Worried about the rise and growing popularity of these radical movements with their leftist and Islamist leanings, Malay conservatives and traditionalists began organising counter-movements of their own. But, like their Indonesian counterparts, the conservative Malay élite — aristocrats and members of the royal families — were quite open about their support of the colonial government. The Malay organisations formed in 1938–39 were all led by conservative members of the traditional ruling élite wary of the growing influence of communism, socialism and Islamic reformism in their midst. Worse still was the prospect of being abandoned by the British colonial rulers in the event of war and Britain being defeated by Japan. At its 1939 congress, the *Persatuan Melayu Selangor* (Selangor Malays Organisation, PMS) led by Tengku Ismail made it clear that they were fully behind the imperial government of Britain in the event of war in the Pacific. When

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Mecca. He travelled between Malaya and Mecca several times, and was stranded there for several years during World War I. When he finally returned to Malaya, he entered the world of vernacular Malay journalism, working for the magazine *Edaran Zaman* and writing for the newspaper *Saudara*, published by Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang. He later became editor of *Majlis* in Kuala Lumpur and an editor of *Warta Malaya*. At *Majlis* he worked with other prominent Malay writers and radical thinkers such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Abdul Samad Ahmad and Ahmad Boestamam. Ibrahim and Boestamam were also with him at *Warta Malaya*. He became an active member of KMM. During World War II he worked with several Malay language newspapers under Japanese control and sponsorship, including *Perubahan Baharu* and *Berita Malai*. Throughout his career he was known as a staunch defender of Malay rights and privileges. He is credited with coining the terms 'darah keturunan Keling' (DKK) and 'darah keturunan Arab' (DKA), which were used (sometimes derisively) to mark the differences between pure-blooded Malays and those whose ancestors included foreigners. He died on 5 December 1943.

the British colonial government began rounding up radical Malay activists like Ibrahim Yaakob prior to the Japanese invasion of Malaya, hardly a word of protest was uttered by the conservative-nationalists. In fact, they expressed their even stronger determination to support the British. As well as agreeing to contribute to the 'Lady Thomas Patriotic Fund', PMS suggested that a 'Spitfire fund' be established to help Britain pay for more fighter planes to defend the mother-country of the Commonwealth.<sup>40</sup> The other conservative Malay organisations agreed, but their efforts came to naught as the Japanese *blitzkrieg* across Southeast Asia came so fast that the only planes airborne in time were the Japanese Zeros.

*A Door is Opened: The Rise of the Radicals and Islamists  
during the Japanese Era*

When Japanese bombers sank the warships HMS *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, the British colonial authorities realised that the game was over. With the loss of these two crucial battleships, there was no way Britain could defend Malaya, Singapore or Hong Kong. The French, Dutch and Americans were likewise exposed to the tentacles of the Nippon octopus, and one by one the Western colonies of Southeast Asia fell into Japanese hands.

Japan's invasion of Southeast Asia matched the advances of Nazi forces in Europe in terms of its speed and efficiency. Britain's defence strategy, by contrast, was hollow and impractical. The Japanese landed on the northern shores of Kelantan, and in a number of weeks had reached Singapore, Britain's 'Gibraltar of the East'. By February 1942, Lieutenant-General A. E. Percival was there to meet them and to offer the terms of the British surrender to General Yamashita, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese forces.<sup>41</sup> Winston Churchill described the loss of Malaya and the

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<sup>40</sup> William Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, pp. 241, 246.

<sup>41</sup> A major reason for the poor performance of the Allied forces during the defence of Malaya was the lack of air cover. In his account of the conflict, General A. E. Percival, then GOC in Malaya, bemoaned the  
*continued p. 34*

fall of Singapore as 'the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history'.<sup>42</sup>

With the remnants of the humiliated Western armies marched off to sweat under the Japanese yoke and the conservative Malay rulers humbled before their subjects, the Malay radicals at last found themselves in a world that would grant them the freedom to dream aloud. The only serious opposition to the Japanese in Malaya came from the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), mostly Chinese leftists and communists who had taken to the jungles to carry out a guerrilla war.<sup>43</sup> The MPAJA was aided by a clandestine network of Chinese associations, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Union (MPAJU).<sup>44</sup>

Once they had taken over British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, the Japanese military authorities began promoting the development of the radical Malay nationalists in their efforts to win the confidence of the Malays. (Many conservative Malay élite were forced to accept their new humbler status, or chose to work against the Japanese by joining the British-led paramilitary units engaged in guerrilla warfare in the jungles.)<sup>45</sup> Several radical

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lack of fighter planes to check the rapid Japanese advance from the north. (A. E. Percival, *The War in Malaya*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949.)

<sup>42</sup> Alan Warren, *Singapore 1942: Britain's Greatest Defeat*, London: Hambledon and London, 2002, p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> During the war, MCP guerrillas trained by British army officers fought and worked alongside other forces such as Force 136 and the Malay militias. The MCP organised its own militia, the MPAJA; the 1st regiment of MPAJA was established at Serendah, Selangor on 1 February 1942.

<sup>44</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna, 'The Making of a Malayan Propagandist: The Communists, the British and C. C. Too', *JMBRAS*, LXXIII(1) (2000), p. 71. MPAJA received its weapons and training from British troops working covertly in Malaya. MPAJU was used as the main channel to deliver weapons and supplies to the guerrillas in the jungle.

<sup>45</sup> Among them were men such as Tun Abdul Razak, the young Malay aristocrat from Pahang who later became the second Prime Minister of Malaysia. During the war he served as a member of the Malay *continued p. 35*

nationalist leaders such as Ibrahim Yaakob chose to work with the Japanese authorities and were invited to lead the numerous militias formed under Japanese patronage.

The Malay radicals who had once been under British control busied themselves with the task of dismantling the very same colonial structures. The Japanese occupation gave Ibrahim Yaakob and his fellow radicals the opportunity to develop and disseminate their ideas as never before, even though Japanese military rule was as harsh and restrictive as British colonial rule had been. After release from detention in February 1942 (Ibrahim was detained by the British shortly before the Japanese invasion, though he tried to work with them prior to the attack),<sup>46</sup> Ibrahim and the Malay radicals found KMM was banned by the very same Japanese military establishment that had come to help 'liberate' them. Open discussion of the question of independence and public display of the nationalist flag, the *Sang Saka Merah-Putih* (the political standard of the Malay radicals), was also outlawed. Nonetheless, the Malay radicals were courted by the Japanese administration and invited to play a prominent role in the development of Malay civic and para-military organisations that the Japanese hoped to use to help reinforce their rule in Malaya.

Ibrahim Yaakob and the radical nationalists found it easy to cooperate with the Japanese out of political necessity. The KMM had already been covertly assisting the Japanese even before the actual invasion in 1941.<sup>47</sup> With the assistance of the KMM the Japanese

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Wataniah regiment of Force 136 set up by the British, eventually rising to the rank of captain. Another Malay conservative, Harun Idris, joined MPAJA. After the war, he joined UMNO and became head of its Youth division in the 1970s.

<sup>46</sup> In *Sedjarah dan Perjuangan di Malaya* (pp. 82-83), Ibrahim gives an account of his attempt to work with the British and Tunku Omar of the Terengganu court to create an independent Malay buffer-state in the Riau-Lingga kingdom.

<sup>47</sup> Prior to the Japanese landing, the KMM had used prostitutes and bartenders to extract information from members of the British expatriate community, used aborigines to help monitor the movement of British  
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military intelligence (under Major Fujiwara) smuggled a group of Acehese militant nationalists from Selangor to Sumatra, to begin covert anti-Dutch operations in Aceh and the rest of Sumatra prior to the Japanese invasion.<sup>48</sup> Ibrahim also agreed to help the Japanese by purchasing in August 1941 (with the aid of Japanese funds) the Malay newspaper *Warta Malaya* to launch a sustained anti-British campaign in the Malay press.

After the Japanese had consolidated their hold on the Malay Peninsula, Ibrahim and the other ex-KMM leaders such as Ahmad Boestamam were invited to lead the Japanese-sponsored native militias and armed forces, the Giyugun and Giyutai.<sup>49</sup> Ibrahim was

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troops in the rural interior and locate their camps, formed an 'intelligence branch' to compile information for the Japanese intelligence services working under the *Fujiwara Kikan* (Fujiwara Office) which supervised intelligence-gathering from Malaya and Thailand.

<sup>48</sup> The Japanese military intelligence units had always had a special regard for the Aceh nationalists, whose martial spirit and religious convictions they admired. Early in 1941, General Sugiyama ordered Major Fujiwara (who was in charge of intelligence operations in Malaya and Thailand) to establish contact with the anti-Dutch movement in Aceh, North Sumatra. Acehese volunteers soon agreed to work with the Japanese to prepare the way for the Japanese invasion. In 1941, a group of Acehese militants was smuggled from Selangor to Sumatra, but only after the KMM had managed to intercede and persuade the Malay rulers of Selangor to support the Japanese and turn against their British colonial rulers. The covert operation was successful, and the Acehese prepared the way for the Japanese advance later in the year. (Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, Hong Kong: Heinemann, 1977, pp. 123–126.)

<sup>49</sup> The Giyutai (volunteer militia) and Giyugun (volunteer army) were formed by the Japanese in January 1944. Both units comprised Malay soldiers under the command of Malay officers selected and approved by the Japanese. It is hardly a surprise that their commanders were mostly from the Malay radical anti-British camp, many of whom were KMM members. The Giyugun was a professional army, with a centralised base and training camp at Johor Bahru. The troops were given uniforms and arms and training by the Japanese army. It was led by Ibrahim Yaakob, its lieutenant-colonel, and many soldiers were ex-KMM members. The Japanese relied on the Giyugun as part  
*continued p. 37*

promoted to the rank of commander-in-chief of the local militia. Lebra notes that as the commander of the Malayan Giyugun, Ibrahim deliberately chose to refer to it as PETA, 'hoping to strengthen its ties with its (stronger) Indonesian counterpart'.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, other radicals such as Ishak Haji Muhammad returned to their careers in journalism when given the opportunity.<sup>51</sup> Together, the Malay radicals worked to promote a sense of common pan-Malayan identity amongst their followers in all the movements and institutions in which they were working.

However, it soon became clear to radicals like Ibrahim that the Japanese piecemeal efforts to accommodate their demands were cosmetic at best. Despite Ibrahim's constant reference to the Giyugun as 'PETA', it was obvious that the Malayan defence units were in no way comparable to their Indonesian counterparts, either in size or ability. (Indonesian PETA units were equipped with rifles and small-calibre artillery, while their Malayan counterparts were armed with sticks.) Furthermore, the Japanese military authorities had made it quite clear that the Malayan civil and para-military organisations were meant to play only a supporting role behind the Japanese military administration, and that the Malays themselves were not to be given any real chance to prove themselves on the battlefield or work towards their political independence.

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of its local defence force, though they were poorly armed and never used outside Malaya. At its peak, it had about 2,000 members. The Giyutai, on the other hand, was a semi-professional unit organised on a voluntary basis which served as a home guard. Its units were dispersed all over the peninsula, with no centralised administration. Members had only the most rudimentary military training. Its leader was the young Malay radical activist Ahmad Boestamam, and at its peak it had about 5,000 members.

<sup>50</sup> Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, p. 120.

<sup>51</sup> Ishak Haji Muhammad worked in the Japanese controlled paper *Berita Malai* (Malay News) and was even posted to Tokyo for a period. In 1946 he wrote the political tract *Bersatu-lah Sekarang* (Unite Now!), which called for the immediate reunification of Malaya and Indonesia and independence for both.

Despite the constant monitoring of their activities, the Malay radicals tried to promote the interests and goals of the Malay nationalists during the Japanese occupation. They continually spoke of the need for the Malay peoples to unite, and they tried to negotiate with the authorities in Japan for the unification of the Malay Peninsula with Indonesia, and for their eventual independence.<sup>52</sup> When such overt means of negotiation did not bear fruit, Ibrahim and his colleagues were prepared to resort to more covert methods, a reminder of his earlier days in the political underground.<sup>53</sup>

In late July 1945, under the watchful eye of the Japanese military command, the Malay radicals were given the chance to form the *Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung* (KRIS) (Union of Indonesian and Peninsular Malay Peoples) under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy.<sup>54</sup> KRIS contained a number of ex-KMM members, though it also attracted the support of less radical nationalists such as Dato' Onn Jaafar and Malay ruler Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak. The radicals' dream seemed to be within

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<sup>52</sup> In *Sedjarah dan Perjuangan di Malaya* (p. 133), Ibrahim describes how he and other Malay nationalist leaders were in a 'goodwill mission' sent to Tokyo in 1943 to petition *pemerintah Djepang* (Japanese leaders). This was probably during the Greater East Asian Conference held in Tokyo. Their mission requested that the Malay Peninsula be united with the neighbouring Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra, into a single Malaya-Java-Sumatra bloc. The Indonesians were represented by Tunku Mohammad Hassan and Mohammad Shafi'i.

<sup>53</sup> Ibrahim also notes (*Ibid.*, p. 134) that when travelling between Malaya and Indonesia during the occupation he also engaged in covert activities such as laying the foundation for an underground guerrilla network to resist the Japanese as the tide of the war turned against them. In Malaya, the underground network was led by other KMM activists such as Ahmad Boestamam in Perak.

<sup>54</sup> Other interpretations of the acronym KRIS included *Kesatuan Rakyat Istimewa* (Special People's Union) and — by those who felt KRIS was a serious attempt to bring about a union between Malaya and Indonesia — *Kerajaan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung* (Government of the Peoples of the Peninsula and Indonesia) (William Roff, in Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. xxxi).

arm's reach when Ibrahim Yaakob and Dr. Burhanuddin met Indonesian leaders Soekarno and Hatta while the latter were in Taiping, Perak on 12 August.<sup>55</sup> But this short-lived project was the closest that the Malay radicals ever got to establishing their cherished goal of reunification and independence for the entire Indonesian-Malayan peoples.

The eventual collapse of the Malay radical-nationalists' project was not entirely their own doing. Dependent on the patronage and protection of the Japanese occupation force, they were also beholden to Japanese interests and Japan's military fortunes. As the war wore on and the human and economic costs escalated, it became clear that Japan's march into Asia would be checked and that it would find itself on the defensive. By 1945, Japan was once again on the retreat, fending off Allied attacks in Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines and the Pacific islands. By the end of the war, Japan was forced to surrender Malaya back to the British, but on the condition that the colony returned to her former colonial masters would be a *tamed* one. Ibrahim Yaakob and his colleagues were deemed unacceptable by both the departing and returning colonial powers, and like Subhas Chandra Bose and U Ba Mau, to whom he likened himself, Ibrahim was forced to leave Malaya on 20 August 1945, just before the British returned.<sup>56</sup>

While the radical Malay nationalists were given a chance to play a more active public role during the Japanese occupation, the same could not be said of the Islamists. During the Japanese military occupation of Malaya and the East Indies, the development of political Islam was comparatively slow. Although Imperial Japan

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. xvi.

<sup>56</sup> Ibrahim Yaakob, *Sedjarah dan Perdjjuangan*, p. 112. Caught by the internal politics of the Malay nationalist groups at the wrong place and the wrong time, on his own account Ibrahim missed his opportunity to leave Malaya with Soekarno and Hatta who had been flown back to Indonesia just in time to proclaim her independence on 17 August 1945. By the time he arrived in Indonesia, the British were back in power in Malaya and the radical Malay nationalists had regrouped under PKMM, led by Mokhtaruddin Lasso and Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy.

had tried to court the support of Islamist movements and organisations in the Malay world throughout the 1930s,<sup>57</sup> clearly their true intention was to use these Islamists to establish a staging post on the lands they were about to conquer. A few piecemeal efforts were made by the Japanese to win the support of the Islamists of Malaya and Indonesia, but these efforts were, by and large, even more cosmetic than the effort to win over the radical nationalists.

In the former Dutch colony of the East Indies, the Japanese authorities realised the potential of the forces of Islam which were well entrenched in the country. The Japanese courted the support of both the traditionalists (from movements like the *Nahdatul Ulama*) and reformists (from movements such as the *Muhamadijiah*). During the period of Japanese rule, the *Majlis Shura Muslimin* (Masjumi) was formed to bring together the diverse traditionalist and modernist-reformist strands of Islam in the country. Masjumi eventually came under the leadership of prominent Islamist thinker Muhammad Natsir.<sup>58</sup> The Japanese

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<sup>57</sup> The Japanese government had been trying to court support from Muslim groups and movements outside Japan since the 1930s. Of particular interest to them was the effort to win over Malay support in the archipelago. Martin Kramer notes that in 1938 the Japanese attempted to unite the Muslim groups sponsored by them under the *Dai Nippon Kaikyo Kyokai* (Greater Japan Muslim League), then under the presidency of the Siberian Tatar Muslim leader, Abdulreshid Ibrahimov. In November 1939, the Japanese government hosted the International Islamic Exhibition in Tokyo and Osaka in an effort to win support from Muslim groups abroad. They succeeded in courting Indonesian Muslims of the MIAI, which sent four representatives to Japan. (Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congress*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 155–156.)

<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Natsir was one of the most influential modernist Muslim leaders in Indonesia. He was born in Alahan Panjang, Kabupaten Solok, Minangkabau in West Sumatra on 17 July 1908. Born into an important Minangkabau family, he carried the title Datok Sinaro Panjang, but rarely used it. During his youth he joined the emerging Muslim modernist movement (*Kaum Muda*) and was at the forefront of numerous attacks on the traditionalist *ulama* in the East Indies. He was leader of *Jong Islamiten Bond* (JIB) in Bandung in 1928–32. From *continued p. 41*

also sponsored the creation of Islamist militias such as *Hizbullah* in their attempt to build up a local defence force to help them in the event of a Western counter-attack in Indonesia.<sup>59</sup> Like the PETA militia, *Hizbullah* troops were given training in the use of arms and furnished with weapons. At the end of the war, the Japanese left behind a number of organised Islamist bodies and militias that later took part in the anti-Dutch war of Indonesian independence of 1945.<sup>60</sup> Movements like *Masjumi*, *Nahdatul Ulama*

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1932-42, he was director of the modernist Muslim *Pendidikan Islam* (Pendis) Institute in Bandung. In 1940-42, he also sat in the *Dewan Kabupaten Bandung* (Bandung District Council). During this time, Natsir grew increasingly concerned about the plight of the Indonesian Muslim community and began to work with the nationalists who were struggling against Dutch colonial rule. After World War II he joined the government of the newly independent republic and served in the first Republican Central Political Committee (1945-46). The nationalists were keen to win his support, and in 1946-49 he served as Information Minister under Hatta and Syahrir. He was a leader of *Masjumi* (1949-58). Natsir worked both with and against Presidents Soekarno and Soeharto. From 1960-66 he was detained and his party (*Masjumi*) banned. In the 1960s and 1970s, Natsir's status and influence grew both at home and abroad. He attended the *Muktamar Alam Islami* (Muslim World Conference) in Karachi, Pakistan. He also represented the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Mecca and sat on the committee of the *Majlis A'la al-Alamy lil Masjidi* in Mecca. Later he was given the King Faisal award by the Saudi Arabian government for his services to Islam. In May 1980, he (and General Harun Nasution) took part in the signing of the 'Petition of 50' to complain about abuses of power by President Soeharto's government. As a result, he was banned from leaving the country. He remained active throughout his life and passed away in Jakarta in 1993.

<sup>59</sup> At its peak, the *Hizbullah* militia in the Japanese East Indies had 50,000 armed troops who were drilled and given rudimentary military training and weapons. Although much smaller than the *Keibodan* civil defence corps that had about 1,300,000 men, it was nonetheless a significant fighting force (Joyce C. Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*).

<sup>60</sup> For a comprehensive account of the role played by the various Islamist movements of Indonesia in the lead-up to the war of continued p. 42

and *Muhamadijiah* played a greater role in the independence struggle.

Notwithstanding the differences in the Japanese treatment of the Malaysians and Indonesians, the close links between the people of the archipelago could not be denied. Many Malaysian radical nationalists and Islamists had contact with the Indonesian Islamists and nationalist movements. For instance, Osman Abdullah (one of the first to join PAS in 1951) had studied at the Islamic University of Padang in Indonesia. During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, he joined the Japanese-sponsored *Hizbullah* militia and took part in the Indonesian war of independence against the Dutch.<sup>61</sup> Mohamad Dahari Mohamad Ali, another Malay radical who had helped to form KMM, served as a staff officer in the Sumatran Command of the Indonesian national army between 1946 and 1948.<sup>62</sup>

In Malaya, however, the lot of the Islamists was much poorer. The Japanese never tried to instil a martial spirit among the Islamists in Malaya. There was no attempt to create a Malaysian Islamist militia along the lines of the Indonesian *Hizbullah*, for example. The few efforts made were more ornamental and symbolic in nature. Islamist leaders like Dr. Burhanuddin also bemoaned the fact that Japan's entry into Malaya did not bring the country any closer to political unity. If anything, it did the opposite: in 1942, the Japanese handed over the four northern Malay

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independence and beyond, see Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun: Indonesian Islam under Japanese Occupation 1942-1945*, Leiden: Fouris, 1983 (orig. publ. 1958).

<sup>61</sup> By the end of the Indonesian war of independence, Osman Abdullah rose to the rank of captain. He was offered a place at Jogjakarta military college, but his family refused him permission to accept. Upon his return to Malaya, he joined UMNO, but in 1951 was among the faction who left to form their own religious movement. He left PAS in 1963 after a dispute with Asri Muda (head of PAS in Kelantan), and re-joined UMNO. He then served in the Ministry of Information and the Prime Minister's Department. He finally rose to the rank of Deputy Minister.

<sup>62</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. 9 n. 2.

states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah and Perlis to Siam, which was under the leadership of the ultra-nationalist Phibun Songkhram.

Only in December 1944 did the Japanese military authorities organise the Pan-Malayan Religious Council at Kuala Kangsar, Perak's royal capital, as part of their attempt to control the religious bureaucracy in the Malay states and to bring the traditional rulers and their religious establishments under Japanese patronage and influence. The move was badly timed as the fortunes of the Japanese were running low and they could only manage to court the interest of some sections of the traditional Malay élite. The Pan-Malayan Religious Council was a failure; it never managed to gain the support of the ordinary Malays or the more radically minded *ulama*, who instead turned their attention to the more ambitious project of creating a radical nationalist political movement.

On 13 August 1945, the Japanese occupation of Malaya and the East Indies finally came to an end. Lt. General Ishiguro was the first Japanese officer to lay down his sword at the feet of the new British C-in-C, Lt. General Sir Frank Messervy (formerly of the 14th Indian army). The Japanese occupation had affected the people of Southeast Asia variously, and the cost had been unevenly spread. In Indochina, the human cost of the Japanese occupation had been extremely high: over one million Indochinese were killed when the Japanese high command ordered the diversion of rice stocks to feed Japanese soldiers as the war was ending. In Malaya, as was the case across Southeast Asia, the ethnic Chinese were made to pay a higher price for Japan's foray into the region: thousands of Chinese civilians had been tortured, killed, imprisoned or forced to become sex slaves for the Japanese army. Other parts of the region, however, managed to reap some benefits from the Japanese episode.

After three years of Japanese occupation, the Indonesians were given the opportunity to develop armed forces and militia of their own that were more than ready to meet the returning Dutch. The Indonesian war of independence that followed was a relatively brief chronicle of adventures, bravado and lucky escapes. On 17 August 1945, nationalist leaders Soekarno and Muhammad

Hatta proclaimed the nation's independence. This was echoed on 2 September by Vietnam's declaration of independence by communist leader Ho Chi Minh who was equally determined to ensure that France would never again gain control of his country. In Burma, the Burmese militias — comprising nationalists, socialists, communists and Buddhist activists — were also preparing themselves for the inevitable fight with their ex-colonial masters. Their independence was won three years later, in 1948.

In Malaya, the hour of the Islamists had yet to arrive. The returning British colonial authorities were keen to re-establish control and influence over their colony by whatever means necessary, and their priority was to disarm the militia units of the communist MPAJA (which they themselves had helped to train and arm). Like the French in Indochina (who desperately tried to promote the enfeebled Emperor Bao Dai whose Nguyen dynasty they had previously disempowered), the British identified a number of Malay rulers and leaders they could rely upon to prop up the tattered remains of their colonial establishment. In September 1945, the British Military Administration (BMA) was set up in Malaya; it effectively ruled the country until the end of March 1946. Tagging along with the British was a detachment of security and intelligence personnel from the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which surveyed the political terrain in the region.<sup>63</sup> The American agents were based at the OCBC bank offices in Kuala Lumpur, close to the Chinatown district where they could observe the activities of the Chinese communist and leftist movements.<sup>64</sup> Though few in number, the American presence in Malaya was long-lasting. As shown in the Philippines, the Americans were keen to

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<sup>63</sup> Kumar Ramakrishna, 'The Making of a Malayan Propagandist', p. 73.

<sup>64</sup> Lim Cheng Leng (*The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, pp. 66–69) notes that among the American OSS agents were Brig. General R. C. Pape, Lieutenant J. W. Smith and Captain Post. The OSS agents attempted to lure members of the MCP-backed MPAJU; one MPAJU leader, Koon Swan, even tried to gain the support of the Americans in MCP's struggle against the British. None of the MCP's efforts was successful, and in the end it was the OSS (with the help of the Malayan intelligence expert C. C. Too) who won over the communist leaders (like Chan Tai Chee) to their side.

impress upon the people of Southeast Asia that they were the new power to be reckoned with.<sup>65</sup>

The British and Americans were keen to ensure that order was restored in Malaya as soon as possible, but their main concern was the potential threat of the communists rather than the Islamists. Despite an invitation to the MPAJA to send a contingent to the victory parade in London and the award of an OBE to the new MCP secretary-general Chin Peng by none other than King George himself, it was clear that in the wake of World War II both the

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<sup>65</sup> America's return to the Philippines was the first stage of a long, drawn-out campaign to impose their political will on Filipino society. The first obstacle they encountered was the Philippine Communist Party (PCP), which had been formed in the 1940s and had fought against the Japanese alongside the Hukbalahap (People's Army against Japan) formed in 1942. But the Americans, not happy with the PCP and the Huk rebels, made every effort to undermine their efforts to fight off the Japanese occupiers. At times, the US even allowed the Japanese to attack and harass the Huk rebels unmolested. US opposition to the PCP and Huk forces was based on ideological grounds. Both the PCP and Huks were left-leaning nationalists who included in their political agenda a land reform programme the Americans wanted to scuttle. In the post-war period, US forces helped to re-install traditional Filipino leaders and the feudal élite, who were used in the campaign to undermine the Huk forces (Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 40). By the end of 1945, the Americans were training a local force of 50,000 Filipino troops who were later used to contain the Huk uprising. When the Huk leaders attempted to reintegrate themselves into mainstream Filipino society their moves were blocked by the Americans and pro-American Filipino leaders. In 1945-47, the Philippine-US Trade Act and Philippine-US Military Agreement were passed. The latter provided the Americans with 23 military bases, on 99-year lease. The pact also ensured that the Philippines could not turn to any other country for military aid and training; the government was not allowed to buy even a single bullet from any other country without permission from Washington (Ibid., p. 41). In 1950, the US provided the Philippines with \$US500 million worth of military assistance. The Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) helped to reorganise the Philippine intelligence services, and appointed their man Ramon Magsaysay as its new head. Magsaysay was later elevated to the position of President of the Philippines, with the help of the US and its covert intelligence units in the Philippines.

Western and Eastern blocs were forced to settle their ideological differences in no uncertain terms. The stage was set for yet another confrontation.

During the closing stages of the war, the only Malay-Muslim groupings that came to the fore were a handful of loosely organised militias and Islamic-oriented millenarian-inclined *silat* (martial arts) cult groups called the *Sabilillah* movement, whose main interest was in protecting their communities and territory from the incursion of the Chinese communists of MPAJA. The warriors of the *Sabilillah* movement engaged in sporadic raids against Chinese settlements thought to be sympathetic to the communists and were responsible for many brutal revenge killings in retaliation for the atrocities committed by the communists against Malay villagers and officials. Most of the violence was centred around west Johor and in settlements along the Perak River. In Johor, many of the *Sabilillah* fighters were led by Kyai Che Muhammad Saleh Abdul Karim, the *penghulu* of Mukim Empat near Batu Pahat. Despite its militant tenor, the *Sabilillah* movement remained dispersed, poorly led and ill-disciplined; it never developed into an organised body and in time was disbanded by the British colonial authorities. Radical Malay nationalism only began with the formation of the *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya, PKMM).

### *The Radicals Re-converge: Formation of the Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*

The first radical Malay nationalist party, *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM), was formed two days after the end of Japanese rule, on 17 August 1945 (the same day that Indonesia declared its independence).

The PKMM's principal founders were a number of radical Malay nationalists, including Mokhtaruddin Lasso (formerly MCP), Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, Ibrahim Mohamad, Aishah Ghani, Shamsiah Fakeh and the radical Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir. The party also attracted Islamist activists such as Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif.

The PKMM's first president was Mokhtaruddin Lasso, who had links with Indonesian nationalist movements as well as the communists in Malaya.<sup>66</sup> Its second president was Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, an Aligarh-educated radical Islamist-nationalist who later became the third president of PAS. PKMM had its own militant youth wing, *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API) led by Ahmad Boestamam. Its women's wing, *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS) was first led by Aishah Ghani and later by Shamsiah Fakeh.<sup>67</sup> It also had a farmers/peasants' wing, *Barisan Tani Sa-Malaya* (BATAS). The party had its own journal, *Penyedar*, that dealt with social and political issues. One of the editors of *Penyedar* was Mohammad Asri Muda (who would later become the fourth president of PAS).

The PKMM quickly filled the vacuum created by the absence of the British colonial authorities and the weakness of the crumbling Japanese military establishment in 1945-46.<sup>68</sup> In November 1945, it

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<sup>66</sup> Mokhtaruddin Lasso is thought to have been born in Indonesia, and was said to have travelled to Moscow before World War II. His political career began when he joined the MCP. During the Japanese occupation he served with the communist resistance in MPAJA. After the war, he joined the PKMM and became its leader. He was said to be the vital link between the MPAJA and the PKMM. He was forced to leave Malaya in 1946 with a number of other Malay radical nationalists and he never returned. British authorities even suspected that he was actually two different people using the same name. After his departure, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy took over the leadership of the PKMM. By then the PKMM claimed to have a membership exceeding 60,000.

<sup>67</sup> Aishah Ghani was a journalist who wrote for the AWAS newspaper, *Pelita Melayu*. The aim of AWAS was 'to arouse in Malay women the consciousness of the equal rights that they share with men, to free them from the bonds of tradition and to "socialise" them' (Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, p. 55). Most AWAS members were Malay schoolteachers and government servants. Aishah joined UMNO in 1949, while Shamsiah Fakeh left to join the communists during the insurgency.

<sup>68</sup> For a historical summary of the achievements of the radical Malay nationalists during this period, see Burhanuddin al-Helmy, *Perjuangan Kita: 17 Ogos 1945 hingga 17 Ogos 1946*, Singapore: PKMM, 1946.

organised its first national congress, during which it adopted the slogan 'Merdeka' (Independence), the *Sang Saka Merah-Putih* (red and white) flag of the Indonesian nationalists and the song *Indonesia Raya* as its party anthem. The PKMM soon became the main political vehicle for both Malay secular and Islamist nationalists calling for immediate independence from British rule. Prominent Malay-Muslim leaders added their support to the PKMM during the initial stages; one of them, Kelantanese *ulama* Maulana Abdullah Noh, even went as far as declaring the PKMM's struggle against the British colonial authorities part of the compulsory *jihad* against '*penjajah kafir*' (infidel oppressors).<sup>69</sup> Many radical nationalists who joined PKMM were also inspired by the revolutionary nationalism of Soekarno and the Indonesians. They called for closer ties with Indonesia while dreaming of the creation of a pan-Malay political alliance that would unite Malaya, Indonesia and the other Malay-dominated regions of the archipelago under the heading of *Malaya-Raya* (Greater Malaya).

The British colonial authorities were wary of the PKMM from the start. Many among the British High Command in Malaya feared that the organisation would later merge with, or serve as a front for, Indonesian nationalists and communists opposed to British interests in the region. Other officials were worried about the possibility of the PKMM working with Islamist radicals and militants. The British HQ Malaya Command report of 1946 (entitled 'Communal Violence and Political Militancy in Malaya') observed that by 1946 Malacca had become the base for an anti-British 'holy war' movement whose members came from both local Malay-Muslim *silat* associations and

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<sup>69</sup> Maulana Abdullah Noh was a strong supporter of the PKMM in its early stages, partly because the Islamists did not have a political organisation of their own. He wrote a tract entitled *Semangat Perajurit-Perajurit Muslimin* (The Spirit of Muslim Warriors) in which he called on the Malays to forcefully resist the colonial government (*PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, Selangor: Panel Pengkaji Sejarah, Pusat Penyelidikan PAS, Angkatan Edaran, 1999, p. 4).

Ahmad Boestamam's API movement that was part of the PKMM.<sup>70</sup>

Unknown to the radical nationalists, the British colonial authorities had already decided on the fate of Malaya when the House of Commons discussed the matter on 10 October 1945. By 22 January 1946, the white paper entitled 'The Malayan Union and Singapore' was ready and the British were prepared to turn the country into a full-fledged colony again. Sir Harold MacMichael was sent from London to secure the support of the Malay rulers. Prior to his secret meetings with the Sultans, MacMichael ordered an investigation into the activities of each of the rulers during the Japanese occupation. Since most rulers had, to some extent or other, collaborated with the Japanese, MacMichael found it easy to apply pressure on them to secure their consent and co-operation for the Malayan Union proposal.

When news of the Malayan Union proposal was made public, the Malay organisations were enraged. The Union proposal was seen as a blatant attempt to deny the Malays the right of self-determination and reduce the country to the status of a colony. Many Malay organisations were keen to form a pan-Malayan Malay movement to halt the Malayan Union project. In response to the rise and dominance of PKMM, a number of conservative-traditionalist nationalist movements began to emerge. Many of these were smaller entities than PKMM and more conservative in outlook.

The first Malay Congress was held at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in Kuala Lumpur on 1-4 March 1946. The congress, opened by the Sultan of Selangor, was attended by 152 delegates from 41 Malay political organisations and societies from all sides of the political spectrum. PKMM was also invited to take part. The congress discussed the plan to form *Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu* (PEKEMBAR), but opted for the title UMNO (United Malays

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<sup>70</sup> A. J. Stockwell, *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya*, Series B. Vol. 3, London: Institute for Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1995, p. 245. Malaya Command Report 'Communal Violence and Political Militancy in Malaya', CO 537/1581. 22 June 1946. HQ Malaya High Command Intelligence Review no. 31.

Nationalist Organisation) instead. A Second Malay Congress, held on 11–12 May 1946 in Johor, was attended by 36 Malay organisations.

On 11 May 1946, UMNO was officially launched at the Istana Besar in Johor Bahru. The first President was the Johorean aristocrat Dato' Onn Jaafar.<sup>71</sup> The party executive committee included a number of prominent Malay aristocrats and nobles, including Dato' Nik Ahmad Kamil of Kelantan, Dato' Yassin Abdul Rahman of Johor, the Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang of Perak, Dato' Haji Mohammad Noah, Syed Alwi Alhadi and other prominent feudal lords from Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang and Kedah. With so many feudal lords and aristocrats among its leaders, UMNO quickly developed a reputation as a conservative-traditionalist organisation that was feudalistic in character.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Dato' Onn Jaafar's father and grandfather had both served as Chief Ministers in the sultanate. Onn had been educated at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar and received British colonial education. He later served in the colonial bureaucracy and also took up writing. In 1946, he wrote the appeal in the Malay press that led to the first Malay Congress and the creation of UMNO. For many of his detractors, Onn Jaafar seemed to typify the Europeanised, Anglophile Malay aristocratic ruler whom the British were keen to promote. In 1950, Dato' Onn left UMNO after a dispute over the question of membership for non-Malays, a proposal he personally supported. He later formed the Independence for Malaya Party (IMP), a broad-based multi-ethnic liberal-democratic party which had support from the British colonial authorities, who hoped to project Onn as the future leader of the country and whose liberal ideas and beliefs they were comfortable with. In time, the IMP suffered from the impression that it was a British-backed political movement. Dato' Onn's own Anglophile character did not help: it made him look like a pawn of the British colonial authorities. After the failure of the IMP at the 1951–52 election, Onn formed the *Parti Negara* (National Party) and he changed his position, adopting a more chauvinist pro-Malay rhetoric that isolated him even further from his non-Malay supporters.

<sup>72</sup> From the very beginning, UMNO was characterised by a strong neo-feudal element which coloured its internal politics and management. Within the party, the cardinal values of loyalty and obedience to the party leaders were cultivated by its leaders. Chandra has noted that 'In analysing the UMNO leadership's relationship to unquestioning  
*continued p. 51*

It soon became obvious that the instrumental alliance between the radical nationalists and traditional-conservatives could not be maintained indefinitely, because as long as UMNO was under the dominance of the charismatic and influential Dato' Onn, the more radical agenda of the PKMM would be sidelined. PKMM leaders began to view their own presence within UMNO as questionable, and rejected UMNO's conciliatory gestures towards the British colonial authorities. Ideological as well as personal differences between the leaders of the PKMM and UMNO led to the rupture between the two movements. During the second UMNO general assembly (29-30 June 1946), at Ipoh, the left-wing Malay nationalists of PKMM left UMNO, after a heated dispute over the colours of UMNO's flag.<sup>73</sup>

Freed from the constraints of UMNO, the PKMM leaders could resume their radical political activities. PKMM leaders like Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam and Ustaz Abu Bakar began to mobilise support from both the leftist as well as Islamist nationalists in their effort to create a leftist-Islamist front to counter the

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loyalty, we must bear in mind that its entire philosophy revolves around the idea of a protector — the UMNO leadership itself — and a protected — the Malay community. It is no mere coincidence that even the UMNO constitution talks about protection. ...

The political dimension of protection and unquestioning loyalty has 3 major elements in it: — (a) the way in which unquestioning loyalty and communal solidarity are demanded as a price for protecting the community from what are perceived as threats to its political position (b) the manner in which criticisms from within UMNO are curbed and controlled ... and (c) the way in which unquestioning, and therefore loyal supporters are protected and rewarded.' Because of the undue emphasis placed on the neo-feudal forms and protocols within the party, many of the party's critics have argued that the ideological orientation of UMNO is unclear. Generally the party is regarded as being right-of-centre and with a strong traditionalist-conservative outlook. (Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector? An analysis of the concept and practice of loyalty in leader-led relationships within Malay society*, Penang: Aliran, 1979, pp. 78-79.)

<sup>73</sup> The UMNO flag was finally raised during the third UMNO assembly in Penang on 27-28 July 1946.

growing influence of the conservative-traditionalist leaders of UMNO.

During this time, however, UMNO leaders were quick to mobilise Malay support behind them. Adopting the slogan *Hidup Melayu* (Long Live the Malays), they began to project themselves as the most able and committed defenders of Malay interests in the country. However, the conservative UMNO leaders were also keen to ensure that they would not completely alienate themselves from the British. From 1946 to 1948, UMNO worked closely with the departing British authorities to guarantee that it would be in a key position to assume power as soon as independence was granted. On 29 June 1946, UMNO's leaders presented their own alternative proposals to the British and by 25 July 1946 the British had set up a working committee, which included both the Sultans and representatives of UMNO, to discuss new arrangements for the country's future.

Undeterred by the rise of UMNO, the radical Malay nationalists turned their attention to the other ethnic communities in the country in an attempt to forge instrumental coalitions with other movements and parties fighting for an independent Malaya. For the Malay radicals, working with the non-Malays at first proved to be easier than working with the Malay feudal and conservative élite. Boestamam has noted that 'as far as the non-Malay bodies at that time were concerned, there was not one of "rightist" complexion, all were entirely "leftist"'.<sup>74</sup>

The non-Malay (and non-Muslim) parties came together on 14 December 1946 to form the Council for Joint Action which was then expanded and became known as the Pan-Malayan Council for Joint Action (PMCJA) under the leadership of Tan Cheng Lock on 22 December 1946. In August 1947, the PMCJA was expanded and became known as the All-Malayan Council for Joint Action (AMCJA). The radical Malay nationalists wanted to work with and within the framework of the AMCJA, but found that they could not agree with a number of key issues such as the demand for citizenship to be granted to non-Malays and unrestricted franchise to

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<sup>74</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. 97.

be given to all Malayan citizens. The Malay radicals, therefore, decided to form their own coalition, which brought together all the radical and progressive Malay nationalist parties and movements in the country. On 22 February 1947, the PKMM organised a conference at its head office in Kuala Lumpur and invited all the other radical Malay organisations to attend, including the *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* (API), *Angkatan Wanita Sedar* (AWAS), *Barisan Tani* (BATAS) and *Gerakan Angkatan Muda* (GERAM). At this meeting it was decided that a coalition of radical and leftist Malay organisations be formed, bearing the name *Pusat Tenaga Rakyat* (People's Movement Centre, PUTERA).<sup>75</sup> Once again, the link with the radical nationalists of Indonesia was clear: 'PUTERA' was also the name of the coalition of radical nationalist and Islamist organisations formed by Soekarno in Indonesia in March 1943, which brought together leaders like Soekarno, Hatta, Hadjar Dewantoro (of the *Taman Siswa* movement) and Kyai Haji Mas Mansur (of *Muhamadijah*).

Soon the PUTERA-AMCJA alliance was formed. The Malay and non-Malay leftist movements began to issue their own demands to the British colonial authorities, challenging the position taken by UMNO. On 27 October, they organised the first nation-wide hartal that brought the country to a standstill.

None of these efforts, however, brought the Islamists any closer to their own ambition of fighting for an independent Malaya along Islamist lines. While the radical Malay nationalists were working with the non-Malay leftists, and the Malay conservatives of UMNO were negotiating with the British colonial authorities, the Islamists in the Malay opposition felt increasingly marginalised and isolated. Dr. Burhanuddin, then of PKMM, shared these concerns and felt there was a need to form a Muslim organisation to bring together the Islamist activists in the country.<sup>76</sup> This led to the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 101 n. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin was later removed from the post of president of the PKMM during its congress meeting in December 1947, which took place at the *istana* (palace) of Kampung Gelam, Singapore. He was 'elevated' to the status of the chief adviser instead.

initial moves to form the country's first Islamic party, the *Hizbul Muslimin*.

**'Awat, Bahaya dari Gunung': The Formation of the Parti Orang Muslimin Malaya (Hizbul Muslimin)**

In March 1947, the PKMM, under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, sponsored the first Pan-Malayan Islamic conference at Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif at Gunung Semanggul, Kedah.<sup>77</sup> The *madrasah* was run by Ustaz

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<sup>77</sup> The Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif was set up on 15 April 1934. It was built on the foundations of another religious educational establishment, the Sekolah Pondok al-Rahmaniah, founded by Ustaz Haji Abdul Rahman bin Mahmud, who had studied in Mecca as well as al-Azhar University, Cairo. By 1930, the teachers of Sekolah al-Rahmaniah felt that it was time to expand its services and facilities. They were readers of reformist magazines and journals like *Seruan Azhar*, *Pilihan Timur* and *al-Ikhtwan* published by reformist thinkers like Syed Sheikh al-Hadi in Penang. They decided to turn their school into a modern *madrasah*. Discipline was strict. Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir, the first principal, insisted that all students wear white uniforms and the black felt *songkok* (not the *kepiah* (white skull cap) associated with traditional *pondok* schools), shave their heads and work six days a week. The school taught a combination of religious and worldly subjects, including art, music, world literature as well as Indian, Chinese and European culture and civilisation. The *madrasah* was one of the few religious educational establishments with a special section for female students. (There were not as many girls as boys; by the late 1930s, the yearly intake of female students was around 30 a year.) Many students became radicals who joined *Sahabat Pena* as well as other Malay associations in the 1930s. On 1 Jan 1940, the *madrasah* formed a company of its own, the Persatuan al-Ihya as-Sharif Berhad, with 1,786 members. Within a year the company's membership rose to 3,258. In the 1940s, the school became the focal point of many Malay-Muslim political activities and served as the base for the country's first Islamic party, *Hizbul Muslimin*. (Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif Gunung Semanggul, 1934-1959*, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Press, 1976.)

Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir,<sup>78</sup> one of the PKMM's founders. The conference set out to address the economic problems faced by the Malay-Muslims. It was meant to bring together the more politically active and progressive Islamic movements and thinkers in the country. As a result of this conference, the *Majlis Agama Tertinggi* (Supreme Religious Council, MATA) of Malaya was created.

MATA began organising political events and meetings for Malay-Muslim activists and nationalists to meet and discuss their plans for the future and the need to mobilise the people. The radical nationalists recognised the growing need to create a radical Islamist party or movement to ensure the Malay religious leaders would not be won over by UMNO.

The MATA conference on 13-16 March 1948 discussed both local and international issues of great concern to the Malays. This reflected the internationalism and cosmopolitan outlook of some of its leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Ustaz Abu Bakar. One major concern was the need to protect the rights of the Malay-Muslims who were increasingly being marginalised in their own country. Among the international issues raised were

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<sup>78</sup> Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir was born in 1907 in Gunung Semanggul, Kedah. His family originated from Kendal, Central Java. His grandfather, *ulama* Haji Jabar Abdul Rauf, came to Malaya in the mid-19th century and settled in Kedah. Abu Bakar's family were all prominent *ulama* and he studied at Sekolah Pondok al-Rahmaniah (see n.77 above) and at Madrasah Dairatul Ma'arit Wataniah at Kepala Batas. In 1934, he became the first principal of Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif at Gunung Semanggul, which he helped to found. He also became a key player in the Malayan political scene. He was one of the founders of PKMM, in 1945. In 1946-47 he took part in numerous PKMM-sponsored activities targeted at the Malay-Muslims and in 1948 helped to form the country's first Islamic party, *Hizbul Muslimin* and became its first president. In the same year, the British colonial authorities arrested Ustaz Abu Bakar and the other leaders and banned the party. After his release from detention, Ustaz Abu Bakar returned to politics. In the 1955 election, he was a candidate for the *Perikatan Melayu Perak*. He stood as an Islamist and his campaign symbol was a mosque; he lost the election and forfeited his deposit.

Indonesia's ongoing war of independence against the Dutch, Siamese control and dominance over Patani, and the Palestinian crisis.<sup>79</sup> The conference participants also referred to the independence struggles of other Asian countries that had led to the independence of India and Pakistan (14 August 1947), Burma (4 January 1948), Ceylon (4 February 1948) and the withdrawal of British forces from Palestine. The question raised was why was Malaya still under British colonial rule when all the other countries had been given their freedom?

The conference participants felt that UMNO was not doing enough to raise these issues in public and that the conservative-nationalists were not able or willing to stand up for Malay-Muslim rights. Needless to say, the UMNO representatives at the MATA meeting were not happy with the tone of discussion set by the Islamists, which was too revolutionary and militant for their taste. The UMNO delegates reported their findings and observations to the party leaders. In due course, UMNO leader Dato' Onn Jaafar began to issue dire warnings about the 'threat from the mountain' (an oblique reference to Gunung Semanggul) and linked the Islamists to the 'threat from the jungle' — a clear reference to the communist insurgents who were fighting in the interior.<sup>80</sup>

The *Parti Orang Muslimin Malaya (Hizbul Muslimin)* was formed on 17 March 1948, after the second Pan-Malayan Islamic conference declared that MATA should be reorganised as an Islamic political party. Its founders included Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir (principal of Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif), Ustaz Abdul Rab, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy (leader of the PKMM) and Kyai Masyhur Azahari of the Indonesian Masjumi movement. Other Malay radicals and leftist-nationalists such as Mohammad Asri Muda, *Hizbul Muslimin's* first secretary, also played a crucial role in its formation and activities. The party's flag was the red and white *Sang Saka Merah-Putih*, also adopted by the radicals of PKMM.

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<sup>79</sup> Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif Gunung Semanggul*, pp. 143–144.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123. Dato' Onn's phrase was '*awas bahaya dari gunung*' (beware of the danger from the mountain). This he linked to the '*bahaya dari hutari*' (danger from the jungles) in many of his speeches.

*Hizbul Muslimin's* first president was Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir; vice-president Ustaz Haji Arrifin Haji Awang and deputy president Ustaz Daud Kamil. The registration fee was 50 sen and yearly membership fee was \$2.<sup>81</sup> With the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin*, all political activities were transferred to the organisation. MATA served as the party's religious affairs bureau. The party had eight bureaus to look after religious, educational, political, economic, social, youth, women's affairs and information. The party's objective was the struggle to create an independent Malaya founded upon Islamic principles and laws, but it also adopted the broad-based nationalist political outlook of PKMM. Its founders realised that the emergence of their party on the Malayan political scene was both problematic and controversial, and that the country's first Islamist party was born at a time when the fortune of Islamist movements elsewhere was hanging in the balance.<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned above, prior to the formation of *Hizbul Muslimin*, the Islamists had raised their concern about the plight of Muslims in Malaya and the rest of the Islamic world at the MATA conference on 13-16 March 1948. The delegates discussed issues related to Muslim concerns abroad, including the Palestinian issue and the plight of Patani under Siamese rule. *Hizbul* members voted to send telegrams of support to the leaders of the Arab Palestinian movement, a letter of protest to the United Nations and to press the Malay rulers to take a stand on the issue of Palestinian rights. On the question of Patani, *Hizbul* members decided to openly show their support for the Malay-Muslims there and voted to send an appeal to the United Nations on their behalf.<sup>83</sup> *Hizbul* members

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>82</sup> The formation of *Hizbul Muslimin* came at a time when the Muslim world in general was in a state of limbo. In the same year in Pakistan, General Muhammad Ayub Khan had forced Liaquat Ali Khan to clamp down on the Islamist parties. *Jama'at-e Islami's* publications were banned and its leader Ab'ul Al'aa Maudoodi was arrested. In the Middle East, Israel had come into being as a sovereign state. Its Arab neighbours immediately declared war on it, but their armed forces were defeated, forcing many Islamist movements onto the defensive.

<sup>83</sup> Nabir Haji Abdullah, *Ma'ahad al-Ehya al-Sharif Gunung Semanggul*, p. 172.

were appalled by the aggressive assimilationist policy of the Siamese government and the arrest of a number of prominent Patani Muslim leaders such as Haji Sulong Abd al-Kadir. (Haji Sulong was murdered in 1954.)

However, the first Islamist party in Malaya was not destined to last long. While the radical nationalists grew more vocal in their calls for independence, the colonial authorities were busy trying to re-establish their power in Malaya and were in no mood to make a second graceless exit. Apart from their worries about the MCP, the British authorities were also wary of the *Hizbul Muslimin*, fearing that its links with the left-wing Malay nationalists and the Islamic movements of Indonesia might make it a powerful force in Malay political circles. In a report entitled 'Effect of Action by Government in Malaya to Counteract Malayan Communist Party Plans' issued in August 1948, the Malayan Security Service claimed that the MCP had 'made a further approach to the Malays under the religious cloak of the Supreme Islamic Council and later the pseudo-political party *Hasbul Muslimin* (sic)'.<sup>84</sup>

The fears of the British colonial authorities were understandable. In the same year that *Hizbul* was formed, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) led by its Stalinist leader Chairman Lasso had launched an open rebellion against the government of the newly independent Indonesian Republic which led to the Madiun conflict of 1948. This rebellion served to remind the British that communism was an active force in the region and that communist forces were more than capable of organising violent resistance against the state if and when the opportunity arose.

As fears of a communist take-over grew among the colonial authorities, practically every radical political grouping in the country was seen as a potential Trojan horse that would open the way for a Soviet-inspired revolution. The MCP was regarded as the prime suspect in the battle of nerves against the Communist International (representatives of the MCP had been sent to the first

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<sup>84</sup> A. J. Stockwell, *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya*, p. 55. Malayan Security Service Political Intelligence Journal no. 15/48. 15 August 1948. CO 537/3753. No. 35. 15 August 1948.

Communist and Workers Parties conference held in London in January 1948),<sup>85</sup> but *Hizbul Muslimin's* leaders and members were also put under surveillance by the British secret service and their activities constantly monitored. The Malayan Security Service (MSS) report of 1948 pointed out that:

The development of this movement should be very closely watched, for it preaches nationalism as the religious duty of all the believers, and Islam has always been a militant creed. There can be no doubt that its propaganda is made to appeal to the young Malay intellectuals and progressives, since it strives to give scriptural authority to their efforts to modernise their society and their economy, and to their undoubted aspirations towards national independence.<sup>86</sup>

The report also noted that one reason why *Hizbul Muslimin* had developed so fast was the weakness within UMNO itself:

In the present relatively lethargic state of UMNO, it (*Hizbul Muslimin*) may well draw away many of the younger and more progressive minds. Its promoters have had a bad political record, and it may well be that in the current crisis any extension of its activities will force the government to consider the question of outlawing the party. ... Whether *Hizbul Muslimin* moves to the right or the left in step with its true parent the *Masjoemi (Masjumi)*, it remains a menace to the British authorities.<sup>87</sup>

Matters finally came to a head in June 1948 when the British authorities declared a state of National Emergency (which lasted until 1960)<sup>88</sup> that was sparked off with the opening moves of

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<sup>85</sup> Two senior MCP leaders — Wu Tien Wang and Abdul Rashid Mydin — attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the MCP and workers' movements in Malaya.

<sup>86</sup> Malayan Security Service (MSS) Political Intelligence Journal, January–August 1948. Public Records Office, London. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> The National Emergency lasted from 19 June 1948 until 31 August 1960. With the declaration of Emergency, the Malay radical groupings were effectively wiped out. *Hizbul Muslimin's* leaders were rounded up for questioning and detained. API, the radical youth wing of the PKMM, was the first political movement to be banned (in *continued p. 60*)

'Operation Frustration'. The main target of the nation-wide security sweep was the leadership of the MCP, and in the years that followed the MCP bore the brunt of the attacks by the Security Forces (SF) of the state. (The MCP suffered from its own intra-party conflicts that brought the party under the grip of its leader Chin Peng, but at the cost of even more defections and liquidations in its ranks.)<sup>89</sup>

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1947, before the Emergency), and its leader Ahmad Boestamam was arrested in 1948 under the Emergency regulations. The MCP was also banned in 1948, and its members went into hiding in the rural interior to carry out guerrilla warfare. The PKMM was not banned, but with the arrest of many of its members and the increasingly restrictive measures imposed by the Emergency regulations, it ceased to function effectively. It finally transferred itself to Indonesia in 1950, after it was proscribed in Malaya. In his memoirs, Ahmad Boestamam notes: 'With no more left-wing bodies to struggle constitutionally in the country after the declaration of Emergency, a vacuum naturally resulted in the Malayan political arena. This vacuum was quickly filled by UMNO, the one organisation that remained legal at that time, enabling it to achieve great power such as it holds today' (Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. 144).

<sup>89</sup> The underground nature of the MCP (even after its formal recognition in 1945) made it susceptible to internal conflicts and power struggles. One of the first internal party purges took place on 1 September 1942 when senior MCP leader Loi Tek called a meeting of MCP leaders and activists in a squatter hut near Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur. The meeting was ambushed by Japanese troops, and nearly 40 senior MCP leaders were killed or captured by the Japanese. (Loi Tek did not attend the meeting.) In March 1947, Chin Peng and his followers accused Loi Tek of having been a Japanese spy during the war and launched their own internal party *coup* against him. Loi Tek was unconstitutionally deposed (and later mysteriously disappeared) and Chin Peng took over in 1947 (although news of the takeover only filtered down to the militia units by 1948). The MCP leadership was split due to numerous rivalries between the leaders, which led to intra-party killings (such as the beheading of Ah Kuk, head of the MCPSMB, by his own bodyguards). These factional disputes had a negative effect on the morale and performance of the MCP's fighting force, and contributed to the defections from its ranks during the two Emergencies of 1948–60 and 1968–78.

The colonial authorities also moved decisively against *Hizbul Muslimin*. At the outset of the National Emergency, the colonial authorities arrested and detained the party's president Ustaz Abu Bakar and six other leaders: Ustaz Ar-Rab Tamimi (head of *Hizbul* propaganda), Ustaz Abdul Rauf Nur (*khatib* of Masjid Semanggul), Ustaz Abdul Wahab Nur, Mohamad Abas, Mohamad Nor Haji Mokhtar and Abdullah Hakim. The last four were all based at Masjid Tinggi. These arrests badly affected the educational and political activities at Madrasah Ma'ahad. Nearly half the students left as there were no longer enough teachers.

At the same time, the British banned PKMM and API, its militant youth wing. Many prominent radical leaders such as Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam and Khatijah Sidek were detained along with the Islamists. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy was one of the few who managed to evade detention. More than 12,000 activists and militants from the communist, socialist and Islamist camps were detained by the colonial authorities at the outset of the Emergency. The situation in Malaya grew increasingly complex and desperate because of a number of unexpected events. On 4 July 1948, the High Commissioner Sir Edward Gent died in a plane crash. (He was later replaced by Sir Henry Lovell Goldsworthy Gurney.) By 1949, only seven branches of PKMM were still active.<sup>90</sup>

### *Demise and Revival: The Formation of the Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya (PAS) during the Emergency of 1948-1960*

In the wake of World War II, the Western powers were keen to ensure that their colonies in the East would not fall into the hands of the communist bloc. The ambitious American-sponsored Marshall Plan was introduced to help the European countries rebuild in the wake of the war, though it was not without its

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<sup>90</sup> The branches were in Penang, Province Wellesley, Perlis, Perak, Malacca and Johor. (Files of Registrar of Societies, 284/49. Quoted in Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, p. 62 n. 42.)

critics. At least one American Senator — Republican George Malone of Nevada — spoke out against the implementation of the programme, and how it was effectively being used by the British, French and Dutch governments to help prop up their tottering colonies in other parts of the world.<sup>91</sup> Despite such criticisms, the post-war policy of the British Colonial Office remained consistent: Britain sought to use whatever means necessary to ensure that its ex-colonies did not come under the influence of the communists.

From 1948, the colonial government in Malaya was effectively put on a war footing. The MCP had by then declared open war against the British colonial government and in the previous year the MPAJA was renamed the Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA), and then the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). The MPAJU supply and logistics network had also been reactivated by the MCP leadership under the new name *Min Yuen*.

To counter the spread of the MCP, Lieutenant-General Harold Briggs, Commander of the British forces and Director of Operations in Malaya, drew up the infamous 'Briggs Plan' which was designed to take the war to the communists in the jungle. The Malaysian countryside was effectively divided into districts and quadrants policed and monitored by state security forces sent on notorious 'search and destroy' missions. Apart from forceful detention, relocation and deportation of those thought to be communist sympathisers,<sup>92</sup> the colonial forces were also responsible for

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<sup>91</sup> Senator George Malone condemned the Marshall Plan on the grounds that it was no better than a 'repulsive slavery system' being used to keep together the ailing British, French and Dutch colonies in Africa and Asia. He noted that if he was a colonial subject in any of those colonies, he would have preferred to choose communism instead of colonial bondage. In his address to the Senate, Senator Malone argued that the people of Indo-China and the rest of Asia could not be won over to a love of capitalism as long as it was identified with the repressive colonial order that introduced it (*Herald Tribune*, 13 January 1951).

<sup>92</sup> The deportation of suspected members and sympathisers of the MCP began in earnest in 1950. The colonial authorities worked within the scope of the Emergency Regulations (clause 17C), and in 1950 alone 3,773 people were deported — 3,324 to China and 73 to India. The rest were sent to various other places.

a number of atrocities committed in the heat of the fighting. (One of the most infamous incidents was the massacre of Chinese villagers in the hamlet at Batang Kali in December 1948. During the attack, members of the British Scots Guards killed 25 Chinese villagers and later claimed that it was the highest number of MCP suspects eliminated in a single encounter.)

Despite the setbacks brought about by the overzealousness of some members of the SF, the campaign against the opposition (both communist and Islamist) was set to intensify even further. In March 1951, the British set up the Emergency Information Services (EIS)<sup>93</sup> headed by Hugh Carleton Greene (brother of the novelist Graham Greene) and the Malayan propagandist C. C. Too<sup>94</sup> as part

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<sup>93</sup> The main aim of EIS, initially based at Bluff Road, Kuala Lumpur, was to provide anti-communist propaganda for distribution by the radio and mainstream media services in the country. The colonial authorities felt that the Malayan Radio and Film Unit was not doing enough to contain the spread of MCP activities and influence among the public, and that there was a need for a more subtle approach, using psychological warfare. Greene laid down the basic rules of psychological warfare and propaganda in Malaya, which were then learnt and practised by his disciple and co-worker, C. C. Too: Greene argued that for the anti-communist propaganda to be effective it needed to be factual, relevant and not provocative. Rather than attack the communists outright, Greene preferred to win them over with promises of safe conduct and fair treatment. Ramakrishna notes that: 'The EIS had three objectives: to raise public confidence in the government and increase the flow of information from the public to the Police; to 'attack the morale' of members of the MRLA and *Min Yuen*; and 'drive a wedge between the leaders and the rank and file' so as to encourage 'defection.' (Kumar Ramakrishna, 'The Making of a Malayan Propagandist', pp. 76-77.)

<sup>94</sup> Too Chee Chew (better known as C. C. Too) was born on 31 March 1920 in Kuala Lumpur. His family were originally from Hainan province, south China and his father, Too Choo Sun, was a staunch supporter of the nationalist movement back in the mainland. Too's grandfather, Too Nam, was a close associate of the Chinese nationalist leader Dr. Sun Yat Sen. During his early childhood, Too was sent to Chinese vernacular schools in Kuala Lumpur, but later studied at Victoria Institution (VI), and in Singapore at Raffles College. Too was *continued p. 64*

of the effort to break the morale of the MCP. The communists responded by adopting new tactics. Early in 1951, they announced a new 'peace offensive' to win the support of the masses, but this came to naught when on 6 October 1951 the British High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney was killed by communist guerrillas in an ambush that surprised even the communists themselves.

The nation-wide crackdown on both the radical leftists and Islamist parties after the killing of Gurney came as a welcome surprise for conservative UMNO leaders like Dato' Onn who regarded the *Hizbul Muslimin* as a 'red Islamist party' working in league with radical socialist and communist elements.<sup>95</sup> By then both the Malay conservatives and the British colonial establishment were worried about the spread of communism across the archipelago, and the latest developments in Vietnam and Indonesia did little to allay

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an exceptionally gifted student and he was attracted to the activities of the predominantly Chinese communist movement in Malaya. Ramakrishna (*Ibid.*, p. 73) claims that Too was secretly involved in the activities of the MPAJU during the early 1940s and that he even met MCP leader Chin Peng. But by the end of World War II Too was no longer persuaded by the communist's ideological struggle and worked as the secretary of the Nationalist Chinese Consulate in Kuala Lumpur in 1946 (Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 74). Too then decided to work with the British colonial authorities. He joined the EIS in February 1951, and was given the task of producing anti-communist propaganda for the British colonial authorities. When General Templer set up the Psychological Warfare Interrogation Centre (PWIC) in March 1953, Too transferred his activities there. When Malaya gained its independence in 1957, Too was bestowed the Johan Mangku Negara (Defender of the Realm) award by Tunku Abdul Rahman. Too was then given the task of heading the Psychological Warfare Section of the government of the Malayan Federation — a post he held for 27 years until he finally retired in January 1983. A difficult character to work with, C. C. Too was known for some of his more peculiar features: Lim (*Ibid.*, pp. 89–90) notes that Too was also credited with having psychic powers and that he performed exorcism ceremonies from time to time — something that may have come in handy in the murky world of espionage and psychological warfare.

<sup>95</sup> *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 5.

their fears. As a result of the declaration of Emergency, normal political activities could no longer be carried out as freely as before. This gave the UMNO conservatives the opportunity to dominate the local political terrain that was now void of radical elements.

The other unintended beneficiary of the crisis was the conservative leaders of the Chinese community who played on the insecurities of their community. Until then the Chinese community had been concentrated mainly in the west coast coastal settlements. From the 1930s the Chinese in Malaya had found themselves in an increasingly difficult position. In 1933, the British colonial authorities imposed tighter immigration controls on Chinese labour from abroad in an effort to ensure that the Malays would not be reduced to a minority in their own country. The lot of the Chinese community became worse in the wake of the war when large numbers of Chinese joined the MCP and left for the jungle to carry out a guerilla war against the British armed forces. As a result, the Chinese found themselves doubly stigmatised: first, as unwelcome immigrants and second, as an internal security threat.

Partly as an effort to save the Chinese from mass deportation, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) was formed on 27 February 1949 under the leadership of Tan Cheng Lock (later Tun Sir Tan Cheng Lock).<sup>96</sup> The MCA agreed to work with both the British and Malay conservative élite to help resolve the problems facing the country. The British agreed to work with the MCA in an effort to restore racial harmony and to create a conservative Chinese political party as an alternative to the MCP. Later, leaders of the conservative Malay and Chinese parties (UMNO and MCA) came

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<sup>96</sup> Its first secretary was Yong Shook Lin, while Khoo Teck Ee served as treasurer. Other committee members included H. S. Lee as youth and women's committee chairman, Tan Siew Sin as publicity committee chairman and Leong Chong Leng as social welfare committee chairman. From 1950, the MCA operated a lottery to earn money to finance itself as well as its welfare policies directed towards the Chinese peasants who had been forcibly resettled. The party also submitted a memorandum to the British colonial authorities to express the desire of the Chinese to be made citizens of Malaya and not left out of the negotiations for independence.

together to form an instrumental coalition of their own, the UMNO-MCA Alliance.

While UMNO was allowed to take command of the field, some radical Malay leftists and Islamists who had managed to slip out of the net cast by the British authorities eventually left the PKMM and *Hizbul Muslimin* and joined UMNO in the hope of continuing their struggle there. UMNO was then led by the aristocratic Western-educated leader Dato' Onn Jaafar and the movement was a broad, loose coalition of centre-right Malay-Muslim organisations. The leadership was suffering from a crisis of credibility because of their compromising stand towards the British colonial authorities. In an attempt to boost his own image and standing as a nationalist leader, Dato' Onn accepted calls from the UMNO youth wing to change the organisation's slogan from '*Hidup Melayu*' (Long Live the Malays) to '*Merdeka*' (Independence). Despite such superficial changes to UMNO's image, it was widely perceived as the '*boneka British*' (puppet of the British) and a defender of traditional Malay feudal power and interests.

Knowing it was facing a crisis of credibility and popularity, UMNO was keen to promote itself as a defender of Islam and Muslim concerns as well as Malay rights. To that end it sponsored the first meeting of *ulama* (*Perjumpaan Alim Ulama Tanah Melayu*) on 20–22 February 1950 at Bandar Maharani Muar, Johor. The purpose of the congress was to bring together Malay *ulama* from all over the country to discuss matters related to Muslim affairs, for the attention of the UMNO leadership. Many who attended saw the move as a blatant attempt to win over the *ulama* leadership of the Malay community. As Haji Baharuddin Abdul Latif wrote:

*Faktor yang mempengaruhi suasana penubuhan PAS sebelum ia ditubuhkan ialah: Keinginan pucuk pimpinan UMNO untuk mendapat sokongan yang lebih berkesan dari orang-orang Melayu di kampung-kampung atau luar bandar melalui alim-ulama dalam melaksanakan tindakan-tindakan politik mereka, kerana alim-ulama mempunyai pengaruh yang besar dikalangan orang-orang Melayu Islam dikampung-kampung di luar bandar.<sup>97</sup>*

<sup>97</sup> Translation: Factors that shaped the circumstances prior to the formation of PAS itself were: the fact that the UMNO leaders at the time *continued p. 67*

For a brief period, Dato' Onn had managed to secure the support of some *ulama*. UMNO's bureau of religious affairs, headed by Tuan Haji Ahmad Fuad, had managed to present the party as the only organisation able to translate the concerns and demands of the Malay-Muslims into concrete reality. Through the party-sponsored *ulama* gatherings UMNO was trying to play the role of patron to a number of Islamist initiatives. The creation of this 'Islamist camp' within UMNO also came at the time of the 'Nadrah Affair' (1950-51) which gave radical Islamists from all over the country the opportunity to assume centre stage once again and to mobilise support from all sections of the Malay-Muslim community.<sup>98</sup>

### *'Islam in Danger!': The Nadrah Affair, 1950-1951*

The 'Nadrah Affair' of 1950-51 was one of the most explosive disputes between the Malays and the colonial authorities in the post-war years.

The case revolved around the status of Nadrah, a Dutch girl left in the care of Malay foster-parents by her parents in the early stages of the Japanese occupation during World War II. The girl, then named Maria Hertogh, was subsequently given the name Nadrah and brought up as a Malay and a Muslim in Kemaman, Terengganu by her foster-mother Aminah. After the war, Nadrah's foster-mother feared she would be taken back to Holland by the authorities. She therefore decided to marry Nadrah to Mansoor Adabi, a Malay schoolteacher from Kelantan. By then a search

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wanted to get more support from the Malays of the villages and the rural areas by winning over the *alim-ulama*, so they could implement their political projects more effectively. They knew the *ulama* had enormous influence among the Malay-Muslims of the villages in the countryside. (Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil: Rencana-Rencana Sekitar Perjuangan, 1951-1987*, Gunung Semanggul: Pustaka Abrar, 1994, p. xx.)

<sup>98</sup> For a fuller account of the Nadrah Affair, see Haja Maideen, *The Nadra Tragedy: The Maria Hertogh Controversy*, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Press, 1989.

was being conducted for her on behalf of her parents in the Netherlands. When she was finally found, the British colonial authorities felt inclined to intervene and to return her to her family. Nadrah was, by then, a Muslim woman who was legally married under Islamic law.

The decision to repatriate Nadrah to the Netherlands and to declare her marriage null and void had serious implications for the status of Malay and Islamic laws and customs, for it put into question (1) the legal status of the *shahadah* as a formal and binding declaration of faith for all Muslims and Muslim converts, (2) the legal status of Muslim marriages in the eyes of secular British constitutional law, and (3) the legal status of Malay-Muslim law and customs *vis-à-vis* British constitutional law. The Malay and Peranakan Muslims were outraged by the decision of the British and Dutch authorities. Protest movements were launched, led by radical Islamists such as Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Taha Kalu. Also involved were Malay newspapers like *Melayu Raya* and movements such as the Malayan Muslim League. On 11–13 December 1951, the crisis led to violence as Malays rioted in the streets of the major cities, including Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The British authorities resorted to the use of force to quell the riots, arrested the leaders of the protest movement (including Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Taha Kalu) and forcibly separated Nadrah from her Malay foster-mother Aminah and repatriated her to the Netherlands.

The human cost of the Nadrah crisis was high by Malayan standards then. Eighteen people had been killed and 173 were wounded. Scores of buildings were burnt and destroyed in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Hundreds of Malay and Peranakan Muslim activists had been arrested in the wake of the fighting. Seven found guilty of taking part in the demonstrations were sentenced to death by the British authorities. As Firdaus Haji Abdullah noted: 'The Nadrah incident demonstrated the potential role of Islam in an explosive expression of political frustration, and in other forms of political violence.'<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics: Its Origins and Early Development*, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Press, 1985, p. 162.

The British authorities took the incident seriously and reflected on the sudden rise of Islam as a political force. Field Marshall Lord Montgomery even wrote to Winston Churchill to express his doubts about the future of British rule in Malaya. In his letter to the British Prime Minister, Montgomery noted:

No one doubts the urgency of restoring law and order and good government in Malaya. It is vital from every point of view: economic, military, political and from the point of view of the contest between East and West. If the present conditions are allowed to continue much longer the situation (in Malaya) will get beyond a solution.<sup>100</sup>

Referring to the Nadrah riots that had caught them by surprise, Montgomery noted that the British colonial authorities in Malaya were bereft of capable men who knew how to handle the rapidly changing situation in the country.

Although the whole Nadrah affair culminated with the defeat of the radical Islamists, it did offer them and the *ulama* an opportunity to take centre-stage once more as the defenders of Malay rights and Muslim concerns. For many conservative *ulama*, the Nadrah affair was a symptom of a deeper socio-cultural crisis in the Malay-Muslim community as a whole. Many *ulama* and Muslim missionary organisations condemned the leadership of the Malay nationalist movements for not doing enough to stem the erosion of traditional and religious values among the Malays and were even prepared to give their support to the religious authorities of other Muslim countries instead.

UMNO's plight was worsened by the failure of its leaders (in particular its president Dato' Onn) to provide exemplary leadership during the confrontation with the British and Dutch authorities as the Nadrah crisis reached its peak. The Nadrah affair gave rise to the growing fear that Malay-Muslim rights and privileges would be jeopardised in the future if the Malays were not prepared to fight for them. UMNO religious affairs bureau members also protested against the UMNO leaders' decision to allow the

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<sup>100</sup> Lord Montgomery's letter to Winston Churchill, Colonial Records Office no. PREM 11/169 and M/222 2 Jan 1952. Quoted in A. J. Stockwell, *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya*.

issuance of gambling and alcohol licences.<sup>101</sup> In response to these difficulties and disagreements, the *ulama* and conservative Islamists within UMNO continued to discuss matters related to their Islamist and nationalist concerns among themselves. In time, this group grew more and more cohesive and organised.

On 23 August 1951, the second Ulama Congress was held at the Sultan Sulaiman Club in Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur. Still under the tutelage and sponsorship of UMNO, the congress was chaired by Haji Ahmad Fuad, who was also head of UMNO's religious affairs bureau, with Haji Ahmad Maliki as the secretary. Disappointed with the poor leadership and commitment towards Islam of UMNO leaders, the congress members began considering creating an organisation of their own.

Members of the second Ulama Congress issued two resolutions: (1) to renew their efforts towards creating *Badan Tertinggi Agama Islam Peringkat Kebangsaan* (a National Supreme Council for Religious Affairs), and (2) to form an independent association of *ulama* not linked to any other political or welfare organisation. On 23 August 1951, the Ulama Congress decided to form *Persatuan Alim Ulama Se-Malaya* (All-Malayan Ulama Organisation). A 5-man steering committee was set up: Haji Ahmad Fuad (chairman), Tuan Haji Ayub, S. Mohamad Hafiz, Saadon Zubir and Haji Mohamad Amin. (Saadon Zubir and Haji Mohamad Amin were personally selected by Haji Ahmad Fuad.) The committee was given the task of executing the decisions of the Congress and drafting the constitution for the new *ulama* association.<sup>102</sup>

UMNO had been rocked by an internal leadership struggle in mid-1950 when the liberal-minded Dato' Onn proposed that non-Malays be given membership of the movement. Onn was trying to create a broad-based conservative party open to all the races in the Malaysian Federation. He was rejected by his own movement and was forced to resign. Dato' Onn later formed the Independence for Malaya Party (IMP), a multiracial party with a strong centrist-

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<sup>101</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia? 1950–2000 Sejarah Kebangkitan dan Masa Depan*, Kuala Lumpur: G Edar Press, 1993, p. 22.

<sup>102</sup> Baharuddin, *Islam Memanggil*, p. xvii.

liberal character. Unfortunately, IMP proved to be a failure with the electorate in the years to come.<sup>103</sup>

The sudden exit of Dato' Onn left UMNO in a state of limbo. During the UMNO meeting of 25-26 August 1950, the conservative Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, a prince from one of the Malay royal families, was elected the second president of UMNO and Tun Abdul Razak (another scion from a royal house) was elected as his deputy. So abrupt was the split among the UMNO leadership and so quick the succession that the ordinary party members were unsure about where the party was heading and which leader to support. Many party members were unhappy with the sudden rise of the young prince who had previously enjoyed the dubious reputation of being a *dilettante* and playboy in Cambridge and London. The *ulama*, in particular, were not happy with his penchant for sport cars, racehorses, dancing and alcohol (distractions which he never hid from his followers and critics).<sup>104</sup> Around this time, Dato' Onn was also trying to persuade the more conservative UMNO elements to abandon the Tunku and support him instead. Onn persuaded Haji Ahmad Fuad to form a faction within UMNO of *ulama* and more religiously inclined members to ensure that Muslim concerns would not be marginalised within the party.

The Tunku realised that the Nadrah affair had been a major catalyst in the mobilisation of Malay-Muslim activists, the *ulama* in particular. However, it was too late to reverse the decision by the colonial authorities, as Nadrah had already been sent to Holland.

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<sup>103</sup> See n. 71 above.

<sup>104</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman was one of the many sons of the philoprogenitive Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah (who fathered 45 children and had 92 grand- and great-grand-children). He was given a traditional royal upbringing and was later sent to Cambridge to further his studies. For a more detailed discussion of the Tunku's personal history, feudal outlook and practices, see Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector?*, pp. 89-90; Harry Miller, *Prince and Premier: A Biography of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj*, London: Harrap, 1959; and Abdullah Ahmad, *Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia's Foreign Policy 1963-1970*, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1985.

The Tunku therefore turned his attention to the Muslim activists sentenced to death by the colonial authorities. He organised an UMNO-sponsored fund-raising campaign on behalf of the condemned men. With the funds collected, he engaged prominent lawyer David Marshall to appeal on behalf of the accused.<sup>105</sup> The appeal court judge upheld the law, but commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. The Tunku described this as a success for UMNO and used it as proof of UMNO's concern for Muslim interests (though those in the Islamist camp were not very impressed). Late as it was, the Tunku's attempt to play a part in the Nadrah crisis did not stop or slow down the process of the formation of the *ulama* association.

The third Ulama Congress was held at the Kelab Melayu Bagan (Bagan Malay Club) in Butterworth, Penang on 23–24 November 1951. More than 200 *ulama* attended, with 20 female representatives from all over the country, including Singapore. Among the *ulama* present were Ustaz Ahmad Badawi, Ustaz Mohamad Ghazali Abdullah, Ustaz Zabidi Ali, Ustaz Othman Hamzah and Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif. Ustaz Ahmad Badawi presented his manifesto, entitled '*Manifesto al-Badawi: Ulama Kejalan Allah*' (The Manifesto of al-Badawi: *Ulama* on the Path of Allah). Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif, in turn, argued that the Ulama Congress should lay down the organisational structure for a number of religious bodies and committees, including a *majlis fatwa* (fatwa council), *badan tabligh dan penyiaran* (council for joint relations), *badan perhubungan* (communications and information council) and a *badan pendidikan* (educational body).<sup>106</sup> At this Congress it was decided to change the movement's name to *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* (Pan-Malayan Islamic Organisation). This small, marginalised body, made up of a number of *ulama*, imams and conservative nationalists from both within and without UMNO,

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<sup>105</sup> Though he was successful in his appeal on behalf of the seven men condemned to die, lawyer David Marshall did not collect any payment for his services.

<sup>106</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, 'Sedikit untuk Persidangan Alim Ulama', reported in *Utusan Melayu*, 21 November 1951. Quoted in Baharuddin, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 9.

was the nucleus of the Malayan Islamic party which later developed and came to be known as PAS. Today, PAS traces its founding to 24 November 1951.

*The Hybrid Offspring: The Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya  
Steps into the World*

*Inilah rahsia kekuatan PAS. Walaupun orang PAS itu nampaknya lekeh-lekeh; kadangkali kita lihat tok guru mengaji pondok, orang tua mengaji pondok nampaknya lemah. Tetapi inilah dia kekuatan PAS. Mereka mampu melawan UMNO dan Perikatan dari 1951 sehingga sekarang. Hanya kita yang mendokong dasar. Dasar PAS adalah Islam, rujukan al-Quran, Hadis dan ijma Ulama. Seruan PAS 'Allahuakbar'. Matlamat PAS mendirikan shariat Allah Ta'ala. Perkara pokok ini menjadi pegangan ahli PAS. Menang mereka mahu, tetapi kalau kalah mereka bersabar. Oleh sebab itulah semua parti lain yang seumur dengan PAS telah meninggal dunia.<sup>107</sup>*

Speech by Mohamad Sabu,  
PAS Executive Committee member,  
at Bandar Baru Kubang Kerian, August 1999

As a result of the deliberations and decisions taken at the third Congress, the *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* came into being. This had

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<sup>107</sup> Translation: This is the secret of PAS's success. Even though our members may seem poor and weak; the *guru* teaching in the *pondok*, the old men praying in the mosques, may seem weak. But here lies the strength of PAS. They were willing and able to fight UMNO and the Alliance from 1951 till today. All that they had were their principles. The principles of PAS were Islam, the *Qur'an*, *Hadith* and the *ijma* of the *ulama*. PAS's rallying call was 'Allahuakbar'. PAS's aim was to uphold the *shariah* of almighty God. These were the cardinal principles held by all the members. They wanted success, but if and when they failed they were patient and steadfast. That is why all the other parties that came into being at the same time as PAS are dead and buried by now. (Mohamad Sabu, 'Tangisan Air Mata Buaya', speech recorded at Bandar Baru Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, August 1999. Distributed by Jujur Enterprise, Sungai Besi, Selangor, 1999.)

been the intention of many *ulama* from the very beginning. Accounts of how the party came about still vary. Some veteran party leaders like Dr. Abbas Elias claim that the idea was proposed by Ustaz Syed Hamid al-Idrus, a writer for *Qalam* magazine.<sup>108</sup> Others maintain that the organisation was formed under the tutelage of men like Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir from Gunung Semanggul. In fact, it was the result of a cumulative effort on the part of a number of individuals, working at different locations, and at times even unknown to each other.

The party's first *yang dipertua agung* (president) was Haji Ahmad Fuad, who was still the head of UMNO's Religious Affairs Bureau. In the election for the post of president he was challenged by Tuan Sheikh Haji Abdullah Fahim, father of Ustaz Ahmad Badawi. The first *timbang* *yang dipertua agung* (deputy president) was Ustaz Mohamad Ghazali Abdullah. The *naib yang dipertua agung* (vice presidents) were Ustaz Hussein Che Dol (head of northern division), Ustaz Abdul Rahman Jamaluddin al-Jempuli (head of southern division) and Fakir Muhammad Nor (head of midlands division). The *setiausaha agung* (secretary-general) was Ustaz Ahmad Maliki, and the *bendahari agung* (treasurer) was Haji Ahmad Tuan Hussein. *Ahli jawatankuasa agung* (Committee members) included men such as Ustaz Yahya Junid, Haji Uthman Talib, Haji Mohammad Nor, Haji Zabidi Ali, Haji Abdul Wahab Nur, Haji Assaiyya (future Mufti of Perak), Haji Ahmad Badur and Muhammad Mahzub. UMNO members on the committee included Ustaz Ahmad Badawi, Ustaz Ahmad Maliki, Ustaz Ahmad Sahir, Haji Ahmad Long and Haji Ahmad Mansoor.<sup>109</sup> Osman Abdullah, first the secretary of PAS at Hilir Perak, was later elected head of the PAS youth assembly (Dewan Pemuda PAS). Radical nationalist-turned-Islamist Mohammad Asri Muda joined later as a committee member. (He eventually became secretary-general after Ustaz Ahmad Maliki left the party.)

The organisation was housed at Madrasah Masriyyah at Tanah Liat, near Bukit Mertajam and its first office was at Kepala Batas,

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>109</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. xxvi.

Seberang Perai. For its flag the organisation chose the red and white banner of the radical nationalists, but added the party's own Islamic symbols — a green full moon (in the centre or top left-hand corner of the flag) and the words 'Allah' and 'Muhammad'. It is interesting to note that the flags of PAS, UMNO and PKMM all shared the same red-and-white background as the *Sang Saka Merah-Putih* of the Indonesian nationalists.

When he was elected president of *Persatuan Islam*, Haji Ahmad Fuad stated that the aim of the organisation was to unite the Malay-Muslims of the country. His acceptance speech was entitled '*Kita Laksana Sampah, Kerana Tidak Bersatu*' (We are but Flotsam, for We Remain Disunited). The task of uniting the Malay-Muslims under the banner of *Persatuan Islam* was therefore its main aim, but the fledgling movement was barely able to undertake this Herculean task. From the beginning, the base of PAS's support came from the Malay-dominated rural heartland, in particular the north and northeast states from where came the most influential and popular PAS leaders. The charismatic firebrand Mohammad Asri Muda had successfully converted many traditional Malay *ulama* and *guru* of Kelantan to the PAS cause through his close, informal contacts. (Amaluddin Darus, a close friend of Asri, joined PAS in 1955 as its first *tuan guru* in Kelantan.)

PAS's organisational structure was fairly uncomplicated at the beginning. The party's policies were decided by the *jawatankuasa agung* (executive committee) chaired by its president. Three main *dewan* (sections) represented three major constituencies within the party: *Dewan Ulama* (Ulama Council), *Dewan Pemuda* (Youth Wing) and *Dewan Muslimat* (Women's Wing). The rest of the membership was made up of ordinary party members.

The *Dewan Ulama* was part of the party from the very beginning, though its members did not have as much power and influence then. At this stage of the party's development, the *ulama* played only an advisory role and the *Dewan Ulama* did not have the power to direct policies or to veto policy decisions which they felt were contrary to the spirit and norms of Islam.

The idea of a *Dewan Muslimat* was suggested on 3 April 1951 by Ustaz Haji Zabidi Ali, who argued that the party had to open itself to female members and to make sure that women were part of the

Islamist struggle in the country. PAS was worried that if it did not open the way for women to enter the party they would join *Kaum Ibu* (Women's Wing) of UMNO instead.<sup>110</sup> The *Dewan Muslimat* was officially launched on 1 January 1952 during the party's first official general assembly, held at Kepala Batas, Seberang Perai. The *Dewan Muslimat* had its own 7-woman executive committee, chaired by Ustazah Sharifah Rahmah.<sup>111</sup>

One of the first problems faced by the organisation was the question of double membership. Many PAS members (like Haji Ahmad Fuad, Ustaz Ahmad Badawi and Ustaz Ahmad Maliki) were active and serving UMNO members. For them, the *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* was merely an adjunct of UMNO. Some UMNO *ulama* even called for the organisation to be referred to as *Perikatan Ulama UMNO Se-Malaya* (Association of UMNO Ulama of Malaya), but their proposals were shot down.<sup>112</sup> Many other independent *ulama* and members felt that a clear distinction had to be drawn between the organisation and UMNO. Some of the more critical *ulama*, such as Ustaz Syed Hamid al-Idrus (who wrote for Islamist magazine *al-Qalam* of Singapore), Tuan Sheikh Ali Balderam (a prominent *madrasah* teacher in Penang) and Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif (of *Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya Gunung Semanggul*) called for the introduction of party rules and guidelines that would deny the right of dual membership. They pointed out that according to the organisation's constitution (Chap. 1, sect. 22) none of those holding key positions in the organisation's leadership should

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<sup>110</sup> *Kaum Ibu* was established on 25 August 1949. The idea for the women's wing in UMNO was first suggested by the wife of the party's first president. The first leader of *Kaum Ibu* was Datin Puteh Mariah, who led the Malay Women's Society of Perak. Other leaders were Che Zainab Zain Rahmad and Che Saleha Ali. In 1950, Puan Hajjah Zain became the president of *Kaum Ibu*, to be followed by the radical leftist Khatijah Sidek in 1953. In 1956, the leadership passed to Che Fatimah Haji Hashim (later Tan Sri Fatimah) after Khatijah Sidek left UMNO to join PAS. (*The Kaum Ibu Movement: Its History and Achievements*, Kuala Lumpur: UMNO Party Headquarters, Perchetakan Merdeka, 1967.)

<sup>111</sup> *Mujahidah IV*, May 1999, p. 8.

<sup>112</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. xxiii.

belong to other political organisations. (The situation was particularly ironic as UMNO member Haji Ahmad Fuad had chaired the steering committee that drafted the constitution.) After a heated debate, those in favour of dual membership eventually won.<sup>113</sup>

Because of the organisation's relaxed guidelines, many members were confused about their own standing and identity within the party. Some felt that being a member of PAS was equivalent to being a member of UMNO. Others argued that the practice of dual membership eroded the credibility of PAS. Nonetheless, PAS continued to develop at its own pace and with the limited resources it had at its command. The *ulama* continued to issue their calls for the defence of Islam and Malay-Muslim concerns. Then on 4 January 1953 the fourth Ulama Congress was held at Kepala Batas. At this stage, *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* declared its aim of struggling for an Islamic state. The party laid down its objectives as:

1. *Berusaha dengan kuat untuk memperkenalkan kepada rakyat jelata akan kemerdekaan yang tulen serta menanamkan kedalam jiwa mereka semangat kemerdekaan itu sambil menunjukkan cara-cara mencapainya,*
2. *Berusaha dengan kuat memperkenalkan demokrasi yang sejati dan menyatakan faedah-faedahnya kepada negara dan umat Islam serta berusaha menanamkan semangat demokrasi ke dalam jiwa masing-masing sambil menunjukkan cara-cara mencapai demokrasi,*
3. *Mengatur dengan kemas cita-cita merdeka PAS dan sebuah PAS yang menjalankan segala tanggung jawab yang berkaitan dengan agama Islam,*
4. *Berikhtiar memperkenalkan diri PAS sebagai mewakili umat Islam Melayu kepada alam Islamiah dan badan-badan kebajikan Islam seluruh dunia serta membuat perhubungan dengannya, sama ada dalam perkara-perkara kebajikan bagi Malaya khususnya dan dunia amnya,*
5. *Berikhtiar melaksanakan hukum-hukum Islam.*<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp. iv, xxiv.

<sup>114</sup> Translation:

1. To strive to introduce and inculcate in the hearts and minds of the people the meaning of true independence, to instil the spirit of independence in their hearts and to show them how to achieve it,  
*continued p. 78*

It is worth noting that the first four political objectives of PAS at that stage were related to the questions of independence, sovereignty, development and communitarian interests. The goal of upholding the *shariah* came fifth on the list of priorities. This was, in many ways, typical in the Muslim world at that time. When Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the *ulama* of Pakistan were debating the question of Muslim identity for the new republic, the Urdu language and Islam were seen as equally important.

The development of PAS did not go unnoticed. Its rivals in UMNO realised they had to work even harder to win the confidence of both the Malay-Muslims and the British colonial authorities who held the keys to independence. (By then, UMNO was opposed by the IMP under Dato' Onn as well as PAS.) While the PAS leaders were busy trying to lay down the ideological platform and organisational structure of their party, the conservatives of UMNO and MCA turned their attention to appeasing the British colonial authorities.

In February 1952, the new Conservative government in Britain appointed General Sir Gerald Templer as the new High Commissioner and Director of Operations in Malaya. Templer immediately set about strengthening the state security apparatus. One of his first actions was to set up the Psychological Warfare Interrogation Centre (PWIC) at the Malayan Police Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. The killing of Templer's predecessor Henry Gurney had raised the stakes in the battle for Malaya and, in retali-

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2. To strive to introduce and inculcate in the hearts and minds of the people the meaning of true democracy and its benefits, to instil in their hearts the spirit of democracy and to show them how to achieve it,
3. To elaborate PAS's own vision of independence and to develop a party (PAS) that will uphold its responsibilities towards the religion of Islam,
4. To make known to the world the presence of PAS and its role as the representatives of the Malay-Muslim *ummah*, and to develop links with these Islamist movements in the world through social activities; be it in Malaya alone or in the world,
5. To implement the laws of Islam (*PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 8).

ation, surprise attacks and aerial bombardments against MCP targets in the interior were considerably increased. So devastating was the response from the British forces that Chin Peng and the MCP central committee were forced to relocate the party further north, close to the Malayan-Thai border in what was dubbed the 'long march' of the MCP.

Also in 1952, UMNO and MCA formed the *Perikatan* (Alliance) coalition to contest the municipal elections in Kuala Lumpur and 16 other municipalities. The Tunku and Tan Cheng Lock's gamble paid off, and the two parties won a resounding victory: the Alliance won 94 of the 124 seats contested (UMNO won 70, and MCA 24). The MCA central committee then voted to turn their organisation into a fully fledged political party and both UMNO and MCA were invited to take part in the negotiations with the British over the question of independence and the shape of the future Malayan government.

On 23 August and 11 October 1953, PAS was invited to take part in the *Persidangan Kebangsaan* (National Convention) jointly organised by UMNO and MCA in Kuala Lumpur. PAS recognised that both these Malay and Chinese conservative parties were clearly making their bid to become the dominant parties in the Malayan Federation as soon as independence was granted, but it was in no position to alter or influence the mindset of the departing British colonial authorities who preferred to deal with the conservative nationalists. PAS, therefore, sent three representatives — Asri Muda, Haji Ahmad Tuan Hussein and Ustaz Osman Abdullah — to make their own demands. At the convention, the PAS representatives insisted, in no uncertain terms, on the protection of Malay rights and privileges.

PAS rejected UMNO and MCA's argument that Malayan citizenship should be granted to the Chinese and Indian minorities on the basis of *jus soli* — that they were born in the country. PAS also insisted that voting rights should not be automatically granted to the non-Malay communities. Other issues related to Malay-centric concerns such as the status of the Malay royal families, the Malay language and the place of Islam as the state religion were also hotly debated.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Despite the strong stand that PAS was able to effect in public, in reality the party was suffering from a lack of internal co-ordination and control. From 1951–53 its leadership structure was weak and in 1953 PAS suffered its first internal rift because of the rule permitting dual membership, which allowed many PAS members to be involved in the political battles being fought outside the organisation. The situation worsened when Haji Ahmad Fuad, PAS's president, decided to openly support his old friend and ex-president of UMNO, Dato' Onn Jaafar.

UMNO also had problems of its own. In 1953, UMNO under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman was being challenged by its ex-founder and leader, Dato' Onn Jaafar. The Tunku headed the National Convention, an alliance of UMNO and MCA. Dato' Onn had left UMNO and formed his own party, the IMP, and he headed his own alliance called the National Conference, which met for the first time in April 1953, laying down its plans for independence and inviting support from other parties and movements. Desperate for help, Dato' Onn turned to Haji Ahmad Fuad for both moral support and practical assistance. He wanted to win over the support of PAS so that UMNO's Islamic credentials would be further compromised. Haji Ahmad Fuad also wanted to work closely with Dato' Onn's party. The two had been long-time companions in the struggle to form UMNO, and Ahmad Fuad was widely regarded as a strong follower and supporter of Dato' Onn.

However, this proposal was rejected by PAS members; many were suspicious of Dato' Onn's true intentions and his reputation as a pro-Western Anglophile. (At the time, Western powers were buying their own pro-Western Asian leaders off the rack. In the same year, the US had helped to organise the election campaign of Ramon Magsaysay, the pro-American Filipino leader known as 'Washington's boy' in diplomatic circles.)<sup>116</sup> Others were concerned

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<sup>116</sup> Ramon Magsaysay was widely regarded as 'America's boy' in the Philippines. In the 1950s, he was made head of the Philippines Intelligence Services by the Americans, who regarded him as a loyal and trustworthy ally whom they could use. The man behind the rise of Ramon Magsaysay was Lt. Col. Edward G. Landsdale, head of the *continued p. 81*

that it was Onn who first attacked the *ulama* organisation and who spoke of the 'danger from the mountain' when he attacked *Hizbul Muslimin* in 1948. One of the strongest opponents of Ahmad Fuad's decision to support Dato' Onn was *ulama* Ustaz Ahmad Badawi<sup>117</sup> (father of present UMNO leader Abdullah Badawi).

At a special general meeting held at Madrasah Masriyyah, Bukit Mertajam in September 1953 the members were asked to vote on the issue. Haji Ahmad Fuad was badly defeated. Having lost the confidence and support of the PAS members, he was forced to resign from the post of party president in September 1953. Haji Ahmad Fuad then joined up with Dato' Onn and served in the executive committee of the new *Parti Negara* launched by Onn on 28 February 1954.<sup>118</sup> After Haji Ahmad Fuad, other prominent PAS

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CIA in the Philippines and adviser to the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). Landsdale formed the Philippines Civil Affairs Office (CAO) that engaged in psychological warfare against the PCP and other nationalist groups. Through the CAO, the CIA intervened directly in Filipino affairs, shaping public opinion and developing the image and popularity of Magsaysay. In 1953, Magsaysay won the Presidential election with the help of the CAO and CIA, and Landsdale later claimed that it was he who 'invented Magsaysay' (Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 43). Under constant watch and supervision, Magsaysay proved to be a loyal servant to American interests: his speeches were written and vetted by Landsdale and the CAO. On one occasion it was reported that the overbearing Landsdale had even beaten Magsaysay and knocked the new President of the Philippines unconscious for not doing as he was told (Ibid., p. 43). During Magsaysay's term of office the US further deepened and strengthened its grip on the Philippine economy and political system. American companies behaved as if the Philippines was a US colony, and exploited the Filipinos as a captive market and source of cheap labour and resources. Magsaysay died in a plane crash in 1957; he was replaced by another American crony, Diosdado Macapagal. (See Edward G. Landsdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972; William Blum, *Killing Hope*, 1995.)

<sup>117</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Interview with Dr. Abbas Elias: PAS, The Formative Days', *Impact International*, 30(2) (2000): 51.

<sup>118</sup> See n. 71 above.

members, including Ustaz Ahmad Badawi and Ustaz Ahmad Maliki, also left the organisation and re-joined UMNO.<sup>119</sup>

The loss of Haji Ahmad Fuad and the other UMNO *ulama* from PAS gave the organisation the freedom to introduce stricter rules and guidelines concerning membership, its ideological stand and political orientation. For those unhappy with the confused state of affairs in 1951–53, the departure of the pro-UMNO *ulama* was a blessing in disguise: it robbed the organisation of some of its most popular and influential *ulama*, but it also meant that the organisation knew where it stood.<sup>120</sup>

The period of Ahmad Fuad's leadership can be summed up as a time of crisis for the fledgling Islamic party. PAS was almost entirely without funds and material resources, and its membership was so heterodox and small in number that the organisation seemed to need to hang onto the coattails of other more prominent conservative-nationalist leaders like Dato' Onn who were not even party members. It also lacked an office or headquarters of its own. Its first main office was at Madrasah Masriyyah, Bukit Mertajam, but then it moved to Madrasah Ma'arif al-Wataniyyah at Kepala Batas, run by the famous *ulama* Ahmad Badawi. The party's office did not have permanent full-time staff; as a result, many important decisions and meetings went unrecorded. PAS also did not have a coherent policy manifesto of its own, and was forced to ally itself with other nationalist factions that had little concern for its vague Islamist agenda. In its first three years, the organisation's main purpose was to serve as a vocal (though weak) lobby for the *ulama*'s concerns that would add a degree of Islamist credibility to whichever political party or faction they supported. These internal problems contributed to the organisation's first leadership crisis and took up most of the time, energy and resources of its small pool of members.

With Ahmad Fuad out of the way, the executive committee elected Dr. Abbas Elias as the party's second president at a general assembly held at Sekolah Tahzibiyah, Titi Serong near Parit

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<sup>119</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. v.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. v, xxiv–xxv.

Buntar, Perak. Dr. Abbas was away on the *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca at the time, and was only told of the committee's decision as he was making his homeward journey back to Malaya.<sup>121</sup> By then, PAS was keen to show that it had its own political platform and would not accept the model of the independent state that UMNO and its allies were proposing. The task of developing the party's political agenda and propagating it to the masses fell on the shoulders of its second president.

Dr. Abbas Elias was born on 15 July 1914 at Kampong Bandar, Selangor. His father, Haji Elias bin Hussein, was of Sumatran (Minangkabau) origin, while his mother was a Malay woman from Selangor. He had a mainly secular educational background, in the field of medicine. He received his early education at the Anglo-Chinese School (Setiawan), King Edward VII School (Taiping) and then the Medical College in Singapore. All the schools he attended were built during the colonial period as part of the colonial education system. He travelled to England in 1949 to study public health, and returned to Malaya as a qualified doctor and secured a job in the colonial medical service.

Despite his secular educational background, Dr. Abbas was regarded as the best man to lead the Islamic party. His Western educational background meant that he could speak and write in both Malay and English, which was of crucial importance as the PAS leaders were forced to negotiate not only with the Malay constituency in the rural heartland, but also the British colonial authorities who paid scant attention to this small party of 'religious elders and imams'. Upon his return from the *haj*, Dr. Abbas received a letter from Osman Abdullah, secretary of PAS, inviting him to take over the party presidency.

During the presidency of Dr. Abbas Elias (1953-56), the party underwent many trials and tribulations. The colonial authorities made it very difficult for Dr. Abbas to carry out his duties as PAS president.<sup>122</sup> As an indigenous Malay-Muslim doctor working for the colonial medical services, he faced many restrictions and was

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

constantly reminded that that he could lose his position if his political activities interfered with his work. PAS leaders were facing the enormous task of convincing the rural Malays that they could offer a tangible alternative to UMNO. Compared to UMNO, which was led by Malay royals and aristocrats, PAS was seen as a party of *kampung* folk, peasants and farmers, led by 'Tok Hajis and Pak Lebais'.<sup>123</sup>

At this initial stage of its development the party also faced problems of manpower and finances. It could not maintain a permanently staffed office or records of its activities. Most of its office staff were volunteers, many working on a part-time basis. Fifty years later, the party would have its own internet website, on-line TV channel and information service, network of schools, community centres, training camps and its own party-political newspaper that would outsell the national mainstream press, but at that time PAS could not even afford a typewriter, much less its own permanent office. The president had to travel all over the country on his own salary. This was also true of the other leaders. They were forced to sleep in mosques and *surau*, or lodge with party supporters. They had few sources of funding as most of the wealthier Malays supported UMNO. Corporate sponsorship and the patronage of the Malay middle classes only came much later. So low was the party's appeal that during some periods the party could manage to attract only about 10–20 new members a month.<sup>124</sup>

Painfully aware of its chronic lack of members and supporters, the party began opening branches in states other than Kelantan and Terengganu in the north. On 20 March 1954, the first Johor branch was opened. Led by Haji Arriffin Alias, the Johor Bharu branch boasted 200 members. On 6 May 1954, a branch was established in Benut, led by Haji Abdul Razak. On 24 May, Sungai Tempayan branch in Pontian was opened. Between 1959 and 1964 other branches were opened in Johor, in places like Segamat, Mersing, Kota Tinggi, Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Osman Abdullah and Dr Abbas Elias, 25 May 1999.

Despite these developments, PAS remained relatively weak in the south, particularly in Johor, the birthplace of UMNO. PAS's slow advance attracted little response from the British colonial authorities as they were more concerned about the activities of the MCP and its guerrillas in the jungles. News of the defeat of the French forces by General Vo Nguyen Giap's Viet Minh troops at Dien Bien Phu in April 1954 did little to assuage their fears of a communist take-over of the entire region.

Regardless of the weakness of the party and its lack of political power, PAS leaders were already committed to the struggle for Malay-Muslim rights and the formation of an Islamic state. They were worried about the future of the Malays, and the prospect of having to grant citizenship and cultural rights to other ethnic communities. In 1954, the government issued a preliminary education report which stated that a national curriculum for all Malayan students should be developed, using a standardised medium of instruction that would bring an end to the pluralised education system. PAS supported the move, but only on condition that Malay was made the national language and medium of instruction for the whole country. UMNO also supported the proposal in principle, but was forced to deal with protests from the Chinese education lobby and its ally, the MCA.

Apart from calling for the defence and promotion of Malay cultural rights and identity, PAS was also calling for the creation of an Islamic state. At this stage, however, the notion of the Islamic state they had in mind was simply one where the *shariah* was dominant and the rights of Muslims were protected. The party leaders hoped to mobilise Malay support by raising issues related to Malay-Muslim concerns, such as the place and status of Islam in the country. These themes were painted with a very broad stroke; there was little attention paid to minor details regarding elements of Islamic law, *fiqh*, Islamic economics, Islamic education, etc. The party also did not privilege the *ulama* with a special role or position within its leadership structure or organisation. Some leaders (like president Dr. Abbas) were the product of Western secular education. Partly because of this, the antagonism between PAS and UMNO was not very intense.

Dr. Abbas noted that UMNO president Tunku Abdul Rahman was not happy with the Islamic party's stand, but at the same time the UMNO leaders were not too worried about the appeal of PAS, simply because the latter could not mount an effective nation-wide challenge.<sup>125</sup> UMNO's main rival was the *Parti Negara* of Dato' Onn Jaafar (who, it must be remembered, still commanded considerable support and respect among the Malays both as an aristocrat and the original founder of UMNO) and the National Association of Perak led by the Dato' Panglima Bukit Gantang. The only major controversy between PAS and the UMNO-led government took place when the Tunku declared that PAS was no longer allowed to carry the words 'Allah' and 'Muhammad' on its flag. (The party was then forced to remove the words, as the original flag was declared illegal.)

Despite the recurrent disputes between the two parties, UMNO could dismiss PAS's challenge with relative ease. The Malays were still very much under the residual influence of their traditional rulers and conservative *ulama* whose understanding and practice of Islam was a relatively moderate and private affair. In contrast to neighbouring Indonesia that had a long tradition of Islamist activism and militancy, the Malay-Muslims of the peninsula, whose collective memories were rather short, were still not comfortable with the idea of political Islam. The *Darul Islam* revolt of 1950–65 in Indonesia added to the negative image of Islamist militancy. As the Indonesian Islamist movements and parties revolted against the centralised rule of President Soekarno in Jakarta, it appeared as if Islam had the destructive potential to rip nations apart and bring chaos and suffering to the Muslims themselves. Such anti-Indonesian propaganda was effectively utilised not only to demonise the government of Soekarno, but also the Islamist activists in Indonesia, thereby further discrediting political Islam.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>126</sup> The *Darul Islam* revolt was led by the *ulama* Qahar Muzakkar. The revolt eventually spilled onto the outer islands of Makassar, Sulawesi and Sumatra, and forced the Indonesian armed forces to fight on a number of fronts. The situation was worsened by the support of  
*continued p. 87*

As if these obstacles weren't enough, PAS was also handicapped by many technicalities and legal restrictions. Technically, the Islamic party was not yet registered. Dr. Abbas managed to get it registered as an official political party on 31 May 1955, just one day before nomination day and one week before election campaigning began.<sup>127</sup> For the sake of the election, the party was re-registered under another name: Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP).

The federal election was held on 27 July 1955. PAS was not strong enough to field candidates in all the seats: only 11 candidates were nominated compared to UMNO's 35. All PAS's candidates were Malay-Muslims, while the Alliance, made up of UMNO and MCA, fielded candidates from all the major racial groups in the country (see Table 1.2). UMNO's main rival was Dato' Onn Jaafar's *Parti Negara*, which with its ally the National Association of Perak fielded 39 candidates (37 were Malays), which exceeded UMNO's 35. PAS was not allied to any other political or ethnic grouping, and was so poor it could not even pay its candidates' deposit and electioneering costs. It could only offer posters and banners to its candidates.<sup>128</sup> The party knew that its chances were limited as it had yet to open branches all over the country. In some states like Malacca, PAS did not yet have a single branch.

For the 1955 election, PAS chose as its symbol the '*tangan terbuka*' (open hand), which was meant to stand for PAS's open invitation

*n. 126 continued*

prominent and important Islamist parties like *Muhamadijjah*. Masjumi was also accused of plotting the uprising. As a result of this strife, Soekarno suspended constitutional democracy and introduced 'guided democracy' instead. He also banned Masjumi in 1960. For a fuller account of the revolt, see Barbara S Harvey, 'Tradition, Islam and Rebellion: South Sulawesi 1950-1965', Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1974.

<sup>127</sup> In an interview on 23 May 1999, Dr. Abbas candidly revealed that he had managed to get the party registered so fast simply because the registrar of societies was a friend who owed him a favour. Dr. Abbas had obtained a job for the registrar during the difficult times of the Japanese occupation (1941-46) and thus he felt obliged to return the favour.

<sup>128</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Interview with Dr. Abbas Elias', p. 51.

to all Malay-Muslims who wanted to lend their support for the Islamist cause. UMNO leaders quickly made an issue out of it. Soon PAS's opponents were claiming that the sign of the open hand was a warning to all that if PAS were to come to power, among its earliest actions would be the introduction of *hudud* law so that crimes like theft would be punished with amputation of hands.<sup>129</sup> PAS leaders and members did not take kindly to such remarks, and obviously did not share Tunku Abdul Rahman's macabre sense of humour.

Such scare tactics proved quite unnecessary. Despite the high turnout of voters (80.8%) and the fact that relatively more Malays were allowed to vote compared to non-Malays whose citizenship status remained unresolved, PAS was clearly not in a position to take on the might of UMNO and the Alliance. Of the 52 seats contested, 51 were won by the Alliance parties. (UMNO won 36 seats and MCA won 15 (see Table 1.3).) The Alliance gained 81.0% of the votes and 98.1% of seats in parliament. PAS was soundly defeated; it won only one seat, in Kerian, Perak. Its candidate was Haji Ahmad Tuan Hussein, a local *guru* at the *pondok* school of Pokok Sena. Many of the other PAS candidates lost their deposits.

The British colonial authorities were undoubtedly also relieved by the opposition's poor performance. UMNO and the Alliance had lived up to their promises and it seemed clear that the transition of power from British to Bumiputera rule would pass without too many complications or upheavals. However, a telegram sent to London by British Intelligence officials in Malaya ended on a somewhat ominous note when it described the new Islamic party as: 'a newcomer which stands for a strengthening of Islamic influence in the conduct of Malayan affairs'.<sup>130</sup>

After the election, Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister of Malaya. The Alliance government was formed on

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<sup>129</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia*, p. 59.

<sup>130</sup> Foreign Office Intelligence telegram circular no. 147. CO 1030/225. No.7. 15 August 1957 (para 4). Quoted in A. J. Stockwell, *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya*.

2 August 1955 with Tun Razak Deputy Prime Minister. The MCA was represented by Leong Yew Koh, H. S. Lee and Too Joon Hin, who were also given posts in the new Cabinet. PAS had only a sole representative in parliament.

The 1955 election provided PAS with its baptism by fire. Although the Indonesian Islamists were also trounced in the elections of the same year (*Nahdatul Ulama* won only 18.5% of the vote), the victory of the Indonesian Islamists was still much greater than the achievements of PAS, which had secured only 40,667 votes altogether (about 3.8% of total votes). The 1955 election taught the PAS leaders the importance of a sound organisational structure and a solid chain of command. The party still lacked permanent office staff, which meant that paperwork and records were badly kept. Most of the party's office workers worked on a voluntary basis and they could not be relied upon to keep the party machinery going efficiently. The party also had to invigorate itself and revitalise its efforts at winning more members and supporters in the Malay states. Because it had only one candidate in office, the party could not rely on additional funding from its sole member of parliament. UMNO, its main rival, seemed to have had a head start in building its organisational structure. Despite constant attacks on UMNO leaders such as Tunku Abdul Rahman by PAS's ideologues and speakers as 'traitors to the Malay cause', the conservative party had nonetheless managed to organise itself and build a party-political machine in a short space of time. This, in the end, turned out to be the crucial factor that guaranteed UMNO's success and PAS's failure at the polls.

After the 1955 election results were announced, UMNO took the opportunity to declare itself as the only party that could represent the Malays and that could bring about a safe and stable transition of power from British to Bumiputera rule. The colonial authorities were duly impressed by the results. On 28-29 December 1955, the Tunku led the Malayan delegation at the Baling peace talks with the leaders of the (then exhausted and demoralised) MCP. The Tunku's outright refusal to concede to the demands of the communists only added to his prestige and standing in the eyes of the British and other foreign observers of Malayan politics. Soon

afterwards, UMNO vice-president Tun Razak was given the task of writing a report on the state of education in the country, the Razak Report of 1956.<sup>131</sup>

The PAS Islamists were still uncertain about the fate of their new party, which lacked the resources of UMNO and charismatic leaders such as those of the Malay leftists. The radical leftists had, by then, decided to form a party of their own. On 11 November 1955, the *Parti Rakyat Malaya* (People's Party of Malaya, PRM) was launched in Kuala Lumpur due to the efforts of radical nationalists such as Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy. Soon afterwards, Ishak formed and led another leftist party, the *Parti Buruh Malaya* (Labour Party of Malaya, PBM). The Islamists of PAS seemed bereft of friends and credible spokesmen.

In 1956, the race for independence intensified considerably. On 1 January, Sudan gained independence from Britain. In the same month, Tunku Abdul Rahman, still radiant after his party's glorious victory at the 1955 polls, went to London along with other representatives of the UMNO-dominated Alliance to continue the independence talks with the British government that had begun in 1954. This group became known as the 'Malayan Independence Delegation'; it comprised Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak, Tun Dr. Ismail, Tan Sri Nik Ahmad Kamil and Tun H. S. Lee. The discussions continued until 6 February, and by the end of the long process of negotiation the date for independence was set for 31 August 1957. PAS was left with little choice but to sit and watch the proceedings from a distance.

By the middle of 1956, the Reid Commission (named after its chairman Lord Reid) was set up by the British authorities with the intention of finalising the legal and technical details of the transfer of power from the British to the Malayan government. While

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<sup>131</sup> The Razak Report on Education, released in April 1956, called for the creation of a national education policy and national curriculum with Malay as the medium of instruction. Malay was also to be made the main official language of the country. The findings of the report gained the support of the Malays from both UMNO and PAS (and the Malay leftists of the PRM), but it led to protests from the Chinese education lobby and the MCA.

UMNO took the lead in representing Malay interests, several groups within the Malay constituency were not pleased with the conduct of the negotiations and were concerned about their own status and privileges after independence. Chief among them were the Malay royal families and the more conservative Malays who were concerned about the official status of the Malay language, culture and religion in the multiracial democracy to be created in August 1957.<sup>132</sup> The royal houses and PAS both protested against the formation of the Reid Commission, but to no avail.

Despite protests from various quarters, it was clear from the beginning that the process of negotiations between the British government and the leaders of Malaya was never intended to be an open and representative one. Unlike India, where a constituent assembly had been set up so that all sections of Indian society could be brought to the negotiating table, London had opted for a commission that dealt with a smaller number of politicians. This helped to speed up the process of negotiations, but it also meant that the Malayan constitution was not drafted through consultation with the Malayan people as a whole. As a result, the constitution finally drafted by the Reid Commission was seen as a foreign document rather than an indigenous one, leading critics to comment that if the process of negotiation had been more open and democratic, the final Malayan constitution would probably have been quite different and perhaps more Islamic in character.

On 14 July 1956, PAS submitted a memorandum to the Reid Commission that spelt out their concerns as well as demands. The party leaders insisted that Malayan national identity and character should be based mainly on Malay cultural identity and the religion of the Malays, Islam.<sup>133</sup> This would reflect the privileged status and rights of the Malays as the sons of the *bumiputera* (soil) and the rightful inheritors of the *tanah melayu* (Malay lands), a point touched upon in the opening paragraphs of the memorandum:

2. (a). This country is a Malay country and the rights of the Malays in Malaya have been from time to time historically proven and legally

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<sup>132</sup> PAS dalam *Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

recognised. The provision for the safeguarding of the special position of the Malays, which is included in the Commission's terms of reference, should not therefore be looked upon from a ground other than that Malaya belongs to the Malays. Any attempt, constitutionally or otherwise, to change that position is both contradictory to human rights and the principle of law. The Malays have only one position in this country and that is that they own this country, and that their sovereignty is the sovereignty of the country.<sup>134</sup>

In the memorandum, Dr Abbas and the PAS leaders also insisted that Malayan citizenship could not be given to all the non-Malays in the country purely on the basis of *jus soli*:

2. (g). The demands submitted by the other (non-Malay) communities for the rights of citizenship, be it in the form of *jus soli* or that of introducing relaxation in the conditions for citizenship, are clearly not founded on any difficulty in living peacefully and prosperously, ... but are rather motivated by their shared desire for political power which they already reasonably enjoy (sic). This kind of demand is not only uncalled for, but also gravely detrimental to the political progress of the country.<sup>135</sup>

On a more serious note, the memorandum stated that PAS would resist all attempts by the non-Malays to question, challenge or jeopardise the privileged status and rights of the Malays in the country.<sup>136</sup> It also stated that it would react against any attempts by the non-Malay and non-Muslim communities to gain a bigger share of political power in the country in the future:

2. (i). The Malays feel very much offended by those unjustifiable demands for political power since they are convinced by their unreasonableness (sic). This step will undermine the struggle of the people of this country to achieve independence; and this association (PAS) strongly opposes any step which may delay the independence of this country.<sup>137</sup>

The memorandum also made it blatantly clear that PAS was not about to compromise on the question of the place of Islam and

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 88–89.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

Muslim concerns in the country. It regarded Islam, Islamic values and Islamic practices as not only part and parcel of Malay (and thus Malayan) identity, but also the most appropriate guidelines for the future development and government of the nation:

8. One of the implications of the constitutional recognition of Malayan culture and Malayan education is that ISLAM should be the official religion in this country. This is far from a prejudiced point of view. But as the Commission itself has taken unto its shoulder the responsibility for introducing a second form of constitution for the federation, this association (PAS) feels that there shall be no neglect in this point (sic). This association (PAS) feels wholeheartedly that the precepts of Islam are capable of guiding the progress of this country in its future political evolution.<sup>138</sup>

But PAS's efforts to slow down the process of negotiations and to inject their own Malay-centric concerns and Islamist agenda into the discussions were futile in the long run. The Reid Commission and the UMNO and MCA representatives took note of some of the considerations and objections raised by Dr. Abbas and his party, but there was no attempt to radically alter the trajectory of developments. UMNO's dominant presence in the meetings of the commission and its claim to be the only party that truly reflected the overall concerns of the Malay-Muslims meant that the commission was allowed to continue with its proceedings as usual. When the commission finally concluded its work and submitted its report, UMNO was once again in a position to claim yet another triumph. Not only had it won the 1955 election hands-down, it had also managed to deliver to the Malays their cherished dream of an independent homeland of their own. Dr. Abbas and the PAS leaders were unable to stop the progress of the UMNO juggernaut as it slowly but steadily worked its way towards securing national independence on its own terms.

The period of Dr. Abbas's presidency (1953-56) was one when PAS was beginning to learn the ropes in the political arena of Malaya. Right up to the declaration of independence, the party's political fortunes and well-being were continually on the brink.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

Bachtiar Djamily described the first six years of PAS in the following terms:

*Ia berada dalam kandungan ibunya, ketika ayah-bundanya sedang bertelelengkah. Kemudian ia lahir dalam suasana yang tidak semua orang gembira padanya. Sejak kecil sampai ia memasuki Sekolah Melayu darjah enam, ia pergi dan pulang sekolah dengan pakaian yang sederhana, dengan belanja yang sangat sedikit, dengan teman-temannya yang tidak banyak, dengan kemiskinan yang tiada taranya. Ia dibesarkan dalam lingkungan serba tiada menurut nilai hidup yang telahpun serba mengalami derita dan sengsara. Itulah dia PAS dalam menginjakkan kakinya menjelang kemerdekaan negara ini.... Pada masa sekitar enam tahun ini, ditempuh oleh PAS dengan keadaan yang kerdil, penuh derita dan sengsara. PAS adalah suatu pertubuhan politik yang dilahirkan dari tulang rusuk UMNO....*<sup>139</sup>

Apart from the party's lack of financial resources and sound organisational structure, its own Islamist philosophy was also sorely in need of development. Dr. Abbas had tried his best to lead the party, but his leadership was less than inspired. He was regarded as a broad-minded and affable leader who was nonetheless somewhat ordinary in his leadership style and personality.<sup>140</sup> In his tem-

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<sup>139</sup> Translation: It was still in its mother's womb, when its parents were already quarrelling. When it was born, it emerged in a world where not all around it were happy with its coming. From its early days to the time when it finally went to Malay primary school, it wore only the most ordinary of clothes, had only the minimum amount of money, the fewest of friends and it experienced poverty that was unparalleled. It was brought up in an environment where it felt life's harshest blows. That was PAS, as it took its first steps when this country approached its independence... (p. 7). During these first six years, PAS endured the worst of hardships while it was still an infant. This party emerged from the rib of UMNO. (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 75). Bachtiar also notes that during these first few years PAS received little help, support or sympathy from any of the other parties. PAS 'emerged at a time when the Malay community was split within itself, and was facing threats from without in the form of the communists' (Ibid., p. 76). What made matters worse was that the party was already suffering from the negative image of being a party of reactionary fanatics and fundamentalist *ulama*, because of propaganda from UMNO and the Alliance (Ibid.).

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Haji Yusof Rawa, 18 August 1999.

perament and outlook, Dr. Abbas was in many ways a progressive and pragmatist, whose own view of Islamic politics was summed up by the call for an Islamic state in the most general sense imaginable.<sup>141</sup> As a consequence, the party did not have a comprehensive political philosophy or ideology of its own. The clash between 'Islam and secularism' had not yet appeared in PAS's political rhetoric, but its leaders and members were already being demonised as an assembly of '*lebai kolot*' and '*orang kampung miskin*' by its UMNO adversaries.<sup>142</sup> For this reason, PAS could not even claim to have the exclusive rights to call itself the country's main Islamic party: UMNO had claimed that privilege for itself.<sup>143</sup>

The other major drawback was that the party's president was also a functionary within the colonial service. Dr. Abbas's position as a doctor in the British colonial service meant that he was constantly under observation and supervision. The colonial authorities maintained its velvet grip, reminding him time and again of his medical duties and obligations and warning him of the consequences of dereliction of duty. Dr. Abbas was therefore not in a position to travel widely in the country, much less abroad. For this reason, the party remained a home-grown, local affair, cut off from the developments in other parts of the Islamic world. Isolated as it was, PAS was not able to win the recognition, sympathy or help from other Islamist parties and organisations that it so desperately needed.<sup>144</sup>

In the wake of the election debacle of 1955, the party leaders felt that major changes were necessary. Dr. Abbas realised that his own problematic position within the state medical services meant that he was not free to lead the party. Others felt there was a need for a more radical approach to their struggle. The party did not have a popular and charismatic leader like Kyai Wahab Hasbullah, the

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>142</sup> Bachtiar notes that at the time PAS was not only poor, but its membership was cast in stereotypical terms as '*orang surau yang konservatif, Ulama sempit fikiran dan orang kampung yang miskin*' (conservative *surau* residents, narrow-minded *ulama* and poor village people) (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 76).

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>144</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'Interview with Dr. Abbas Elias', p. 51.

president-general of NU in Indonesia.<sup>145</sup> The general consensus that the time had come for a new form of leadership led PAS leaders to approach radical nationalist Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy for help.

In the same year that witnessed the Suez crisis in Egypt (October–November 1956) and the defeat of Arab-Muslim forces at the hands of Britain, France and Israel, the mood in the country had changed in many respects. It was felt that the circumstances required a different kind of leader — one prepared and able to give the Islamic party a more dynamic and even radical image. Dr. Burhanuddin was widely regarded as the real leader of the radical nationalist camp, and he had played an important role in the formation of several radical nationalist parties, from PKMM to the *Parti Rakyat* and *Parti Buruh*. Yet he did not choose to lead either one of these two leftist parties. Many suspected that deep in his heart, Dr. Burhanuddin's own sympathies lay more with the radical Islamists than with the radical leftists. Dr. Abbas and other PAS leaders therefore directly appealed to Dr. Burhanuddin, and invited him to take over the leadership of the Islamist party. Their pleas were answered when the Doktor said 'yes' at the fifth party congress on 25 December 1956.

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<sup>145</sup> Kyai Wahab Hasbullah was elected as NU president-general in 1950 after the death of Kyai Hashim Asyari, NU's founder-president.

## Chapter 2

### 1956–1969: PAS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF DR. BURHANUDDIN AL-HELMI

There has come into the political arena a powerful factor: Young Malaya, with all the vigour that is latent in its blood. And to lead Young Malaya comes Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy....

Karim Ghani, writing in *The Comrade* (1946)<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Favoured Son: Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and the Radical Islamist Movement in Malaysia*

*Theocracy Islam itu nyata bukan cara 'theocracy' yang difahamkan oleh Barat. Jika teori sosialisme dan komunisme primitif itu menghendaki suatu 'collective', maka masyarakat primitif juga ada (persamaan dengan) suatu 'theocracy'. Hal ini terbukti dalam sejarah. Maka Islam ada jua theocracy collective atau theocracy sosialisme.*<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy,  
*Ideologi Politik Islam.*

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<sup>1</sup> Haja Maideen, *The Nadrah Tragedy*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Translation: An Islamic theocracy should not be confused with what is often called a 'theocracy' in the West. If the theory of primitive socialism or communism were based on the notion of a 'collective', then even a primitive society would have something in common with a theocratic collective. This is shown in history. Therefore an Islamic society would be in a sense a theocratic collective or a form of *continued p. 98*

For those who have studied the historical development of PAS, the years of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy's leadership appear as the period when the party was led by the most progressive Islamist intellectual in the country. Between 1956 and 1969 he developed the party from a small, marginalised and poorly organised body into a national political party with a broad-based ideological platform that brought together both radical nationalist and Islamist concerns.

Burhanuddin bin Mohammad Noor was born on 29 November 1911 in Changkat Tualang, Kota Bharu, Perak, the son of a Sumatran immigrant. His father, Haji Muhammad Noor, was a Minangkabau *alim* who taught *tasawuf* and also worked as an agriculturist. His mother was Sharifah Zahrah Habib Osman, a Malaccan woman of Malay-Arab Peranakan descent. They met in Perak after Haji Muhammad Noor had returned from the *haj* in Mecca.

Unlike other secular-minded Malay nationalists such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam, who were the products of British colonial education, Dr. Burhanuddin was very much the product of a traditional Malay-Muslim education. However, he differed from the rest of the traditionalist Malay-Muslim establishment in the *kind* of Islamic education he was given. In his youth he attended both Malay and Arabic schools, and he was sent to study at the *madrasah* of Sheikh Mohammad Khatib al-Minangkabawi in Sumatra for two years.<sup>3</sup> But he left the *madrasah* before the end of two years and returned to Malaya. He was dissatisfied with the traditional mode of religious education

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theocratic socialism. (Burhanuddin al-Helmy, 'Ideologi Politik Islam' (Islam's political ideology), in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 73).

<sup>3</sup> Burhanuddin travelled to Minangkabau, Sumatra with his father in 1926. In his father's home town of Batu Sangkar, Burhanuddin was introduced to the local *alim ulama*. From there he travelled to Sungai Jambu where he studied at the *madrasah* of Sheikh Mohammad Khatib, a close friend and ex-teacher of Burhanuddin's father.

based on rote learning and *taqlid* (blind imitation). Instead, he spent most of his time in Sumatra getting acquainted with local political activities and concerns. There he first came in contact with Indonesian nationalist activists and reformist *ulama* who opposed Dutch colonial rule. In particular, he was attracted to the anti-colonial struggle in Minangkabau led by the local Minang leader Haji Nordin.

In 1927, at the age of 16, Burhanuddin travelled to Penang to study at Syed Sheikh Ahmad al-Hadi's famous reformist Madrasah al-Mashoor where he was taught by the reformist *ulama* and friend of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, Sheikh Mohamad Tahir Jalaludin al-Azhari. Both Syed Sheikh al-Hadi and Sheikh Tahir were, as we have seen, leading figures in the reformist *Kaum Muda* movement who were keen to promote modern ideas and techniques in Muslim education. They were radical thinkers and reformers who challenged the dogmatic and conservative approach of the traditionalist *ulama* in the Malay kingdoms. Though their ideas were regarded as being unorthodox, confrontational, subversive and even irreligious, both men persevered and managed to inject new ideas and a radically different outlook on life within the staid discourse of Islam prevalent in the Malay world at that time. Sheikh Tahir introduced the young Burhanuddin to the ideas of the reformist Muslim thinkers Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. The future president of PAS was thus introduced to new currents of Islamic reformist thought from an early age.

In 1928, Burhanuddin left for further education in India. He studied homeopathic medicine at the Ismaileah Medical College at Secudrabad, Hyderabad, and later became famous as the first Malay to practise homeopathic medicine in Malaya.<sup>4</sup> After completing his medical studies he read philosophy at the Muhammadan Anglo-Indian College (Madrasat ul-U'lum Musalmanan) of Aligarh.<sup>5</sup>

Set up by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1875, Aligarh's aim was to create a pool of Muslim reformers to become the future leaders of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. 27.

the Muslim *ummah*.<sup>6</sup> The founders of Aligarh regarded the political, economic and socio-cultural subjugation of Muslims under Western colonial rule as one of the biggest obstacles to the revival of the spirit of Islam. Muslims, therefore, had to grapple with the challenges of modern-day colonialism, and modern education was thought to be one of the keys to progress. Aligarh's reformist and *mujhadid* (revivalist) outlook was heavily influenced by Syed Ahmad Khan's desire to purge the Muslim mind of the corrupting influences of *jahiliyyah* sectarianism, clan and tribal loyalties, subservience to pre-Islamic beliefs and practices as well as blind emulation of Western culture. In particular, he sought to cultivate a progressive, reformist and universalist approach to Islam that would go beyond both narrow sectarianism and the secular

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<sup>6</sup> The Muhammadan Anglo-Indian College (Madrasat ul-U'lum Musalmanan) of Aligarh, like its counterpart the Deobandi School of Islamic Teaching, was shaped by the values and worldview of the Wahhabi reformists of Arabia. Inspired by the *salafiyya* doctrines of the Wahhabi, the founders of Aligarh were keen to develop a new school of reformist Islam led by a new generation of Islamic reformers and *mujhadid* (revivalists). For this reason, Aligarh borrowed extensively from the practices and methods of the established colonial schools and Anglo-Indian colleges. It sought to improve upon the traditional mode of education provided at the conservative *madrasah* elsewhere in India. Over time, though, the Aligarh and Deobandi schools began to differ in their respective approaches. The Deobandi School became more interested in gradualist social reform through the purification of Islam, while Aligarh became more interested in the cultivation of Muslim élite and intellectuals. While the Deoband concentrated on the task of creating a network of orthodox and conservative-minded *ulama*, Aligarh focused on the need to create a modernist and progressive Muslim political élite to penetrate the colonial machinery of state and the worlds of commerce and administration. The élitist approach of Aligarh was reflected in the manners and values of its founder, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who was noted to have said that 'my university's seminars are not for the sons of peasants and weavers'. (For a historical account of the origins of Aligarh, see David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996 and Kenneth W. Jones, 'Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India', in *The New Cambridge History of India*, III(1), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.)

ideology of ethno-nationalism. Among the fraternity of famous 'Aaleegs' were men such as Liaqat Ali Khan, who later became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, and General Muhammad Ayub Khan, who came to power in Pakistan after a *coup*. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, though not a product of the school, nonetheless donated a fifth of his estate to the university.

Not all of Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas were well accepted at first. The man was a highly controversial figure who incurred the wrath of the traditionalist *ulama* when he openly questioned the existence of *djinn*, expressed his scepticism over the validity of some sections of the Hadith, and insisted on the unalienable right of *ijtihad* for all Muslims.<sup>7</sup> After he established his scientific society in 1864 and began to translate Western books on physics, logic and mathematics into Urdu, some *ulama* began to condemn him on the grounds that he was corrupting the minds of Muslim youth.

Despite the resistance that he faced from the *ulama*, Syed Ahmad Khan persisted in his efforts. He maintained that his intentions were:

to dispel those illusory traditions of the past which have hindered our progress, (and) to reconcile Oriental learning with Western literature and science (so as to) inspire in the dreamy minds of our people of the East the practical energy which belongs to the people of the West.<sup>8</sup>

To this end, Syed Ahmad Khan and his followers such as Sayyid Mahdi Ali favoured and promoted the ideas and teachings of Muslim philosophers of the Mutazilite school, who had argued that human beings were the primary agents and actors in the process of social development. The teachers at Aligarh also encouraged their students to engage in debates with one another, in the hope that it would broaden their minds and prepare them for the struggles that lay ahead of them. Aligarh instilled in the hearts and minds of its students the belief that Islam was a rational, scientific

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<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Aslam Syed, *The Muslim Response to the West: Muslim Historiography in India from 1857 to 1914*, Islamabad: National Institute for Historical and Cultural Research, 1988, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

and universal creed and that the Muslim *ummah* was an integrated whole. Thus the problems faced by contemporary Muslims could only be solved if and when they learned to unite and to live as true Muslims in the here-and-now. For scholars like Aslam Syed, the modernist approach of pioneers such as Syed Ahmad Khan, Sayyid Mahdi Ali and Syed Ameer Ali lay in their 'interpretation of Islam in a contemporary rather than historical context'.<sup>9</sup>

The founder of Aligarh also played an instrumental role in uniting Muslims in India when he launched the annual Muhammadan Educational Conference in the late 19th century. Syed Ahmad Khan's dream of creating a modern Muslim political élite came to fruition when the Muslim League of India was formed during the annual conference meeting in Dacca in 1906. Its first leader was the Aga Khan, and from 1935 the League was led by the charismatic figure of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.<sup>10</sup>

It was in India that Burhanuddin first came to drink from the well of modernist Muslim thought. At Aligarh he came into contact with modernist Muslim reformers who taught him that the future of Islam and the Muslims did not lie in empty slogans or esoteric formulae as some of the traditionalist *ulama* claimed. The panacea for the ills of the Muslims lay in coming to terms with their lot in the present, trying to understand the causes of their decline and to work out rational, systematic and practical programmes of action. Medicine and philosophy were not the only things he learnt there: in India he had his first taste of politics.

Kamaruddin Jaffar and Haja Maideen have noted that while in India Burhanuddin was said to have had personal contact with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who later became leader of the Muslim

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> When the Muslim League was first formed, Muhammad Ali Jinnah was not one of its supporters. He was still loyal to the idea of a united India that was the goal of the Indian Congress Party. From 1927-35, he was very much in the political wilderness. He spent some time in London, and even contemplated settling in England for good. He was finally persuaded to return to India in 1935 and took up the leadership of the Muslim League when his own demands on the Congress were not met.

League.<sup>11</sup> There he learnt about the plight of the Muslim world and the ways in which Islam's attempt to rebuild itself was being constantly thwarted by the Western imperial powers. Young Muslim activists the world over were beginning to mobilise themselves in defence of their faith and identity. Soekarno had formed *Partai Nasionalis Indonesia* (PNI) in 1927. Further to the west, *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin* (Muslim Brotherhood) was founded by Egyptian leader Hassan al-Banna in 1928 while the Muslim League was fighting for Muslim autonomy in an increasingly divided India. (It was not only the Muslim world that was changing. In the same year that Soekarno launched PNI, the Thai People's Party was launched by young Siamese lawyer Pridi Banomyong.)

The young Pak Doktor was moved by these developments. The fate of Palestine, in particular, compelled him to commit himself to the political struggle in defence of the Islamic world. For his efforts, he was arrested by the British security forces in Palestine when he took part in the Arab protest movements against the Balfour Declaration. By the time his education was completed, he was articulate in Malay, Arabic, English, French, Dutch as well as some Urdu.<sup>12</sup> While in India Burhanuddin also was introduced to the various Sufi *tariqa* active in the subcontinent. In particular, he was attracted to *Naqshabandiyya Tariqa* that was also active in the Malay archipelago and had played a prominent role in the development of political consciousness of the Malay-Muslims of Nusantara.

Pak Doktor finally returned to Malaya in 1937.<sup>13</sup> His commitment to the reformist school of Islamic thought compelled him towards political activism and the struggle against both colonial rule and Malay feudalism. He and other reformers became

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<sup>11</sup> Kamaruddin Jaffar, 'Perjuangan dan Pemikiran Politik Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi', *Akademika*, 15 (1979). See also Haja Maideen, *The Nadrah Tragedy*, p. 141.

<sup>12</sup> Haja Maideen, *The Nadrah Tragedy*, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin was affectionately known as 'Pak Doktor' to many of his friends and supporters. The nickname remained with him to the end of his life. (Saliha Haji Hassan, 'Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi: The Ideas of a Malay Nationalist', *Malaysia in History*, XXII(1) (1974).)

involved in all kinds of political, social and religious disputes with the traditional religious and political élite, over issues ranging from Malay customs to the cleanliness of dogs.<sup>14</sup> It was not long before the traditional élite of the *Kaum Tua* school reacted to some of his novel and radical ideas. In the end, he was forced to leave his home town by order of the Mufti of Perak Haji Muhammad Zain, who had appealed to Sultan Iskandar to rid the state of such modernist reformists.<sup>15</sup> Though the Malay Sultans were effectively powerless and impotent before the advances of the British colonial authorities, they still wielded enough power and authority in their own states with respect to their own Malay-Muslim subjects.

Having no choice but to leave Perak, Pak Doktor travelled to Singapore — then a den of *Kaum Muda* activism. In Singapore, he taught at Madrasah al-Juneid, but through his writings and activities he quickly came to be identified with the younger generation of reformers who took on the might of both the colonial establishment as well as the traditional ruling élite and their religious bureaucracy. While in Singapore Dr. Burhanuddin came into contact with Onn Jaafar (the future founder-president of UMNO), who was then editor of *Lembaga Malaya*. In 1937, he founded and published a reformist magazine of his own, *Taman Bahagia*. Pak Doktor had assembled the editorial team of the magazine which they proposed to use as a platform to raise Muslim concerns, including the question of Palestine. This publication was not destined to live long: one hour after the first issue was printed and

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<sup>14</sup> Clive Kessler notes that the younger generation of Malay Muslim thinkers were more than willing to take on the power of the traditional ruling élite who dominated the various religious councils of the states, including *Majlis Agama Kelantan*. In 1937, these debates reached a climax when members of the Kelantanese ruling élite brought up the issue of the cleanliness of dogs. This debate became so intense that the matter was finally referred to the learned scholars of Cairo for adjudication. Kessler notes that in these debates 'a leading role on the modernist side was played by Dr. Burhanuddin'. (Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1938-1969*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978, p. 58 n. 38.)

<sup>15</sup> Ramlah Adam, *Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy: Suatu Kemelut Politik*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996, p. 13.

distributed, Dr. Burhanuddin was arrested by the British authorities and the remaining copies of the magazine were confiscated. He was imprisoned for six months on the charge of spreading seditious material against the government.

In 1939, he became a member of *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM) through his associate Mustapha Hussain, and thus joined the ranks of the radical Malay nationalist movement alongside more 'secular' radical nationalists such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam<sup>16</sup> (though Ramlah Adam claims that Pak Doktor was never part of the 'inner circle' of Ibrahim Yaakob).<sup>17</sup> The KMM radicals were keen observers of developments outside the narrow confines of British Malaya. Their role models at the time were the radical nationalist leaders Soekarno and Muhammad Hatta of neighbouring Indonesia.

For Dr. Burhanuddin in particular, Soekarno was an enigmatic figure whose appeal lay in his ability to bring together the elements of Islamist, leftist and nationalist thought. While other Malay radicals such as Ibrahim Yaakob were attracted by the Marxist, anti-colonialist and nationalist views of Soekarno, Dr. Burhanuddin was attracted by the Indonesian leader's progressive approach to Islam.

It was well known that Soekarno regarded himself as a 'progressive Muslim' in his own right. While living in exile in Flores in 1933-37, Soekarno's constant reading companion was *The Spirit of Islam* by Bengali modernist reformer Syed Ameer Ali.<sup>18</sup> In this book, Ameer Ali spoke of the need for a 'deliverer' who would restore to Islam its dynamism and progressive outlook, so that Muslims would be able to match the achievements of

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<sup>16</sup> Kamarudin Jaffar, 'Perjuangan dan Pemikiran Politik Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy', p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Ramlah Adam, *Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita Bersama Islam: Tumbuh Tiada Berbuah*, Singapore: Pustaka Nasional Press, 1979, p. 107. Ameer Ali was the founder of the National Muhammadan Association of India (est. 1877) and was a key figure of the Indian Muslim modernist movement along with Syed Ahmad Khan and Sayyid Mahdi Ali of Aligarh.

the Europeans<sup>19</sup> — something with which Soekarno and Dr. Burhanuddin could only agree. (That Soekarno also took part in other less-than-Islamic activities such as the sacrificial ceremonies on the slopes of Mount Kalimutu while he was in Flores was something that Dr. Burhanuddin and the Islamists did not realise or preferred to ignore.)<sup>20</sup>

Later, Soekarno came under the sway of his father-in-law Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, the founder of *Sarekat Islam*, who argued that Islam was not only compatible with socialism, but that in its essence Islam *was* socialism realised.<sup>21</sup> Soekarno's own progressive and modernist outlook, his condemnation of traditional feudal values, as well as the rigid dogmatism and obscurantism of the *ulama*, all suggested to Dr. Burhanuddin that he was the ideal modern Muslim and the man of the era.

Apart from their admiration for men like Soekarno and Hatta, the KMM members also looked to other Islamist and radical nationalist movements in countries like Indonesia, India and Egypt. Dr. Burhanuddin, Ibrahim Yaakob and others secretly joined Soekarno's PNI, and Dr. Burhanuddin also joined *Sarekat Islam*. They were inspired by the activism and energy of these nationalist and Islamist movements that seemed able to mobilise large numbers of supporters and rally them to their cause. Examples of Muslim activism could be found everywhere: In

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<sup>19</sup> Syed Ameer Ali's *Spirit of Islam*, published in 1922, was a reworked and expanded version of his earlier text *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teaching of Muhammad* (1873). In his work, he argued for the historical necessity of Islam and attempted to counter the negative image of Islam presented by Western Orientalist scholars (Syed Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideas of Islam*, London: Christophers Publishing, 1922).

<sup>20</sup> The sacrificial ceremonies on the slopes of Kalimutu volcano in Flores had been traditional customs of the people for generations. While living in exile there, Soekarno took part in some of these ceremonies, which involved animal sacrifices. Soekarno's followers later claimed these ceremonies were actually secret political meetings where Soekarno met some of his fellow nationalists and supporters.

<sup>21</sup> Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, 'Islam dan Sosialisme', in Jomo K. S. (ed.), *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Kuala Lumpur: Ikraq Press, 1988, p. iv.

neighbouring Indonesia, the biggest Islamist organisations of the country — *Muhamadijjah*, *Sarekat Islam* and *Nahdatul Ulama* — united to form *Madjlis Islam A'laa Indonesia* (MIAI) in 1937. In India, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and leaders of the Muslim League put forth the Lahore declaration in 1940, calling for autonomy for Muslims based on their 'two-nation' theory. Everywhere it seemed that Muslims were beginning to clamour for their rights and were prepared to fight for their independence.

But just as these developments were gaining momentum and the Islamists seemed to be gaining ground, World War II broke out. Muslims all over the world were caught in a dilemma not of their own making: To support the colonial powers of the West, or the emerging Axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. In the Malay archipelago, the choice presented before the Malayan and Indonesian Islamists was not an easy one.

During the Japanese occupation of 1941-45, Dr. Burhanuddin, like many other Malay Islamists, was forced to take a back seat in the political developments of the country. As seen earlier, the Japanese preferred to promote the radical nationalists whom they regarded as being more anti-British and thus malleable to their interests. The Japanese attempt to co-opt the Malay-Muslim leadership in the country failed because they had courted only a small section of the traditional Malay élite. The more Islamically oriented nationalists were relegated to the margins and not given an opportunity to establish themselves politically.

The Japanese were more cautious about Dr. Burhanuddin, and he was given little to do and even less opportunity to spread his own ideas and influence. One of the few positions he was allowed to hold was adviser on Malay customs and culture to the Japanese Command Centre in Taiping, Perak.<sup>22</sup> While there he worked towards developing the educational activities of Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif at Gunung Semanggul. Constantly under the surveillance of the Japanese authorities, Pak Doktor tried, nonetheless, to continue his efforts to propagate Islam and his Islamist ideology to those prepared to listen. On a few

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<sup>22</sup> Kamarudin Jaffar, 'Perjuangan dan Pemikiran Politik Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy', p. 33.

occasions he addressed the communist guerrillas of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) operating in the jungle. Pak Doktor even managed to convert a few of them to Islam and his line of thinking.<sup>23</sup>

Pak Doktor's only opportunity came when he was invited to lead the Japanese-sponsored, short-lived KRIS movement. For a while it seemed there might be a chance of rejuvenating the nationalist struggle in Malaya after all. When Dr. Burhanuddin met Soekarno and Hatta in person in Taiping on 12 August 1945, it looked as if the goal of a united and independent Greater Malaya encompassing the entire archipelago was within reach. Pak Doktor had asked Soekarno to convince his fellow Indonesian nationalists of the need to integrate Malaya into the new Indonesian state, something that Soekarno personally agreed to raise with the Badan Penyelidikan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Indonesian Independence Planning Committee) on his return to Indonesia.<sup>24</sup> Expectations of the Malayan and Indonesian nationalists and Islamists were at their peak then, even though it was clear the tide of the war was turning and the Western powers were slowly regaining the ground they had lost in the Japanese onslaught. Hussein Mutalib has noted that 'Dr. Burhanuddin could have become the first Prime Minister of Malaya had not the Japanese surrendered so suddenly in

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<sup>23</sup> Hussein Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1993, p. 24. One of the communist guerrillas Dr. Burhanuddin converted to Islam was Gerald de Cruz, who later became a member of the Muslim Converts Association of Singapore.

<sup>24</sup> Soekarno and Hatta were in Malaya *en route* from Saigon to Indonesia. Also present at the meeting was Ibrahim Yaakob, the radical Malay nationalist who later fled to Indonesia and set up PKMM's headquarters in exile in Jakarta (Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. xvi). Soekarno raised the matter of Malayan-Indonesian integration with the independence committee, but the Malayan proposal was turned down as the committee feared it might compromise the security interests of the new Indonesian republic (Magso Yamin Nashkoh, *Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*, Jakarta: Jajasan Prapantja, 1959, pp. 206-210).

August 1945'.<sup>25</sup> But in the end KRIS was a failure and the Japanese occupation a major disappointment for him.

The Japanese occupation did not help the cause of emancipation, either. Dr. Burhanuddin quickly realised that the Japanese military establishment was not about to sponsor or assist in the rejuvenation of the political project of the Malay-Muslims. Like the Siamese Buddhist leader Pridi Banomyong, Dr. Burhanuddin did not lend his support to the Japanese war effort because he did not believe that the Japanese army was there to help elevate the condition of the native people of Southeast Asia. (On a more personal level, Pak Doktor also suffered the human costs of the Japanese occupation: he lost one of his sisters during the period.) He later condemned secular radical nationalists such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Ishak Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam for their naive belief in the promises of the Japanese army administration. To those who supported and collaborated with the Japanese war effort, he had this to say:

*Kemenangan Jepun — Adapula orang yang berfikiran singkat turut suka dengan kemenangan Jepun itu. Tetapi itu bukan kemenangan kita. Itu bukan kemenangan bangsa Melayu. Kebangsaan Melayu telah mendapat penandangan dan pelajaran.*<sup>26</sup>

Despite these setbacks, Dr. Burhanuddin's interest in politics did not wane. His political activities abroad and his experiences during the Japanese occupation convinced him that the plight of the Malays was only a small part of a broader problem that could not be solved via a simplistic form of ethno-nationalist politics. Deplorable though the condition of the Malays had become during the war, they were not the only ones living under the yoke of Western (and later, Japanese) colonial rule. His earlier experiences in India and Palestine had shown him that the Muslims' lot was a common one the world over.

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<sup>25</sup> Hussein Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Translation: On the Japanese victory — there are some short-sighted individuals who felt happy with the victory of the Japanese army. But that was not our victory. It was not a victory of the Malay people. In reality Malay nationalism received a blow and we have learnt our lesson (Burhanuddin al-Helmy, *Perjuangan Kita*, p. 26).

Pak Doktor had come to realise that imperialism in all its forms (be it Western or Asian) could throw up insurmountable obstacles to hinder the development of subjugated peoples and civilisations. The Muslim world, in particular, was hardly in a position to challenge the dominance of the West over the rest as long as the Muslim *ummah* remained divided along boundaries of nation and race.<sup>27</sup> Pak Doktor felt that the best way to overcome this predicament was by broadening the outlook of the Malays and forging a greater sense of unity that would transcend the artificial barriers of race and ethnicity which had been constructed by the ideologues of Empire and the ethno-nationalists of the resurgent South.

*Enter Pak Doktor: Dr. Burhanuddin and the Philosophy of  
Islamist-Nationalism*

*Seorang mukmin dengan seorang mukmin yang lain itu seperti batu bata yang tersusun pada suatu bangunan istana sekeping dengan sekeping yang lain, menguatkan suatu dengan yang lain. Ini adalah ibarat yang diberi oleh Nabi kita bagaimana membela kekuatan bangunan kebangsaan dan Islam.<sup>28</sup>*

Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy,  
*Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu:  
Tak Melayu Hilang Di Dunia*

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<sup>27</sup> It is significant that by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the only Muslim states not under direct and total Western imperial rule were Ottoman Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. The rest of the Islamic world was ruled either directly or indirectly through puppet rulers sponsored and 'advised' by Western powers.

<sup>28</sup> Translation: Each Muslim is to his brother like a brick next to another, built into the walls of a palace, each reinforcing and supporting the other. This is the analogy that was given to us by the Prophet, to show how we can defend the strength of our nation and of Islam. (Burhanuddin al-Helmy, *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu: Tak Melayu Hilang di Dunia*, 2nd edn., Bukit Mertajam: Pustaka Semenanjung, 1954, p. 51.)

Dr. Burhanuddin's first foray into the world of politics came when he, with a number of prominent Malay radical nationalists such as Mokhtaruddin Lasso, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Muhammad and radical *ulama* Ustaz Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir formed *Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* (PKMM) (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya) on 17 October 1945. As seen earlier, PKMM was the first expression of radical Malay nationalism that took the form of an organised political party. In 1946, Pak Doktor took over the presidency of PKMM after it was abandoned by its first president, the communist Mokhtaruddin Lasso.

Despite the sudden and unexpected loss of Mokhtaruddin, the majority of PKMM's leaders were radical nationalists with strong leftist inclinations: Sultan Djenain served as PKMM's main link to *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) (Indonesian Communist Party). A number of other prominent Malay communists were also party members: Musa Ahmad, ex-head of MCP, became head of BATAS, PKMM's peasants' front; Dahari Ali, first secretary of PKMM; Abdul Rashid Mydin, who was also active in MCP, and Abdullah Cet Det, who was active in MCP and was later promoted to commander of the MCP's 10th Malay regiment.<sup>29</sup> Abdullah became

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<sup>29</sup> Already an active member of MCP when he joined PKMM, Abdullah Cet Det became commander of MCP's 10th Malay regiment in 1950 when MCP turned to active confrontation against the Malayan government. But one year later, he was demoted when it was discovered he was having a love affair with the wife of another MCP leader, Ng Chin Ki (@ Ah Shek), commander of MCP's 6th regiment (Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 178). Abdullah was replaced by another Malay communist leader, Abdul Rashid Mydin (who had escaped from a Malacca prison). Abdullah remained an active but unimportant member of MCP for the next few years. He saw active duty again in the 1960s when the 10th Malay regiment was regrouped in southern Thailand, close to the Kelantan border. Once again it was under Abdullah's command while Rashid Mydin was second-in-command. Abdullah's daughter Suraya also joined the MCP and was sent to China for ideological indoctrination. On her return to Malaysia she joined the editorial board of MCP's clandestine radio station, the Voice of the Malayan Revolution (VOMR) *continued p. 112*

head of PKMM's bureau for workers and union affairs. On 4 March 1946, PKMM launched its own paper, *Pelita Malaya* (Torch of Malaya). Pak Doktor used *Pelita* to openly call for closer co-operation and eventual integration of Malaya and Indonesia. In 1946, he wrote:

*Bersatu ialah kekuatan kita: Dan apabila kita ada kekuatan barulah kita akan berupaya membuat dan menghasilkan apa jua yang kita citakan — menyeberang Selat Melaka, mengibar bendera merah-puteh, merdeka.*<sup>30</sup>

At this time a host of pro-Indonesian movements were being formed all over Malaya and Singapore. They included *Pembantu Indonesia Merdeka* (PIM) (Supporters of Independent Indonesia), *Partai Republik Indonesia* (PRI) (Republican Party of Indonesia), *Partai Buruh Indonesia* (PBI) (Indonesian Workers' Party) and *Kelab Buruh Indonesia* (KBI) (Indonesian Workers' Club). For many Malay nationalists like Pak Doktor whose families had originally migrated from Indonesia, support for the pro-independence movement in Indonesia came naturally. Dr. Burhanuddin was particularly close to PIM and he often met its leaders at PKMM's main office at Batu Road in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>31</sup>

Those who knew Dr. Burhanuddin at the time regarded him as one of the most skilful orators and thinkers in the radical Malay nationalist camp. But his fellow radicals were also aware of Dr. Burhanuddin's religious educational background and his commitment to political Islam. What differentiated him from other

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which had its main base in Hengyang province, southern China. Lim (ibid.) has described Abdullah as the 'preserved' leader of the MCP's Malay contingent. He was later elevated to MCP chairman for the signing of the peace accord between MCP and the Malaysian government on 2 December 1989.

<sup>30</sup> Translation: Unity is our strength: And only when we are united will we be strong enough to do whatever we dream of — crossing the Malacca Straits, with the red-and-white banner (of independence) flying, Independence (Burhanuddin al-Helmy, *Pelita Malaya*, 5 April 1946).

<sup>31</sup> Ramlah Adam, *Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy*, p. 44.

Islamist activists was his ability to discuss and engage with non-religious groups and activists (like the communists, socialists and nationalists) who did not share his religious commitment. In his biography of Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam praises his open-mindedness and calm approach towards political matters: '*Saya mengkagumi kebesaran Dr. Burhanuddin sebagai seorang pembela Islam yang tenang — paling tenang.*'<sup>32</sup>

To this end, he began developing his own Islamist political philosophy which differed from that of the 'secular' radical Malay nationalists of his generation. It was an ideology of anti-colonialism which saw the goals of ethno-nationalism as merely a step towards a higher aim of universal brotherhood and equality, with the defence and promotion of Islam and Islamic ideals as its ultimate objective.

This project was first developed in one of Dr. Burhanuddin's earliest political texts; a short tract entitled *Perjuangan Kita* (Our Struggle), written in 1946.<sup>33</sup> He argued that the goal of building a strong, independent and sovereign Malay nation could not succeed without also attempting to rebuild the religious foundations of Malay society. For him, the relationship between religion and society was a mutually interdependent one. The fate of one would invariably affect the other, and the struggle of Malay nationalism had to be linked to the rejuvenation of Islam:

*Selagi belum sesuatu bangsa itu kuat maka Uğama(nya) juga tidak boleh turut kuat.... Kesihatan watan itu daripada iman. Iman adalah sawah uğama.... Kita pandang dari segi falsafah dan kita susunkan dengan pemandangan yang begini:*

- (1) Iman
- (2) Tubuh diri
- (3) Bangsa
- (4) Watan (Tanahair)

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<sup>32</sup> Translation: 'I admired the greatness of Dr. Burhanuddin who was the calmest among the defenders of the faith (Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin: Putera Setia Melayu Raya*, p. 8).

<sup>33</sup> Burhanuddin al-Helmi, *Perjuangan Kita*. The first commemorative text of the PKMM, celebrating the first year of its activities.

*Empat serangkai dalam binaan watan: Iman berdiri diatas tubuh, tubuh berdiri diatas bangsa, bangsa berdiri diatas watan.*<sup>34</sup>

In the same way that the strength of the nation would depend on the strength of the people's religious conviction, so the strength of the nation's religious institutions depended upon the will of the people:

*Adanya watan itu adalah dengan kuat bangsa. Kekuatan bangsa keluar dari tubuh diri pekerja (dan) perajurit. Dalam jiwa pekerja (dan) perajurit itulah letaknya iman... Bangsa (yang) lemah jadilah Ugama yang lemah.*<sup>35</sup>

By then the need to build up a strong and committed nation of Muslim believers was the central aim of Pak Doktor's project. His insistence on rebuilding the project of Malay nationalism upon the foundations of Islam had its roots in the tradition of Muslim political thought that went back several centuries. However, for this ambitious project to succeed it was imperative that the Malays should transcend their political and ethnic differences and come together as a single force, united by their religious beliefs and religious identity.

In *Perjuangan*, Pak Doktor called for the Malays to transcend their narrow ethnocentrism and parochialism to focus on the wider struggle against foreign domination and the exploitation of their economy. He cited the traditional Islamic argument against all

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<sup>34</sup> Translation: As long as a nation has not regained its strength, so will the religious conviction of its people remain weak... The strength of a nation depends upon its faith. Faith is the basis of religion... From a philosophical standpoint we can list the components in a descending order: (1) Faith, (2) The Individual, (3) The Nation, (4) The State. These are the four links in the formation of a nation-state: Faith comes before the individual, the individual before the nation and the nation before the State (*ibid.*, p. 39).

<sup>35</sup> Translation: The existence of a political nation-state/homeland comes from the strength of the people. The strength of the people comes from the workers and fighters. In the spirit of the workers and fighters lies their faith. A weak nation will invariably entail a weakened religion as well (*ibid.*, p. 40).

forms of narrow and *asabiyyah* (chauvinistic communalism) which were regarded as remnants of a pre-Islamic and un-Islamic past: 'Dalam Islam dilarang berpuak2 dan berbangsa yang sempit. ...Tiada berpuak2 dalam Islam, iaitu seperti berpuak2 zaman jahiliah itu.'<sup>36</sup>

Dr. Burhanuddin's philosophy of broad-based non-racialised nationalism was later summed up by Ahmad Boestamam thus:

*Diatas segala-galanya, mendiang Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy adalah seorang patriot. Dan kalau kepada beliau hendak diberikan suatu gelaran maka gelaran yang tepat, layak dan sesuai dan hak sekali bagi beliau ialah Bapak Kebangsaan Melayu....*

*Sebuah negara yang merdeka memerlukan suatu 'bangsa negara'. Ini suatu kemestian. Dan mendiang Dr. Burhanuddin, sejak mula berjuang lagi sehinggalah kepada saat beliau menghembuskan nafasnya yang terakhir, masih tetap mengingini 'bangsa negara' itu dinamakan 'Melayu'... 'Melayu' mengikut istilah beliau mempunyai pengertian yang luas dan progresip — ya, paling luas dan progresip. Siapa saja yang mengaku taat setia kepada negeri ini yang tidak berbelah bagi, asal bersedia mengaku dirinya 'Melayu' boleh diterima menjadi rakyat 'Malaya Merdeka' yang beliau ingini. Tidak ada perhitungan 'darah' diberikan sedikit padanya...'<sup>37</sup>*

Pak Doktor began to propagate this view as soon as PKMM was formed in 1945. As the party's president, he continued to

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<sup>36</sup> Translation: Within Islam there is no space for any kinds of narrow communalism. There is no communalism within Islam as there was during the times of *jahiliah* (the age of ignorance) (*ibid.*, p. 43).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. Translation: Above all else, Dr. Burhanuddin was a patriot. And if we were to honour him with a title that was accurate, worthy, suitable and rightfully his, it would be as the father of Malay nationalism... Each nation-state must be built on a national community of its own. That is a fundamental necessity. And the late Dr. Burhanuddin had struggled all his life, to his dying breath, to ensure that the 'Malayan nation' be called the 'Melayu nation'... 'Melayu', for him, was understood in the broadest and most progressive sense, — yes, *the* broadest and most progressive sense. Whoever was loyal to the country and who was willing to call himself 'Melayu' was part of 'independent Malaya'. No consideration was given to the notion of 'purity of blood' in anyone....

emphasise to its members the importance of going beyond the politics of race and ethnicity, much to the discomfort of some members.<sup>38</sup>

Pak Doktor's reputation as a progressive nationalist and Islamist was thus firmly established by the mid-1940s. As a committed nationalist as well as a progressive Islamist no one in the whole country could equal him. As president of PKMM he played a major role in organising the MATA conference at Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya Gunung Semanggul which led to the creation of the country's first Islamic party, *Hizbul Muslimin*. In the end, however, it became clear that Dr. Burhanuddin's broad Islamist outlook could not be brought into line with the more ethnocentric and culturally specific demands of some sections of PKMM. Internal conflicts had begun to appear within PKMM and eventu-

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<sup>38</sup> A PKMM stalwart with deep misgivings about Dr. Burhanuddin's radical 'new' interpretation of 'Malayness' was Ahmad Boestamam, leader of API, PKMM's youth wing. He recounts an incident when he openly confronted the party president with his fears: '*Saya telah pernah berbincang dengannya dan meninjau fikirannya tentang pengertian 'kerakyatan Melayu' ini. Pada mulanya saya agak ragu2 juga padanya. PKMM memperjuangkan ideologi 'kebangsaan yang luas' atau 'broad nationalism'. Yang demikian pengertian Melayu dalam kontek race sudah tentu sahaja bertentangan dengan ideologi 'kebangsaan yang luas' ini, demikian saya berfikir. "Tetapi pengertian kerakyatan Melayu saya itu bukanlah dalam kontek race melainkan sebaliknya dalam kontek nation", dia menjelaskan kepada saya. Ertinya Doktor bersedia menerima orang2 bukan Melayu menurut pengertian race menjadi rakyat negeri ini asalkan mereka memenuhi syarat2 yang ditentukan.* Translation: Once I approached him (Dr. Burhanuddin) and questioned him about what he meant by 'Malay citizenship'. I felt uneasy about this idea myself. PKMM was fighting on the basis of 'broad nationalism'. But surely the notion of Malay identity would come into conflict with such a broad strategy as this, or so I thought. 'But my understanding of Malay identity is not founded on the concept of 'race', but in the context of the 'nation', he assured me. This meant that (he) was willing to accept all those not of the 'Malay race' as part of the 'Malay nation' provided they lived up to certain requirements (ibid., p. 27).

ally even Pak Doktor could not restrain the more radical and zealous elements within his party.<sup>39</sup>

In December 1947, at the annual meeting of PKMM at the *istana* of Kampung Gelam, Singapore, Dr. Burhanuddin was removed from the post of party president and the leadership was passed over to Ishak Haji Muhammad.<sup>40</sup> Hussein notes that: 'It was his Islamic orientation, particularly his emphasis on justice and sincerity in one's defence of the faith, that lost him (Dr. Burhanuddin) the leadership of the PKMM not long after he himself had founded it.'<sup>41</sup>

While younger radicals like Ahmad Boestamam were in awe of Pak Doktor's stature and restrained demeanour, they nevertheless preferred a leader with a more fiery temperament. As a result of the internal *coup* within PKMM, Dr. Burhanuddin was 'elevated' to the post of chief adviser, but given little power and control over

<sup>39</sup> A rift within PKMM had already occurred by the second congress in 1946. By then, API (PKMM's radical youth wing) had broken away and enjoyed a semi-independent existence of its own. The leader of API, Ahmad Boestamam, was excluded from holding a senior post in PKMM, and in July 1947 the movement was banned with the declaration of National Emergency.

<sup>40</sup> In his memoirs, Ahmad Boestamam recounts the crisis that led to Dr. Burhanuddin's demotion. PKMM's members were worried about Dr. Burhanuddin's relaxed manner in accepting UMNO renegades who defected from their party and joined PKMM in the late 1940s: '*Orang2 yang telah meninggalkan UMNO masuk PKMM tidaklah juga sedikit jumlahnya. Dan orang2 ini akan segera diperchayai sekalipun mereka meninggalkan UMNO semata-mata kerana merajuk tak dapat pangkat dan kedudukan.... Sejak itu bermulalah suatu usaha senyap2 hendak menggantikan pimpinan PKMM dari Dr. Burhanuddin kepada Enche Ishak bin Haji Mohammad. Enche Ishak sendiri tidak tahu dan tidak diberitahu tentang ini.*' Translation: The number of people leaving UMNO and joining PKMM were not inconsiderable. And these people were trusted (by Dr. Burhanuddin) even though they had left UMNO simply because of their personal grievances at not being given ranks and posts... Since then moves were quietly made to transfer the leadership of the party from Dr. Burhanuddin to Ishak Haji Mohammad. Mr. Ishak himself was not aware of these moves, and neither was he told of them (Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin*, p. 32).

<sup>41</sup> Hussein Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia*, p. 24.

the running of the party. Instead of managing the party's affairs, Pak Doktor was given the task of presenting the more moderate face of the movement. This he did at a number of local and international conferences such as the anti-imperialist Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947.

Dr. Burhanuddin continued to play an active role within PKMM, but the fate of all the radical Malay nationalist movements was decided by other factors and circumstances beyond their control. In 1948, the growing tension between the colonial authorities and the radical nationalists, socialists and communists reached its peak. After the killing of several British planters and attacks on various British colonial enterprises by communist insurgents, a state of Emergency was declared on 19 June 1948. Other radical parties and movements such as API and MCP were banned. Several radical Malay nationalists, including Ishak Haji Muhammad and Ahmad Boestamam, were rounded up and detained without trial according to the Emergency regulations of the time.

The Emergency effectively neutralised the threat of the Malay radical movements. Most of their leaders were either under detention or had escaped into exile. The Malay communists who escaped the nation-wide crackdown gave up the political process and turned to the gun instead: In 1949, communist leader Osman China formed the MCP's 10th Malay regiment and led his troops into the jungle to carry out a guerrilla war that lasted till the 1980s.<sup>42</sup> Others radical leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin found

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<sup>42</sup> Osman China was a leader of the Malay contingent of MCP, which paid for his education at Raffles College in Singapore prior to World War II. He returned to the Malayan mainland in 1948 and supported Chin Peng's decision to declare war against the state. Osman helped to set up MCP's 10th Malay regiment which was officially launched on 21 May 1949, and served as its propaganda chief. The regiment was the largest of the MCP forces, but Lim Cheng Leng (*The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 176) notes that it was also the most poorly armed and trained. The Malay troops were given the most basic training and the most basic weaponry. Many were simply instructed in the Malay art of *silat* (martial arts) and not given any weapons. As a result, the regiment suffered very high casualty rates and desertion was common. *continued p. 119*

themselves bereft of the party-political machinery necessary for their projects. Years later, he would comment on this period of isolation thus:

Since the banning of the MNP (PKMM) and other Malay left wing organisations in 1948, I was rendered politically inactive. So has been the fate of many thousands of others in this country. The Emergency Regulations literally stifled political life and activity so much that no honest and sincere nationalist or patriot could survive under those circumstances. We were rendered inactive because all honest and sincere political parties and organisations had fallen victims to the Emergency laws.<sup>43</sup>

Robbed of a party to call his own, Dr. Burhanuddin was forced to struggle as an individual activist and thinker. He began to speak and write for the local vernacular Malay press on issues related to Malay-Muslim concerns as well as trying to challenge some of the more traditional and conservative attitudes towards Islam of the conservative Malay élite. In 1950, he took part in the 'Nadrah' controversy that involved the fate of Maria Hertogh, a Dutch girl who had converted to Islam and married a Malay-Muslim, Mansoor Adabi (the son of Kadir Adabi, an active KMM member). When the British and Dutch colonial authorities declared that the Muslim marriage between the two was null and void and that Nadrah was to be repatriated to the Netherlands against her wishes, Dr. Burhanuddin, with a number of other Malay and Peranakan Muslim radicals, took the lead in the struggle to defend her rights and the status of Malay-Muslim customs and Islamic laws.

In response to the action of the British authorities, Dr. Burhanuddin and Abdul Muhammad formed *Jawatankuasa Tindakan Nadrah* (Nadrah Action Committee). Pak Doktor also

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By 1951, the unit was practically disabled (though it was revived time and again up to the 1980s). In 1955, Osman China and his wife surrendered to Malayan security forces at Kuala Lipis.

<sup>43</sup> Burhanuddin al-Helmi, 'Ucapan Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi Semasa Menerima jawatan Yang Di-Pertua PAS, 1956', in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, Selangor, p. 75.

used the Malay newspaper *Melayu Raya* (then under Harun Aminurashid, a PKMM member) for his attacks on the British court and colonial government. The Nadrah crisis reached its peak in 1951 when riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. For his part in the demonstrations and protests, Dr. Burhanuddin was arrested together with Taha Kalu, Mohamad Murtaza, Derus Sarip, Abdul Muhammad and Syed Ali al-Attas. They were held at Pulau Sekijang prison.<sup>44</sup> He was detained for nearly three years and only set free in 1953. For Pak Doktor, the personal cost of his detention was high: His marriage broke down as a result of the prolonged separation, and his wife filed for a divorce while he was in jail. Politically, the results were equally bad: the PKMM leadership had been wiped out and the party was effectively killed on the Malayan mainland, with only a few tattered remnants left in Singapore.

The Nadrah affair ended with defeat for the Islamist camp, but it had helped to boost the image of Dr. Burhanuddin, who appeared as the most vocal and articulate activist and political leader throughout the crisis. After his release in 1953, Dr. Burhanuddin was courted by several UMNO leaders and invited to play a more active role as their adviser. (On 6 August 1954, UMNO's youth wing in Pontian invited him to speak about the relationship between Islam and politics.) As seen in Chapter 1, the Nadrah crisis also made clear to many *ulama* and Islamist leaders the growing need to form a political lobby to defend the rights and interests of Muslims in the country. Shortly after the crisis, a group of *alim ulama* brought together under the patronage of UMNO decided to break away from the conservative-nationalist camp and form a political organisation of their own which later became *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* (PAS).

During this time of crisis within UMNO, Pak Doktor found himself free to turn once again to his writing. In 1954, he wrote and published *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu: Tak Melayu Hilang di Dunia*, in which he stressed yet again the need for a radical Islamic

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<sup>44</sup> Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 3.

challenge to some of the most basic presuppositions of the nationalist project. He reminded his readers that Islam had always served as the basis of their political struggles and it was their faith that had sustained them for so long: '*Keteguhan semangat Melayu itu dari zaman ke zaman, berdasarkan persandaran dan pegangan yang teguh, iaitu dengan pegangan Uagama.*'<sup>45</sup>

Going against some of the most basic foundational premises of the secular-radical and conservative schools of nationalist thought, Pak Doktor emphasised the need for an Islamic perspective on the goals and ends of nationalism for the Muslim *ummah*. For him, it was clear that nationalism was merely the means, and not the aim, of political struggle:

*Islam memandang kebangsaan itu sebagai suatu alat, dan bukan tujuan. Kebangsaan hendaklah mengambil suatu tempat yang sederhana dan bulat, sebagai suatu lambang yang boleh menarik dan menyatukan suatu bahagian tenaga untuk mencapai cita2 Malaya yang besar abadi, sebagaimana Islam memandang dunia bukan tujuan tetapi hanya suatu alat atau tanggungan.*<sup>46</sup>

Political projects, he argued, could not be based upon pragmatic and instrumental needs alone. Neither could success in the political arena be achieved as long as there remained disagreements over the fundamental principles and goals of Malay nationalism:

*Alat dan tenaga yang terutama untuk menchapai kemerdekaan itu ialah bersetuju sebulat dan bersatu padu diatas falsafah kebangsaan, kebangsaan yang bulat dan taat setia yang tidak berbelah bahagi... Kami hendak*

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<sup>45</sup> Translation: The strength and will of the Malay people over the centuries were always with its support and firm convictions: that is, with the conviction of their faith in religion (Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *Asas Falsafah Kebangsaan Melayu*, p. 61).

<sup>46</sup> Translation: Islam regards nationalism as merely a tool, never an end in itself. Nationalism has to occupy a moderate and rounded position as a symbol to attract and unify all forces to achieve the dreams of a greater Malaya that is united; in the same way, Islam views the world as not an end in itself but merely as a tool or a trust (upon Mankind) (ibid., p. 44).

*mendirikan negara kebangsaan Melayu, diatas dasar kebangsaan menurut keadilan, dan kemanusiaan yang luas, sama berhak dan adil.*<sup>47</sup>

The basis of political mobilisation for the Malays engaged in political struggle thus had to be one which transcended the exigencies and vicissitudes of worldly upheavals: It had to be based, instead, on the fundamental belief that as Muslims they were morally compelled to resist all forms of domination and injustice while remaining united within the universal brotherhood of Islam. This kind of committed struggle, which transcended the boundaries of race and nation, had to be based on Islam, the religion of the Malays and the basis of their identity as a people.

For Dr. Burhanuddin, political mobilisation and organisation under the banner of Islam was the only way for the entire Muslim world to resist the impact of colonialism and to build their collective strength as a united nation of believers:

*Seorang mukmin dengan seorang mukmin yang lain itu seperti batu bata yang tersusun pada suatu bangunan istana sekeping dengan sekeping yang lain, menguatkan suatu dengan yang lain. Ini adalah ibarat yang diberi oleh nabi kita bagaimana membela kekuatan bangunan kebangsaan dan Islam.*<sup>48</sup>

He recognised, as did the secular radicals, the need to struggle for national independence and particularist goals. Like the secular nationalists, he also understood the practical need for collective mobilisation along nationalist and ethnic lines. But Pak Doktor also pointed out that from an Islamic standpoint these had always been

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<sup>47</sup> Translation: The primary means and strength required to achieve independence are: agreement and unity over the fundamentals of the philosophy of Malay nationalism; a nationalism that is all-encompassing and undivided... We want to build a *Melayu* nation-state, based upon the principles of nationalism founded upon justice, a broad humanism that is all-encompassing, with rights and justice for all (ibid., pp. 72-74).

<sup>48</sup> Translation: Each Muslim is to his brother like a brick next to another, built into the walls of a palace, each reinforcing and supporting the other. This is the analogy that was given to us by the Prophet, to show how we can defend the strength of our nation and of Islam (ibid., p. 51).

regarded as *preliminary stages* in a broader long-term struggle towards the emancipation of all people and the creation of a just society based on universal humanistic goals:

*Asabiyyah itu adalah suatu pembawaan, suatu tabiat yang berguna kepada manusia, tetapi ia tidak boleh digunakan kearah menuju kesempitan, tetapi perlu digunakan untuk menuju keluasan dan kebebasan sejati abadi.... Dengan ajaran Muhammad membela bangsa dan bahasa pada tingkap pertama untuk semua bangsa, untuk perikemanusiaan yang hak dan dan keadilan abadi.<sup>49</sup>*

Once again, Pak Doktor was trying to revive his project of a de-racialised nation-state, founded upon a broad concept of Malayan citizenship and popular sovereignty inspired by the universalism and humanism of Islam. But unfortunately for him, his preaching in the political wilderness of Malaya went unheard at the time.

In the 1950s, intellectuals and activists from all over Asia were swept by the 'nationalist bug'. Nationalism, anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism were the burning issues of the day. In 1955, Dr. Burhanuddin opened and chaired the *Kongres Pemuda Melayu* (Malay Youth Congress) held in Kuala Lumpur. The anti-colonial mood was sustained by the Bandung Conference organised by Soekarno, which Dr. Burhanuddin also attended. The leftist camp was still inclined towards the ideology of *Marhaenism* — the socialist-nationalist ideology of the 'little peasant' — as formulated by Soekarno and the radical nationalists of Indonesia. Pak Doktor realised that the time was not right for him to propagate his own vision of nationalist politics inspired by religion. Left without an attentive audience of his own, he instead concentrated his efforts on the formation of the first Malay socialist party in the country, *Parti Rakyat Malaya* (PRM) (People's Party of Malaya) which was founded in Kuala Lumpur on 11 November 1955.

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<sup>49</sup> Translation: *Asabiyyah* is a habit, a characteristic that is useful for mankind, but it can never be used in a narrow way; instead, it has to be understood in the broadest sense and directed towards true freedom for all... From the teachings of our Prophet Muhammad, we know that the defence of each nation and its language is a duty for all, for humanity in general and for our rights and in the cause of justice (ibid., pp. 50-51).

PRM was led by Ahmad Boestamam, and most of its members were Malays from working-class backgrounds. Ishak Haji Muhammad, the other close friend and compatriot of Dr. Burhanuddin, then formed and led his own party, *Parti Buruh Malaya* (PBM) (Labour Party of Malaya). Unlike PRM, Ishak's PBM also managed to attract a small number of Chinese urban-based workers as well as leftist intellectuals and activists schooled in the ideas of Fabian socialism.

Dr. Burhanuddin had played a key role in the formation of both *Parti Rakyat* and *Parti Buruh*. He was always in the background, acting as the advisor to both parties and co-ordinating their joint activities. Yet the Doktor remained without a political party of his own to lead. It was only in 1956 that he was offered an opportunity to return to mainstream national politics.

### *The Call of Islam: Dr. Burhanuddin's entry into PAS*

*Kita dari angkatan PAS akan melancarkan bahtera perjuangan kita menuju pelabuhan cita-cita Islam yang sangat jauh pelayarannya. Kita sama-sama bertolak beriringan aliran-aliran lain dan walaupun nasionalisme dan sosialisme telah sampai, tetapi Islamisme akan berlayar terus, menuju pelabuhan kita: Baldatun Taiyibatun Wa Rabbun Ghaffur.<sup>50</sup>*

Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy,  
*Suara Islam*

In 1956, Dr. Burhanuddin was invited to take over the leadership of PAS by its second president, Dr. Abbas Elias.

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<sup>50</sup> Translation: 'We in the Islamic movement and PAS will launch our own struggle towards our objective though the journey may be a long one. We will struggle along with other schools of thought, and though nationalism and socialism have reached their ends we will press on regardless towards our goal: *Baldatun Taiyibatun Wa Rabbun Ghaffur*'. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, writing in *Suara Islam*, 16 January 1957.

As noted earlier, PAS was experiencing a crisis of leadership and morale. Dr. Abbas and the other party leaders felt that the time had come to give their party a more vigorous and dynamic image, and that a new kind of leadership was required for the task. Dr. Burhanuddin was thought to be the man most suited for the job. He officially accepted the post on Christmas Day, 25 December 1956.<sup>51</sup>

Pak Doktor's decision hardly came as a surprise to those compatriots who had struggled together with him in the past. His acceptance of the leadership of PAS was the natural step to take for the Malay-Muslim radical whose politics was always rooted in both leftist concerns as well as Islamic philosophy and values. PAS provided Pak Doktor with the political vehicle he needed for his own radical Islamist project and for him it seemed a natural continuation from the days when he led the radical nationalists of PKMM.<sup>52</sup> (For some in the secular camp of the Malay nationalist movement, the move also came as a relief as it allowed their leadership to grow beyond the long shadow cast by Pak Doktor's enormous political stature.)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> This took place at the fifth general assembly of PAS on 24-26 December 1956. Dr. Burhanuddin officially joined the party on 14 December 1956.

<sup>52</sup> In his acceptance speech when he took over the leadership of PAS (then known as PMIP), Dr. Burhanuddin noted that: 'The MNP (PKMM) is banned but the PMIP remains still. One door is closed, yet another is still opened; and even though it is not widely opened as we all hoped it to be, it is sufficient for the people to channel their will and give expression to their aspirations; in other words to continue the process of our national struggle towards historical development. The various currents of the nationalist movement coming from all directions will form a huge river which in time will burst the dam and wipe away all the vestiges of colonialism from this country.' (*PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 76).

<sup>53</sup> In his memoirs, Ahmad Boestamam noted how great the influence of Dr. Burhanuddin was on the growth and development of the fledgling left-wing party (PRM) which he led. Although Dr. Burhanuddin was never a member of PRM, Boestamam noted that he wielded such  
*continued p. 126*

For the radical nationalists, Dr. Burhanuddin's decision to assume the PAS leadership signalled the emergence of a progressive Islamic party in Malaya.<sup>54</sup> This was spelt out in no uncertain terms in Pak Doktor's own speech of acceptance when he officially took over the presidency of PAS:

Why is it that I have chosen to lead PAS?

In our society today there are three forces forging side by side competing with one another but working closely together against colonialism. These forces are potential forces and their roots lie with the people. They are the forces of nationalism, the forces of Islamism and the forces of socialism. They are not separable from one another but are in fact related to one another. ... In nationalism we find the element of socialism because nationalism in its fundamental interpretation is based on consciousness and the aspiration to build a just society. ... In socialism one finds elements of nationalism because socialism by itself cannot be built unless it is pioneered by a nationalist spirit to blaze the path towards freedom and away from the yoke of colonialism. The building of socialism can be regarded as the final extension of these developments. ... In a way elements of nationalism

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n. 53 continued

influence on the party membership that it appeared as if he was its leader or founder (Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, p. 54). Boestamam also admits to developing a grudge against his comrade because of his enormous influence over party members (*ibid.*, p. 57).

<sup>54</sup> Ahmad Boestamam records that Dr. Burhanuddin had personally told him how he intended to inculcate progressive and radical values and ideas into the leadership and ideology of PAS. Boestamam's own response was shaped by his pragmatic outlook which was firmly focused on the primary goal of all the opposition movements, secular and Islamic alike. For him, the emergence of a modern and progressive Islamic party would have been an asset for PRM, as it would mean the emergence of a party with which PRM could be allied: '*Kalau PAS berjiwa kiri dan progresif juga untungnya kepada Partai Rakyat Malaya, demikian saya memperhitungkan. Setidak-tidaknya Partai Rakyat Malaya tidak akan menghadapi 'lawan' yang bertambah sebagaimana kalau kiranya PAS berjiwa kanan dan tidak progresif.*' Translation: If PAS became a progressive party with leftist tendencies it would benefit us, I reckoned. At least it would mean that the PRM would have one fewer 'enemy' to deal with, as would have been the case if PAS was a rightist party without progressive views (*ibid.*, p. 65).

are also found in Islamism, as it is vital to base the national liberation movement on the high principles of Islamism. The common factor in these three forces is their fundamental anticolonial stand; their common objective being the need to build a free, democratic and sovereign nation. As such, these forces should necessarily work side by side, mutually strengthening one another. Their enemy are the forces of colonialism and imperialism, which does not come from one main source or one country. In its full attire, imperialism has an international pattern. The forces of imperialism are further strengthened by the presence of weak and reactionary elements: by the presence of feudal elements, the compradore-capitalists and their ilk. To oppose them one or two forces alone may not be sufficiently strong enough, and it is imperative that all progressive forces in society should come together, to consolidate and unite, and should be bound in one massive combatant force.<sup>55</sup>

In his policy statement issued in the same year (1956), Dr. Burhanuddin laid down the ideological, political and strategic objectives of PAS.<sup>56</sup> Towards the primary political objective of national independence, Pak Doktor argued that he and his party would work with all other political and ideological groupings in the land. Convinced that neither the conservatives nor the socialists would be able to win independence with the full support of the entire country, Dr. Burhanuddin called for the three main ideological streams (Islamists, nationalists and socialists) to come together. By doing so he was also echoing Soekarno's attempt to forge the NASAKOM coalition of *nasionalisme-agama-komunisme* (nationalists-islamists-communists) in Indonesia:

*PAS sanggup bekerjasama dengan apa sahaja golongan, apa saja parti, apa saja aliran dalam masyarakat atas dasar kepentingan kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanahair...*

*Perjuangan itu sama besarnya dengan perjuangan yang telah kita pusakai dari datuk-nenek kita menentang penjajahan semenjak kejatuhan empayar Melaka dahulu. Dan sudah tentu perjuangan yang sebesar itu mengkehendaki tenaga yang sebulat-bulatnya dari seluruh rakyat negeri ini, mengkehendaki pengorbanan yang rela dari segenap golongan progresip*

<sup>55</sup> PAS dalam *Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>56</sup> See Burhanuddin al-Helmi, 'Ucapan Dasar Parti PAS, 1956', in Jomo K. S. (ed.), *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Kuala Lumpur: Iqra Press, 1988.

*dalam masyarakat. Tenaga-tenaga nasionalisme, keugamaan dan sosialisme yang sihat dalam masyarakat hasrat kita gembelengkan, kita padukan mulai sekarang untuk merupakan satu tenaga besar demi tugas perjuangan kemerdekaan dan kedaulatan tanahair kita.*<sup>57</sup>

However, Dr. Burhanuddin remained a Muslim first and foremost. It was his broader Islamic outlook that compelled him to extend the scope of his political project beyond the ethnocentric confines of the radical nationalist camp. Reiterating his earlier criticism of the short-sighted and narrow approach offered by the ideology of ethno-nationalism and secular political ideologies in general, Pak Doktor pointed out that the approach of PAS and its members had to be based upon absolute fundamental principles removed from the vicissitudes of politics and history:

*Saya berpendapat bahawa sebarang ideologi hanyalah alat saja untuk memperjuangkan cita-cita nasional, cita-cita kebangsaan, iaitu cita-cita menegakkan suatu negara Malaya yang merdeka, demokratis dan berdaulat....*

*Ideologi nasionalisme atau kebangsaan ialah [bertujuan untuk] mencapai kemerdekaan politik, ekonomi dan sosial, dan terdirinya kebebasan dan kemakmuran rakyat bersih dari sebarang pengaruh penjajahan. ... Semua isme ini timbul dari pengalaman-pengalaman manusia yang telah berlaku dalam proses perkembangan masyarakatnya dari zaman kuno hingga ke zaman moden ini.*

*[Tetapi] Ideologi Islam (atau Islamisme) adalah berbeza dan berlainan daripada isme-isme yang lain. Keistimewaan Islamisme ialah datangnya sebagai hukum ketetapan yang diturunkan Tuhan yang menjadikan manusia seluruhnya dan menciptakan alam ini sekaliannya. Hukum ini*

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<sup>57</sup> Translation: 'PAS is willing to work with any group, any political party, any stream of society on the principle that independence for the nation and homeland should come first.... The struggle today is as great as that which we inherited from our ancestors since the fall of the Malaccan Empire centuries ago. And surely a struggle as great as this requires the genuine and sincere sacrifice and effort of all progressive groups within society. The healthy forces of *nationalism, religion and socialism* must be brought together by us now, in order to forge together a greater collective force that will fight for the independence and sovereignty of our homeland.' (italics added) (ibid., pp. 4-5).

*tidak dapat di-ubah-ubahkan dan ditukar atau dipinda-pinda. Yang boleh berubah dan bertukar ialah hanya manusia itu sahaja. Islamisme tegasnya adalah hukum Tuhan bagi seseorang dalam perhubungan dan masyarakat dan dalam perhubungan dengan Tuhan.*<sup>58</sup>

Political Islam had thus found its radical and progressive expression in Dr. Burhanuddin and the party he had come to lead. Between 1956 and 1964, the fortunes of PAS began to change for the better under the leadership of its new president.

During the first few years of Dr. Burhanuddin's presidency, the deputy president was Cairo-educated Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad (who had joined the party in 1955).<sup>59</sup> Dr. Zulkiflee was himself well known throughout the country as a respected Islamist thinker and expert on Islamic disciplines such as *fiqh*. He had travelled widely

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<sup>58</sup> Translation: I believe that a political ideology is nothing more than a tool: a tool to further the aims of the nation, of nationalism, of building a Malayan nation-state that is independent, democratic and sovereign.... The ideology of nationalism is directed towards the political, economic and social liberation of the nation and the emergence of a sovereign nation free from all influences of colonialism. ... These *isms* have all emerged over the centuries of human experiences, from ancient times to the present modern age. (But) the ideology of Islam (or Islamism) is different from these other *isms*: The uniqueness of Islam is that it is based upon God-given fundamental principles, which come from the creator of Man and the Universe. These fundamentals are unchangeable and cannot be revised at whim. Islam therefore lays down the fundamental principles in dealing with Man's relation to society as well as his relation to God (*ibid.*, pp. 5–6).

<sup>59</sup> Ustaz Zulkiflee Muhammad received his education at al-Azhar in Cairo, where he was president of the Malay students association. Upon his return to Malaya, Ustaz Zulkiflee, like Dr. Burhanuddin, spent some time teaching and writing. He taught at the Islamic College at Klang, Selangor. He was also a prolific pamphleteer and one of PAS's best speakers (Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 118 n. 30). He joined PAS in 1955 and served as the deputy president under Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi. He was responsible for establishing PAS's contacts with other Islamist movements in Indonesia and the Arab world. He passed away in a car accident on 6 May 1964 (Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia*, p. 202).

to other Muslim countries like Egypt and was a close friend of contemporary Indonesian Islamist thinker Hamka. Later, while he sat in Parliament, Dr. Zulkiflee set a new national record when he delivered a speech on Islam and politics which lasted more than four hours. In time, his sustained critique of the secular model of government in the country even earned him the respect of his opponents like the Tunku and V. T. Sambanthan.<sup>60</sup>

Although Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee held different views on some matters related to Islam and politics, they managed to reconcile themselves and work together for the good of the party.<sup>61</sup> Another important *ulama* who joined the party's executive committee in that year was Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif.<sup>62</sup> Under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin, PAS also began to shed its tainted image as a party of '*pak lebai* and *imam kolot*'. Soon the party

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<sup>60</sup> *Tamadun*, August 1999, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Haji Yusof Rawa, 18 August 1999.

<sup>62</sup> Ustaz Baharuddin Haji Abdul Latif was born in 1927 at Kampung Sungai Parit, Setiawan, Perak. In his youth he received traditional Malay education at a number of local Malay schools. Later he studied religion and Arabic at Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya Gunung Semanggul of Sheikh Abu Bakar al-Bakir. He entered the world of politics in 1945 when he became a member of PKMM which was led by men like Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Ishak Haji Muhammad. While in PKMM, he became an active member of API, its militant youth wing led by Ahmad Boestamam. He also joined the first Islamic party, *Hizbul Muslimin*. When PAS was established in 1951, he became a member and took active part in PAS politics from 1956 when he became a member of the PAS executive committee. Since then he has served as the party's secretary-general as well as general treasurer. He also worked as a writer and an editor for the party's publications *Suara Islam* and *Bulan Bintang*. By the late 1970s, Ustaz Baharuddin was one of the party's main leaders and spokesmen. In the wake of the Kelantan crisis of 1977-78 and the fall of Asri Muda as PAS president, Ustaz Baharuddin, with a number of other prominent PAS leaders such as Haji Yusof Rawa, began to call for the leadership of the *ulama* in the party. This came in the wake of the Iranian revolution which he, and many *ulama* of the party, supported both in principle and in spirit.

began to attract a number of radical nationalists with Islamist sympathies as well, such as Khatijah Sidek.<sup>63</sup>

With Dr. Burhanuddin at the helm, PAS was finally being taken seriously by both the conservative-nationalists of UMNO and the departing British colonial authorities. In its report to London in May 1957, the British Commissioner-General's office in Malaya described PAS as 'an extremist nationalist Pan-Malayan Islamic party' that might pose a threat to the plans that had been carefully laid out by the British and the Alliance parties. On its leader Dr. Burhanuddin, the Commissioner-General's report noted:

Dr. Burhanuddin realises clearly that for the next few years the Malays are likely to be attracted by a strong communal policy and that the need to compromise between the Malays and the Chinese is the greatest weakness in the Tunku's position. Perhaps the main hope of the opposition is that the present moderate leadership of the Alliance will be overthrown, (and) that in the ensuing trouble the Alliance will disintegrate and that the Malay opposition parties will benefit from the destruction of UMNO.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Sumatra-born Khatijah Sidek was one of the few Malay women who took an active part in radical leftist politics. In the 1940s, she was a member of *Persatuan Kaum Buruh Indonesia Malaya* (Indonesian and Malayan Labour Organisation) and was present at the first Malay Congress. In 1947, she formed and led *Himpunan Wanita Indonesia Malaya* (Indonesian-Malayan Women's Association). From 1948-50 she was detained by the British colonial authorities on the charge of being a communist activist. She joined UMNO in 1953 and from 1954-56 was head of *Kaum Ibu*. While in UMNO, she was regarded as 'being stronger than any man in the party' (Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, p. 130 n.15). She left UMNO to join PAS in 1958 when it was led by Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy.

<sup>64</sup> Malayan Commissioner-General's Office report, 'Outlook on Malaya until 1960'. FO 371/129342. No.8. Quoted in A. J. Stockwell (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire*, p. 392.

Turning to the scenario in the future, the report argued that:

It is clear that the opposition Malay leaders see their opportunity after *Merdeka* rather than before. The Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, which regards Western imperialism as a greater danger than Communism, has declared its determination to repeal the Emergency regulations, to foster co-existence with the MCP, to secure the withdrawal of all Commonwealth forces from Malaya and to oppose all military pacts with the West.<sup>65</sup>

Of primary concern for the British was the possibility that PAS might establish a working relationship with the left, in particular the communists of MCP.<sup>66</sup> The British were therefore understandably anxious about the future development of PAS and the shape and form that the organisation might assume in the years to come. Despite these worries, however, they were in no position to stop the process of withdrawal from Malaya.

On 31 August 1957, the Federation of Malaya gained its independence with the president of UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman, as the country's first Prime Minister. Tun Ismail became the first Governor of Bank Negara, Tan Siew Sin was made the country's first Finance Minister and V. T. Sambanthan was the first Public Works Minister.<sup>67</sup> The ruler of Negeri Sembilan, Tuanku Abdul Rahman ibni al-Marhum Tuanku Muhammad, was chosen by the Conference of Rulers to be the country's first constitutional

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> The report claimed that Dr. Burhanuddin 'maintains contact with supporters of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and the elements within the Malayan Federation that support the People's Action Party (PAP)'. It warned that 'this group (PAS) may, after independence, spread its influence and is therefore an ideal target for penetration by the MCP' (ibid.).

<sup>67</sup> Abdullah Ahmad notes that when the Tunku became Prime Minister, he allocated jobs to the non-Malay members of his Cabinet according to the respective economic roles played by their communities. Thus Tan Siew Sin, leader of the Malayan Chinese, became the Finance Minister and V. T. Sambanthan, leader of the Malayan Indians, became the Public Works Minister (Abdullah Ahmad, *Tunku Abdul Rahman*, p. 14).

monarch, the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong. The hit film of the year was *Bujang Lapok* (Outdated Bachelors) starring P. Ramlee and featuring the hit song *Manusia* (Mankind) sung by Saloma.

At that point in Malaya's early history, the country's links to the mother-country Britain were very strong indeed. The Malayan flag was raised for the first time in Kuala Lumpur, and a few hours later in front of Malaya House in Trafalgar Square, London. The national anthem, *Negaraku* (My Country) — based on a French song written by the poet and composer Béranger during the Restoration period<sup>68</sup> — was also played for the first time. The

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<sup>68</sup> The national anthem *Negaraku* (My Country) has a long and interesting history. As Malaya came closer to independence, the incoming Cabinet led by the Tunku proposed a competition for a national anthem. The competition attracted a number of local and foreign contestants, including British composer Benjamin Britten, but none of the anthems submitted satisfied the selection committee or the Cabinet. Finally, a Cabinet member suggested that the popular song *Terang Bulan* (Bright Moon) be adapted instead. The origins of *Terang Bulan* date back to Sultan Abdullah of Perak's period of exile in the Seychelles, where he became acquainted with the song *La Rosalie* by French composer Béranger (1780-1857). In 1888, Raja Chulan was invited to London as part of Raja (later Sultan) Idris's entourage. Upon arrival at Southampton, the Perak delegation was asked about the anthem of their state. Not having an anthem to call their own, Raja Chulan suggested that the band play *La Rosalie*. The song thus became Perak's official anthem. By then the song *La Rosalie* had also reached the Malay Peninsula, thanks to the growing sea-borne traffic between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Renamed *Stanbul Satu*, it became a hit with Indonesian *bangsawan* troupes and was renamed *Terang Bulan*. In time, the tune became well known across the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch East Indies. When Malaya finally gained independence in 1957, *Terang Bulan* was one of the most popular songs in the region. The Cabinet finally decided to give it new lyrics and suggested a number of minor alterations. The Tunku also had to negotiate with the Perak royal family, for it meant depriving them of their state anthem. When the tune was finally played before the Cabinet it was unanimously accepted. Thus it came to pass that a song written by a French composer during the Restoration period became the national anthem for the newly independent  
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Federation of Malaya inherited the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy along with a constitutional monarch as its head of state, something that the UMNO leaders in particular were keen to install. The secular nature of the constitution was apparent in the way that it guaranteed religious pluralism and the freedom of belief. Among the various laws that protected the rights of the religious minorities were: The Hindu and Muslim Endowments Ordinance of 1949, The Cheng Hong Temple (Incorporation) Act of 1949, The Pure Life Society (Suddha Samajam) Incorporation Ordinance of 1957, The Daughters of Charity of the Canossian Institute (Incorporated) Ordinance of 1957 and the Superior of the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (Incorporated) Ordinance of 1957. The country also inherited a strong and centralised top-heavy federal government apparatus where certain institutions (such as the Royal Malayan Police Force (RMPF)) were stronger than others.<sup>69</sup>

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Federation of Malaya. (I am thankful to Gilles Huberson, former Deputy Ambassador of France to Malaysia, for the information quoted above. For more information regarding the curious history of *Negaraku*, see Raja Aminah binti Almarhum Sultan Abdullah, 'The Origin of *Negaraku*', in *Malaya in History*, July 1960 and 'Seychelles's Link with Malayan History', *Seychelles Bulletin*, May 1976.)

<sup>69</sup> At the time of independence, the RMPF was one of the few highly developed institutions that remained largely intact and its survival reflected the continuity of rule and government from the British to the post-colonial era. Zakaria Haji Ahmad (p. 114) has argued that one of the reasons for the 'comparatively democratic' experience of nation-building in post-colonial Malaya has been 'the balance provided by the existence of a high police capacity and the consideration on the part of Malayan leaders that the power placed in their hands would not be abused for unlawful ends.' Zakaria warns, however, that the line of separation between government institutions like the police and the political parties in power was a very thin one from the beginning and that there was always the danger that the executive branch of the government might use the policing apparatus of the state for politically repressive ends. (See Zakaria Haji Ahmad, 'The Police and Political Development in Malaysia', in Zakaria Haji Ahmad (ed.), *Government and Politics of Malaysia*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987.)

Because of the consensus of values and ideology that already existed between the two sides, the transfer of power and authority from the departing colonial powers to the traditional Malay ruling élite proved to be uncomplicated. In the words of Chandra: 'both feudal history and British colonialism had thus conspired to bestow the privilege of power upon this group.'<sup>70</sup> It was just a matter of legal procedure before the Malay Sultans were installed as the ideologically potent symbols of Malay power, while the Malay aristocratic élite manoeuvred themselves into positions of real political power as the *de facto* rulers.<sup>71</sup> Decades of British colonial rule had ensured the integrity and viability of the Malay royal families,<sup>72</sup> something which the conservatives of UMNO were quick to recognise and exploit in what Roger Kershaw has termed a 'sociological symbiosis'. (And a shaky symbiosis it was from the beginning, which would eventually fall apart three decades later.)

With half of the world's remaining royal families behind them, the new Malay conservative élite were in a position to take full advantage of the enormous amount of political, bureaucratic and economic power that now lay at their disposal. While the Agong (King) was meant to serve as the head of state and the symbolic

<sup>70</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> Chandra notes that 'by *Merdeka* in 1957, there was this dual concept of Protector — the Sultans as symbolic protectors and the UMNO leaders as substantive protectors. Lest it be misunderstood it must be made very clear that the UMNO leadership was very much devoted to the concept of the monarchical system... What the UMNO leadership wanted, however, was the right to exercise actual power in the political process. To do this, the Sultans had to be made Constitutional monarchs.' (*ibid.*, p. 66).

<sup>72</sup> Roger Kershaw has noted that 'the British had made several vital contributions to the viability of Malay monarchy all over the Malay Peninsula: its authority in Malay society within each individual State was strengthened and consolidated by the regularization of succession in a single line, and by recognition of the Sultan's authority, untrammelled by Residential interference 'in the twin spheres of Malay custom and Muslim religion'. (Which was not the case in that other British protectorate of Brunei.) (Roger Kershaw, *Monarchy in Southeast Asia: The Faces of Tradition in Transition*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 28.)

referent for Islam's status as the official religion of the country, it was the Prime Minister who actually wielded real power in the newly independent country. As Kershaw says: 'In place of effective (or imaginable) mechanisms involving royalty, it was the dominant Malay party, UMNO, that guaranteed the perpetuation of Malay rights.'<sup>73</sup> Thus by 1957, because of the manoeuvrings of the Tunku and UMNO, royal politics 'was practically dead'.<sup>74</sup> The federal elections that preceded and followed the declaration of independence were merely another legal formality that 'largely concealed traditional feudal loyalties and duties binding the Malay peasantry to the aristocratic leaders', as Hua Wu Yin has argued.<sup>75</sup>

Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that *The Times* of London reported the birth of Malaya with a resonant chord of approval. In particular, the editorial pointed out the impeccable credentials of its conservative Malay leaders who, unlike the troublesome radicals of the left, had showed that they were of a decidedly more moderate and accommodating temper. It reassured its readers that: 'Malayan nationalism had not been born out of conflict and there was not a single Malayan Minister who had ever spent a day in prison for sedition.'<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, the departing British authorities did have a lot to be thankful for. Unlike Indonesia, which had nationalised all Dutch assets when it declared its independence, the conservative government of the Federation of Malaya safeguarded the economic interests and investments of the British even after they had left.<sup>77</sup> Harun Hashim, the representative of the Malayan Commission to London, had even toured the length and breadth of Britain speaking

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Hua Wu Yin, *Class and Communalism in Malaysia*, p. 109.

<sup>76</sup> *The Times*, 31 August 1957.

<sup>77</sup> Abdullah Ahmad (*Tunku Abdul Rahman*, p. 8) notes that even after independence, 'rubber, tin, banking, insurance, shipping and the oil industry were all in British hands'. This in turn affected Malaya's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the Western powers and Britain in particular.

to members of the British Conservative Party inviting them to invest in the newly independent country. The title of his talk was 'Malaya, My Country, My People and its Future'.<sup>78</sup> That the Malayan representatives felt the need to invite more foreign capital into Malaya was seen as somewhat ironic, considering that the level of foreign capital penetration into the country was already high and that most of the major commodity industries (such as rubber and tin) were still in the hands of British monopolies.

Malaya gained her independence at a time when the fortunes of the Muslim countries of the world were clearly on the decline. While the new country was taking its first tentative steps into the world, powerful Western countries like the US, Britain and France were busy with the task of toppling Muslim governments elsewhere: in 1957, the Syrian government narrowly escaped a second *coup* attempt sponsored and directed by the CIA. Earlier in the year, on 9 March 1957, the Eisenhower Doctrine was announced and accepted by the US Congress.<sup>79</sup> The doctrine stated that henceforth the US would consider the Arab countries in the Middle East a legitimate part of their sphere of interest, and that the US government would take the necessary steps to ensure US interests in the region were promoted and defended.<sup>80</sup> The CIA was authorised to expand and upgrade its activities in the region, and in time was actively spying on, and conducting covert operations in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The CIA's main concerns then were Egypt and Syria, and the agency worked with the intelligence agencies of the other Arab countries to undermine and contain the growth and influence of Gamal Nasser's Pan-Arabism across the Arab world. In some cases, the Americans went as far as working directly with Arab rulers such as King Hussein of

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<sup>78</sup> Harun Hashim, 'Benchmark: Final Activities Leading to the Country's Independence', *New Straits Times*, 26 August 1995.

<sup>79</sup> For a summary of the Eisenhower doctrine and an explanation of its rationale by the man himself, see Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace 1956-1961*, London: Heinemann, 1965.

<sup>80</sup> William Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 89.

Jordan.<sup>81</sup> Those recalcitrant and independent-minded Arab leaders (like Iraqi leader Abdul Karim Kassem who laid the foundations for OPEC) were chastised by their American mentors in no uncertain terms: In Karim Kassem's case, the 'warning' came in the form of a poisoned handkerchief sent to him by mail.<sup>82</sup>

As soon as independence was declared, the Malayan government was forced to deal with the impending global commodity crisis that threatened to jeopardise its development and economic stability. The high level of population growth (3.4%, one of the highest in the world) and rising unemployment gave cause for concern to local and foreign investors alike.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> William Blum (*ibid.*, p. 90) has noted that King Hussein of Jordan was one of the most valuable allies of the US at the time. In return for US support for his own campaign to eliminate political opponents, Nasserites and communist sympathisers in the country, the ruler of Jordan allowed CIA operatives to work openly in his country and provided them with information. Hussein soon declared martial law in Jordan and began an extensive purge of the Pan-Arab nationalists, leftists and student groups. The US, in turn, made several large payments to the Jordanian ruler, via the CIA.

<sup>82</sup> The attempt to kill Abdul Karim Kassem through the use of a poisoned handkerchief was as diabolical as it was Machiavellian. The poison-laced accessory was sent from an Asian country by post, but apparently did not reach its target. Kassem survived the attack, only to be executed by his own people three years later (*ibid.*, p. 98).

<sup>83</sup> Until the 1950s, Malaya's economy was very dependent on the production of key commodities such as natural rubber and tin. Malaya was still the world's biggest producer of both commodities in 1957. However, in the mid-1950s, the Malayan economy was hit hard by the commodity crisis which affected the price of rubber and tin worldwide. The development of synthetic rubber severely diminished Malaya's comparative advantage. Even though the economy was growing at an annual rate of 5%, fluctuations in the price of these key commodities on the world market meant that the Malayan economy was caught in cyclical fluctuations it could not control. Coupled with the increasing population growth rate, the level of unemployment in Malaya grew alarmingly fast (from 2% in 1957 to 7% in 1967). With the establishment of Bank Negara Malaya (BNM) (Malayan National Bank) in 1959, the Malayan government began to  
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To complicate matters further, the non-Malay political organisations and parties began to call for citizenship and equal political rights on behalf of their own constituencies. (See Table 2.1 for 1957 population figures.) The MCA under Tan Cheng Lock initiated a citizenship application movement that led to more than a million Chinese residents being given Malayan citizenship within a year. This led to tension within the country as a number of Malay groups and organisations began to protest about the way in which citizenship was offered so readily to the Chinese who until recently were regarded as transient migrants from abroad. UMNO and PAS members were equally worried about the special position and privileges of the Malays at a time when their own collective stake in the national economy was so small. Their fears were aggravated further when the MCA leadership was usurped by Lim Chong Eu, a staunch defender of Chinese identity and cultural rights.

The Tunku handled most of these intra-party problems in his own typically neo-feudalistic style. Through his own informal contacts and dealings behind the scenes, the Tunku managed to pacify the dissident elements within the other Alliance parties, such as the MCA. Opponents within his own party like Aziz Ishak were gently eased out of power or moved to other positions where they

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impose tighter monetary management on the national economy. In the initial stages of the commodity crisis, the government's strategy was to match the cyclical changes in the economy with expansionary fiscal policies. Thus public sector operations in the late 1950s were pro-cyclical. As commodity prices soared, so did the level of public spending, and vice-versa. The rationale was that the government wished to invest as much as possible in development and economic growth, and to pave the way for the creation of a more diversified manufacturing industry so that Malaya's economy would not be eternally dependent on commodity production. The negative side effect of these pro-cyclical policies was the ever-widening deficit which had to be financed through a higher level of domestic borrowing in the 1960s. (For a fuller account of the commodity crisis and its economic impact in Malaya, see Samuel Bassey Okposin and Cheng Ming Yu, *Economic Crises in Malaysia: Causes, Implications and Policy Prescriptions*, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Press, 2000.)

could no longer pose a threat to the president of the party.<sup>84</sup> These moves were made by the Tunku to ensure that Malaya would remain on the course of economic development that he himself had charted. The question of an Islamic state was well and truly outside the orbit of the Tunku's concerns. The country's first Prime Minister fell back on the political realities of the time as an excuse for not turning the country into an Islamic state as some PAS leaders had demanded. In his own words: 'Our country has many races and unless we are prepared to drown every non-Malay, we can never think of an Islamic administration.'<sup>85</sup>

Apart from fears related to the economic and political future of the Malays, the PAS Islamists were also concerned about the political system inherited from the British. The federal constitution, which was drafted by the Reid Commission, became the framework for the legal and political structure of the new state. The constitution (widely criticised as an imported *alien* document) declared that Islam was the *official* religion of the Federation, but offered no provisions whatsoever for the *shariah* to be a source of legislation in the country.<sup>86</sup> While articles 3, 11(1), 11(2), 11(3), 11(4), 12(1), 12(2) and

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<sup>84</sup> Aziz Ishak was then one of the more prominent and popular UMNO leaders. He was soon made Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, a very important post for UMNO leaders as it gave them exposure and contact with the rural Malays. One major project that Aziz Ishak attempted to promote was the building of a massive fertiliser and paper plant. This, he argued, would have earned UMNO more support and votes from the rural Malays, but many other UMNO leaders felt that Aziz was also placing himself in a position where he might later be able to confront and challenge the Tunku. Acting on advice from Finance Minister Tan Siew Sin, the Tunku vetoed Aziz Ishak's proposal and attempted to move him to another ministry. Aziz refused to be moved, and subsequently resigned his post. He later formed the National Convention party which became part of the Socialist Front in the lead-up to the 1964 general elections (Hussein Yaakub, *UMNO Tidak Relevan*, Shah Alam: Angkatan Edearan, 2000, pp. 140–141).

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in K. J. Ratnam, *Communalism and the Political Process in Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1965, p. 122.

<sup>86</sup> Article 3 of the constitution states that Islam is the official religion of the Malayan state. This, in effect, means that all rituals of state and *continued p. 141*

12(3) provided for freedom of worship and the propagation of religion, they did not go as far as the Islamists wanted in terms of establishing Islam as the religion of State *per se*.<sup>87</sup>

What made matters even worse for the Islamists was the apparent incoherence of the Islamic legal system of the newly independent state: While the central (federal) government was very much united in structure and purpose, there remained a number of different Islamic religious departments and Islamic courts, and each state had its own Islamic law enactment and Islamic family law enactment. The Malay rulers retained their traditional roles as head of Islam within their respective states, and were also responsible for the administration of *adat* (customary) laws,<sup>88</sup> but their

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government must be carried out under the cloak of Islamic discourse. The opening of parliament, for instance, is heralded by a reading from the *Qur'an*. However, the constitution also states that 'other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation'.

<sup>87</sup> Article 11(1) of the constitution declares that every Malayan citizen has the right to profess and practice his or her own religion and to propagate it. But the freedom to propagate religion is circumscribed by article 11(4) which states that it is illegal to propagate any other religion among those who are already Muslim. Article 11(2) protects citizens from having to pay any taxes that would be allocated to any religious cause apart from his or her own, while article 11(3) guarantees the right for all religious communities to manage their own religious affairs. Article 12(1) prevents any form of discrimination on the grounds of religious belief. Clause 2 of the same article establishes the right for religious communities to form and maintain institutions of learning for their own faith communities while article 12(3) guarantees that no citizen shall be required to receive religious instruction in any religion apart from his own. All of these measures were designed to ensure that the rights of each religious community are respected, but they also ensured that Islam would not be given undue emphasis or privileges over other religions in the country. Critics of the constitution pointed out that the terms of articles 1, 11 and 12 made it much easier for non-Muslims to enter Islam than vice-versa.

<sup>88</sup> For those states without a Ruler of their own (i.e., Penang, Malacca and Singapore), the *Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* (King) serves as the head of Islam.

powers were checked by the *Majlis Agama Islam* (Islamic Council) of each state, headed by a *mufti* who could issue his own *fatwa* if and when necessary.<sup>89</sup> Compared with the orderly and centralised universe of the central government, the sphere of Islamic law and administration in the states was a shambles that allowed for constant contestation for power and authority between the various actors on the scene. The Malayan Federation was, therefore, for all intents and purposes a *secular* state run according to the model of constitutional democracy as practised in Westminster. Under the Tunku, postcolonial Malaya developed as a member of the Western alliance during the Cold War, open to the post-Bretton Woods international liberal-capitalist economic order with its economy geared towards export-oriented strategies.

Also in 1957, PRM and PBM formed an alliance called *Fron Sosialis Rakyat Malaya* (People's Socialist Front of Malaya). PAS, under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin, agreed to work closely with the Socialist Front to challenge the dominance of the Alliance coalition. From that point onwards, PAS focused its attention on winning the political struggle at home. The primary objectives of the party would be to challenge UMNO's dominance and popularity among the Malays, to develop the appeal of PAS as the party that really represented the interests and concerns of the Malay-Muslims, and to bring about a radical change in the political system of the country via the establishment of an Islamic state.

Like their counterparts in the Socialist Front, both the president and vice-president of PAS — Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee — argued that independence was useless and meaningless if the Malay-Muslims did not attempt to use their newly gained political freedom to radically reinvent their nation on their own terms. Dr. Burhanuddin argued that gaining independence through UMNO was of no use or value whatsoever because the conservative-

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<sup>89</sup> The right to issue *fatwa* was also given to the legal committees appointed by the various state religious councils.

nationalists of UMNO were acting as the compradore agents of the departing colonial powers:

*UMNO leaders have time and again repeated the claim that without UMNO Malaya will never get its independence. This contention is acceptable, but the question is: What type of independence? I said that the contention is acceptable because it is only in UMNO and not in any other forces of nationalism that imperialism and imperialist interests will be guaranteed when they hand over political power in this country. The present leadership of UMNO have proven themselves to be trustworthy guardians of imperialist-capitalist interests because it has consistently shown its willingness to compromise and even to capitulate to the imperialists on questions of fundamental interest to the people.<sup>90</sup>*

For Dr. Burhanuddin, the future of independent Malaya depended on who would take over the government and what form of political, social, economic and cultural order was put in place after the colonial authorities had departed for good. The progressive Muslim leader called for a number of radical changes to the model of economic management left by the colonial powers. Among the demands of Pak Doktor were:

- An end to monopolies in general and, in particular, the monopolistic practices of the British companies and conglomerates still operating in Malaya,
- A package of legal mechanisms designed to protect workers' rights and to end exploitation of labour in both the rural agrarian and urban industrial sectors,
- The introduction of a welfare state system with state assistance for the poor and unemployed,
- State promotion of co-operative ventures and companies owned by workers themselves,
- And a ban on 'immoral' economic practices and enterprises contrary to Islam. This would include a ban on all businesses related to gambling and alcohol production.

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<sup>90</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin's acceptance speech, 1956. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 81.

Pak Doktor voiced these demands soon after he took over the leadership of PAS, and reiterated them as independence drew closer.<sup>91</sup> The Alliance leaders were understandably perturbed by PAS's demands as they threatened to jeopardise the close economic and political links between the new government and foreign capital that was still in Malaya. PAS's demands to nationalise key sectors of the economy and to roll forward the borders of the state were a direct challenge to the liberal-capitalist principles upon which the Malayan economy was based. On a personal note, the Tunku also took great offence at some of PAS's demands directed at his own personal tastes and preferences, such as horse-racing and gambling. Needless to say, the Tunku's defence of alcohol consumption and horse-racing as 'harmless fun' and 'revenue-earning' enterprises did not persuade the leaders of the Islamist party.

Other PAS leaders also spoke at length of the dangers that lay ahead in the post-colonial era, and their fear that with the departure of the British colonial authorities a new group of 'native colonisers' would come to power. Writing in the party's official paper *Suara Islam*, Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif commented:

*Tidaklah besar maknanya kemerdekaan itu kepada PAS, jika umpamanya perjuangan kemerdekaan itu berhasil menghapuskan satu penjajahan asing oleh orang yang tidak seagama, lalu digantikan oleh penjajahan lain oleh orang yang seperti itu juga.*<sup>92</sup>

For other PAS leaders like deputy president Dr. Zulkiflee, independence necessarily meant turning the country into an Islamic state following the model envisioned by PAS. Writing in *Suara Islam*, Dr. Zulkiflee argued:

*Setelah mencapai kemerdekaan, sampailah kita ke peringkat mengisi kemerdekaan, dari sini bermulalah peringkat kedua perjuangan kita,*

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<sup>91</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, pp. 165–166.

<sup>92</sup> Translation: Independence would have little meaning for PAS, if it means merely replacing the rule of a foreign government made up of unbelievers with another form of authoritarian rule by like-minded (native) people (Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 19).

*peringkat jangka panjang perjuangan PAS. Sebagai suatu parti politik yang berideologi, kita berazam hendak mengisi kemerdekaan itu dengan ideologi kita sendiri, iaitu ideologi Islam atau Islamisme... Ini bermakna PAS kenalah berikhtiar menjadikan negara ini pada akhirnya sebagai sebuah negara Islam (Islamic state) dalam ertikata yang sebenar; lebih daripada sebuah negeri Islam semata-matanya (Muslim country).<sup>93</sup>*

Calls for an Islamic state were also raised by party president Dr. Burhanuddin. In an earlier paper entitled '*Agama dan Politik*' (Religion and Politics) that he delivered before the members of UMNO youth wing in 1956, Pak Doktor argued:

*Kita wajib menjalankan hudud-hudud dan hukum-hukum Islam. Kita wajib melepaskan diri kita dan bangsa kita daripada teraniaya dan terjejas. Kita wajib melepaskan diri kita daripada tertipu dan diperbodoh-bodohkan. Kita wajib memberikan pelajaran yang melepaskan diri kita dari belenggu pelajaran penjajah kepada anak-anak kita. Tidakkah kita berdosa jikalau kita tidak menjalankan kewajipan kita? Tidakkah kita takut dimurka dan dikutuk Tuhan dengan melanggar undang-undang serta suruhannya? Tidakkah kita wajib bernegara yang berdaulat, manakala Qur'an menjanjikan bahawa 'keagungan adalah untuk Allah, Rasulnya dan orang-orang Mukmin'.<sup>94</sup>*

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<sup>93</sup> Translation: Now that independence has been achieved, we have reached the stage where we need to fill that independence with real meaning; this is the second stage of our struggle, the long-term struggle of PAS. As a party with an ideology of its own, we need to struggle to give our new-found independence some meaning according to our ideology which is Islam or Islamism... This means that PAS will now strive to turn this country into a truly Islamic state, in the real meaning of the word, rather than just a Muslim country. (Zulkiflee Muhammad, 'Rancangan Perjuangan PAS', *Suara Islam*, 15 May 1957. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 123.)

<sup>94</sup> Translation: We are obliged to put into practice the laws and rules of Islam. We are obliged to free ourselves and our people who are oppressed and dominated. We are obliged to free ourselves from lies and from being manipulated by the colonisers. We are obliged to free our children from the influence of colonial education. Have we not sinned by not living up to our obligations? Are we no longer afraid of God's punishment and judgement upon us, for not fulfilling these obligations? Are we not obliged to fight for a sovereign and  
*continued p. 146*

However, Dr. Burhanuddin's understanding of an Islamic state differed in many ways from that of his contemporaries and fellow party members. Rather than a form of Islamist politics couched in terms of a discourse of authenticity or a nostalgic attempt to return to the fundamentals of historical Islam, his brand of Islamist thinking was also influenced by nationalist and anti-colonialist concerns. He envisaged an Islamic state that was both modern and dynamic, openly in competition with the more dominant and powerful liberal-capitalist Western economies. Rather than the cherished dream of the Prophet's community of Medinah or the 'golden age' of the Caliphate, Dr. Burhanuddin turned to Soekarno's Indonesia and Nasser's Egypt for examples of modern, progressive Islamism at work. In defence of this view of Islam as an ideological alternative and political model, he argued:

Those who naively say that PAS is a party of *Pak Lebai* (village elders) should look around them or turn to the Middle East. Whether or not PAS is competent in its role in the struggle for national liberation, the Middle East provides the answers. And Abdel Gamal Nasser provides the example... The struggle of the Malay-Muslim patriot does not differ from the Egyptian Muslim patriot. As a Muslim and a patriot the Egyptian nationalist strives for national independence and the sovereignty of his homeland. As a Muslim patriot he is also striving for the honour of his faith, the prestige of Islam and for a united Muslim nation. One cherished hope cannot be achieved without the fulfilment of the other. *National independence and sovereignty are the basic objectives of every patriot and the realisation of our hopes as Muslims cannot be achieved without first realising these objectives...* . Certain quarters are doubtful of our role as a party that is struggling for national independence. If they still entertain any doubts till now, the answer is here. The role of Egypt under the leadership of Colonel Nasser provides the unchallengeable example of the triumph of Islamic nationalism against international imperialism.<sup>95</sup> (Italics added)

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independent nation, whereas the *Qur'an* has said that 'All greatness is to God, his Prophets and the community of the faithful?' (Burhanuddin al-Helmy, 'Agama dan Politik', in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 48).

<sup>95</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin's acceptance speech, 1956. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, pp. 78-79.

The repeated calls for the establishment of an Islamic state led to a series of firm measures and commitments within the party. On 13 December 1957, the *Dewan Ulama* PAS (Ulama Council) was formed, six years after the party had come into being. This came about after extensive discussions among the leaders and *ulama* of PAS at Madrasah al-Ulum al-Syariah at Bagan Datuk, Perak.<sup>96</sup>

In 1958, the *Dewan Ulama* PAS issued four crucial resolutions to the effect that PAS would commit itself totally to the formation of a state based on Islam.<sup>97</sup> These resolutions were:

- The struggle to create an Islamic state governed by the laws of God is obligatory for all Muslims,
- The basis of the struggle of PAS was the *ayat* in the *Qur'an* (*Surah as-Shura*: 13) which calls on Muslims to defend their faith and beliefs and to create a society based on and guided by these beliefs,
- There can be no other system of government apart from that which has been ordained by God since God is the creator of all and that the natural laws of God govern the affairs of creation,
- Such a state has come into existence before during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and that to create a similar system now would be in accordance with the Sunnah of the prophet.

To cap it all, article 5(1) of the party's constitution called for a concerted political effort to: '*memperjuangkan wujudnya di negara ini sebuah masyarakat dan pemerintahan yang terlaksana di dalamnya nilai-nilai hidup Islam dan hukum-hukum menuju keredhaan Allah*'.<sup>98</sup>

By taking these steps, the party had openly stated its claim on the political terrain of the country. At the party's general assembly on 25 December 1958, the name of the party was changed to *Persatuan Islam Se-Tanah Melayu*. Its ideological stand and manifesto were

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<sup>96</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 381.

<sup>97</sup> Jamal Mohd Lokman Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz: Seorang Ulama serta Ahli Politik Malaysia di Abad ke-20*, Kuala Lumpur: Sulfa Press, 1999, pp. 70-71.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. Translation: to struggle in order to create in this country a society and an administration which would uphold the values and laws that have been ordained by Allah.

clearly laid out before the electorate. What was then required was an organisational apparatus and party-political machinery that would be able to translate these ideas into socio-political reality.

*PAS under Dr. Burhanuddin: Organisational Reform  
and Development*

Both Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee were experienced party-political campaigners who understood the need for a strong, expansive grassroots network of party activists and propagandists. During this period the party began to improve its channels of communication with the general public. Important and influential party leaders were given key roles in the party's new organisational structure to help with the process of internal party reform and development. Experienced grassroots activist Ustaz Amaluddin Darus, for example, was asked to move from Kelantan to Kuala Lumpur to become head of PAS's bureau of communications and propaganda in 1958. Mohammad Asri Muda, the Kelantanese firebrand who had so effectively spread PAS's message all over his home state, was asked to help expand the party's network of branches and offices in the neighbouring state of Terengganu.

Under Dr. Burhanuddin's leadership PAS underwent a major nation-wide overhaul of its membership and organisational structure. The party began to expand its network of branches and divisions all over the country. In 1956, the party expanded its activities in Terengganu. The first PAS branch in Terengganu was established in Dungun on 6 July 1956, at Madrasah al-Zainiyyah with Asri Muda representing the PAS central committee.<sup>99</sup> Branches were opened in Kuala Terengganu (1956), Kemaman (1957), Besut and Kuala Berang (1958). By 1959, practically the entire state and all its major parliamentary constituencies had been covered, thanks to PAS activists like Asri Muda, who was *pesuruhjaya* PAS (the head of PAS activities) in Terengganu in 1956-57.<sup>100</sup> In 1958, he

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<sup>99</sup> Zulkifli Sulong, *Operasi Tawan Trengganu*, Batu Caves: Penerbitan Pemuda, 1994, p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

was replaced by Ustaz Ahmad Azam Hanifah. PAS *Dewan Pemuda* Terengganu was set up on 20 January 1961 and *Dewan Ulama* on 17 May 1962. (*Dewan Muslimat* PAS Terengganu was formed much later, in 1973.) A local member who eventually played an important role in both *Dewan Pemuda* and *Dewan Ulama* was the young *ulama* Ustaz (later Tuan Guru) Abdul Hadi Awang. In 1999, he became Chief Minister of the state when PAS came to power there.<sup>101</sup>

In Kedah, the party's liaison committee began opening up more *cawangan* (divisions) and *ranting* (branches) all over the state. *Pesuruhjaya PAS negeri* (a state commissioner) was appointed to oversee the development of the party's organisational structure which had been left dormant for so long.<sup>102</sup> The same structure was introduced in all the other states and the party eventually developed a hierarchical structure: each state had its own *jawatankuasa negeri* (executive committee) which in turn monitored and guided the activities of division and *jawatankuasa cawangan* (branch committees). PAS divisions and branches in Kedah began to mirror the organisational structure of UMNO, which had developed a powerful network of grassroots supporters in the state.

The party also started to work its way southwards, forming divisions and branches all over states such as Malacca and Johor. In Malacca, Dr. Burhanuddin called on his old friends from Singapore for help. These included prominent Malay and Peranakan Muslims such as Haji Taha Kalu, Dr. Mohamad Nor and Yaakob bin Ishak. Many of these men had worked with Dr. Burhanuddin during the 'Nadrah crisis' of 1950-51. (Taha Kalu, it will be remembered, was one of those arrested with Dr. Burhanuddin in the wake of

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<sup>101</sup> More will be said about Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang later. He served as head of PAS *Dewan Pemuda* from 1976-79, and later also became head of *Dewan Ulama* Terengganu.

<sup>102</sup> PAS had established itself in Kedah as early as in 1951, but the party's structure in the state was poorly developed. During 1951-55, PAS was not as active in Kedah as it was in Kelantan, Terengganu and Perak. The Kedah section acted more as a branch of the PAS central committee and did not play an active part in national politics.

the anti-British riots in Singapore.) On 11 November 1957, Dr. Burhanuddin personally opened the first Malacca branch of PAS, at Masjid Tanah. By inviting the Mufti of the state, Ustaz Haji Khalil, as well as the *ulama* to take part in the formation of the party's branches in Malacca, PAS had also effectively infiltrated the state's network of *ulama* and religious functionaries. In time, Dewan Ulama Malacca was set up and PAS's bridgehead into the state was secured.<sup>103</sup> The same tactics were employed in the other states on the west coast and in the south. By August 1959, PAS had opened 15 branches in Johor, the birthplace of UMNO and heartland of Malay conservatism.<sup>104</sup>

The party's leaders realised that their effort to mobilise support would not bear much fruit without the benefit of media and a propaganda machinery of their own. They saw the practical necessity of having an official party publication. Asri Muda, widely regarded as one of the best vernacular Malay writers in the country, was appointed as editor of the party's first official newspaper, *Suara Islam* (The Voice of Islam). Launched during the party assembly of 1956, the vernacular party newsmagazine was written in *Jawi* (Arabic) script, and its publication office was in Kota Bharu, Kelantan.<sup>105</sup> Through *Suara Islam*, the ideas of the party leaders were quickly and effectively disseminated to both members and non-members all over the country. *Suara Islam* lasted until late 1958. In the 1960s, the party transferred the base of its media operations to Kuala Lumpur, and launched its second official Malay-language newspaper, *Bulan Bintang* (The Star and Crescent) which

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<sup>103</sup> PAS branches began to appear all over Malacca from 1957: Kampung Paku (28 August 1958), Berisu (4 November 1958), Serbang (30 November 1958), Alor Gajah (19 January 1959), Sungai Petai (28 February 1959), Kuala Sungai Baru (8 March 1959), Air Limau (30 March 1959), Air Pabas (23 July 1959), Lubuk Redan (24 July 1959), Pengkalan Balak (2 August 1959), Simpang Empat (19 August 1959), Air Molek (28 September 1959), Kuala Linggi (28 September 1959), and Ramuan Cina Kecil (28 September 1959). By the end of 1959, the entire state was covered by PAS.

<sup>104</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 107.

<sup>105</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 1.

was also written in *Jawi* script. *Bulan Bintang's* first editor was Abdullah Zawawi Hamzah (then party secretary-general), followed by Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif from PAS central communications and information bureau. *Bulan Bintang* was published until 1973.

Dr. Burhanuddin and the PAS leaders realised that, besides using new methods and strategies, they also had to work within the existing political terrain. Their past experience in mobilising Malay-Muslims had taught them the need to work with and within the traditional structures of Malay society where religious leaders and functionaries were still afforded a great deal of social status and respect. To that end, the party began developing its 'sub-élite' strata of *ulama*, imams, *madrasah* and *pondok* teachers, religious educators, missionaries and students to disseminate the party's political message to the masses. Their approach was a pedagogic one, which has been aptly summed up by Bachtiar Djamily:

*Kalau gunung tak datang ke Muhammad, maka Muhammadlah yang akan datang ke gunung itu. Kalau si bodoh tak datang belajar ke si pintar, maka yang merasa dirinya pintarlh yang pergi mengajar si bodoh. Kalau surau dan masjid itu telah lengang, kerana tak banyak orang yang mahu memantapkan ajaran agama lagi, maka para ulama dan juru dakwahlah yang berkewajipan membawa ummat kepada jalan yang benar.<sup>106</sup>*

PAS's pedagogic approach was embodied in the figure of the humble PAS imam or *guru* who travelled from one village to another, carrying out his religious and social obligations in the *masjid* (mosque), *surau*, *madrasah* or homes of the villagers, while at the same time preaching the message of the Islamist party to his captive audience.

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<sup>106</sup> Translation: If the mountain would not come to Muhammad, then Muhammad would have to go to the mountain. If the stupid would not learn from the intelligent, then those who regarded themselves as intelligent would have to go to educate the stupid. And if the *surau* or mosque was empty because the people were no longer interested in improving their knowledge of religion, then the task would fall on the *ulama* and the missionaries to bring the message of Islam back to the people (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 13).

Despite the seemingly informal manner in which these activities were carried out, the party's leadership did lay down strict guidelines on how these religious functionaries were to conduct themselves. They were told to wear traditional Malay dress all the time. (The *songkok* or *kopiah* was the most common form of headwear.) They were never allowed to use luxury goods such as silk neckties or expensive shoes. (Western clothes in general were frowned upon.) At that time, the PAS leaders and members were less inclined towards Arab and North African styles of dress. Though the representatives of the party were encouraged to dress decently, they were not asked to dress in the same way as Muslims in the Arab, North African or Indian parts of the Muslim world. Even the members of the *Muslimat* wing of the party were still seen in the traditional Malay *baju kurung* and *baju kebaya*, more often than not without a *tudung* (headscarf).<sup>107</sup> (This sartorial shift only took place in the 1980s, as we shall see later.) Party leaders were never allowed to be chauffeur-driven or take taxis. They were never allowed to accept meals in restaurants without paying for themselves; and they were constantly reminded that they should never let their 'eyes wander' too close to members of the opposite sex.

Within a short time, the middle-ranking leadership of PAS took over most of the traditional duties and functions of the religious leaders of the community. As Bachtiar Djamily notes, the term '*pemimpin PAS*' (PAS leader) soon became synonymous with '*pemimpin agama*' (religious leader):

*Jika disebut pemimpin PAS, pada umumnya dikalangan orang ramai, pemimpin PAS itu tentulah seorang cerdik pandai, seorang ahli agama. Dan bila dia datang ke kampung, pemimpin PAS itu tentulah tahu membaca doa, tentulah boleh menjadi khatib dan Imam ketika sembahyang Jumaat atau sembahyang fardhu atau sunnat yang lain.*<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Haji Mustafa Ali, 23 August 2000.

<sup>108</sup> Translation: Whenever anyone said 'PAS leader', in general everyone assumed that he was knowledgeable and pious. And when he came to the village, everyone knew that the PAS leader could read the *doa* (prayers) and that he could be the *khatib* or imam to lead the *Jamaah* prayers or the prayers that were *fard* or *sunnah* (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 16).

This network of PAS *ulama* and imams quickly succeeded in entrenching themselves within the local communities which they served. Thus by the time of the 1959 elections, the party, through its vast and expanding network of middle-ranking political and religious functionaries, had made considerable inroads into UMNO's support base.<sup>109</sup>

The 1959 federal election was an important event for a number of reasons. For a start, there were more non-Malay and non-Muslim voters than in the previous election, and observers of Malayan politics were unsure how this would affect the pattern of voting. (In the 1955 election, the Malays had made up 84.2% of the electorate, the Chinese 11.2% and Indians 4.6%.)<sup>110</sup> The voter turnout was 73.3%.

Prior to the election, UMNO leaders issued a number of electoral promises to the Malay-Muslim electorate in particular. In the predominantly Malay northern states, they promised major development and infrastructure projects that would help to improve communications and promote development of the local economy. In Kelantan, for instance, UMNO leaders promised that should UMNO be voted into power in the state, a major new roadworks scheme would be implemented that would culminate in the building of a bridge across the Kelantan River to link Seberang Pasir Mas and Pasir Mas. So confident was UMNO of a victory in Kelantan that the engineers were asked to start work on the bridge project: pillars were erected and a number of Indian labourers from Kerala were moved there.<sup>111</sup> Similar promises were made to the Malay villagers in other parts of Kelantan and Terengganu, but the UMNO leaders were not prepared for the results of the 1959 election.

To the shock and horror of UMNO leaders, the Alliance did not fare as well as it had done in 1955: its share of the vote was drastically cut from 81.0% to a mere 51.8%. However, due to the

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<sup>109</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, p. 267.

<sup>110</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 64.

<sup>111</sup> Hussein Yaakub, *UMNO Tidak Relevan*, p. 82.

first-past-the-post system inherited from the British model, the Alliance won a higher proportion of parliamentary seats — 74 (71.1%) of the 104 seats (see Table 2.2).

PAS won 21.3% of the votes and 13 seats (12.5% of seats) in the federal parliament (PAS contested 58 seats in all). The party also won 42 state assembly seats, most in the northern states — 9 of the 10 seats contested in Kelantan and 4 of the 6 contested in Terengganu. As a result, the party took control of the entire north-east of the Malay peninsula when it won control of the state governments and assemblies of Kelantan and Terengganu. Its president, Dr. Burhanuddin, won the parliamentary seat in Besut, Terengganu. Other prominent PAS leaders elected to Parliament were Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad (Bachok), Hasan Adli Arshat (Kuala Terengganu Utara), Khatijah Sidek (Dungun), Osman Abdullah (Tanah Merah), Datuk Raja Muhamad Hanifah (Pasir Mas), Haji Ahmad Perai (Kelantan Hilir), Harun Pilus (Terengganu Tengah) and Asri Muda.

PAS's allies in the Socialist Front (PRM and PBM) won 22.1% of the votes (more than PAS, it should be noted) but they won only 9 parliamentary seats (8.7% of seats). Altogether, the instrumental coalition of Islamist and leftist parties had also won control of several town councils such as Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Malacca, Penang and Seremban, as well as local authorities in places like Serdang, Jinjang (in Kuala Lumpur) and Lapis.

PAS's victory in the 1959 election was a surprise for many. One reason for the party's success in the north was the redrawing of the electoral boundaries prior to the election. The UMNO-led government had attempted to create new electoral constituencies that were pluralist in nature to ensure the multiracial Alliance would do well in the election. But this was not so easy to do in the northern states of Kelantan and Terengganu where the local populations were overwhelmingly Malay. As a result, the predominantly Malay constituencies that were the natural political bases of PAS and *Parti Negara* were left largely intact.

The UMNO leaders were furious with the election results. Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak declared that the Malay-Muslim voters of Kelantan and Terengganu were 'ungrateful traitors' who had betrayed the party that was meant to lead them —

UMNO.<sup>112</sup> As soon as the results were known, UMNO leaders cancelled all the promised projects in Kelantan and Terengganu. The bridge project at Pasir Mas was called off, and the pillars that had been erected earlier were left standing. (UMNO leaders challenged PAS and the people of Kelantan to build the bridge on their own without federal government assistance. This they finally did when PAS took over government of the state.)<sup>113</sup>

When it took over the state governments of Kelantan and Terengganu, PAS became the first Islamist party in all Southeast Asia to form its own government via constitutional means. It was also one of the earliest Islamist parties in the entire Muslim world to come to power. (Earlier, *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin* had come to power for a brief spell in Yemen in the 1940s.) When news of PAS's victory broke, many Islamist movements and parties in Indonesia were jubilant. Ibnu Hasyim notes that the reaction among the Arab Islamist movements was even stronger: most of them had not even heard of PAS, and did not realise that there was such an Islamist party in Malaya.<sup>114</sup>

PAS's performance in the north exceeded the expectations of even the veteran leaders of the party. In Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah it won 63.9, 36.9, 31.7 and 23.6% of the votes respectively (see Table 2.3). Overall, the party won 329,070 votes (21.3% of the total).

Within a few years, the political fortunes of the Islamist party had been turned around by its new leaders. Having learnt their lesson from the debacle of 1955, the leaders and managers of the party worked hard to improve the organisational structure of the party and the election results of 1959 showed that their internal reforms were finally paying dividends. The grassroots network

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> As part of the challenge to PAS, some senior UMNO members also claimed that if PAS could actually complete the bridge at Pasir Mas then they would strip themselves naked and expose themselves on the bridge as a sign of humiliation and defeat. This part of the challenge has yet to be met, though the bridge was completed nearly four decades ago (ibid., p. 83).

<sup>114</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 149.

laid down by PAS activists like Amaluddin Darus and Asri Muda in the northern states had delivered PAS the victory it wanted. Although PAS's fortunes in the south were obviously much poorer,<sup>115</sup> its main rival UMNO was now forced to take the party seriously. As Bachtiar Djamily writes:

*Manakala PAS lulus dengan markah yang baik dalam peperiksaan pilihan-raya 1959, benar-benarlah PAS menjadi PAS pada masa itu. Banyak orang yang tadi mengejek dan melecehkan kami, kemudian menutup bibirnya rapat-rapat dan tidak sanggup berkata apa-apa lagi.*<sup>116</sup>

So shocked were the leaders of UMNO and the Alliance coalition that they were forced to revise not only their previously held assumptions about PAS as a party of rural peasants and village imams, but also their tactics in dealing with the party.

It was clear that by 1959, PAS — not Onn Jaafar's *Parti Negara* — was the biggest political challenger to UMNO. (*Parti Negara* was effectively wiped out during the 1959 election. The only seat won by the party was Onn Jaafar's, in Kuala Terengganu.) The Islamist party had evolved to become a serious threat to the political viability and survival of UMNO in the Malay heartland. The leaders had called upon all members, including the female supporters of *Dewan Muslimat*, to lend their weight during the campaign.<sup>117</sup> As a result, PAS was rewarded with a resounding victory that many did not expect. PAS' opponents were equally amazed by the results.

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<sup>115</sup> In the 1959 federal election, PAS fielded three parliamentary candidates in Johor — in the constituencies of Pontian Utara, Muar Selatan and Segamat Utara. The party's performance was still very poor in the southern state: It won only 2.3% of the parliamentary votes (4,992 out of 216,027 votes) and 2.6% of the state assembly votes (5,417 out of 214,496 votes). (Source: PAS Johor Division archives)

<sup>116</sup> Translation: And when PAS won the elections of 1959 with flying colours, we realised that at long last PAS had finally become a major party. Those who had previously abused and derided us were now forced to shut up, and they were no longer able to say anything against us. (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 8).

<sup>117</sup> In his address to the 1959 annual meeting of *Dewan Muslimat*, Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad, PAS vice-president, called on the women *continued p. 157*

The UMNO leaders were so concerned that the Tunku was forced to turn to the one under-utilised section of his party: *Kaum Ibu*, its women's wing. As Manderson has shown, it was actually PAS's success at the 1959 election that served as the catalyst for the rejuvenation of *Kaum Ibu*, which later made it one of the most powerful women's political organisations in the world.

PAS's victory in the 1959 election also forced UMNO leaders to reconsider their own roles as defenders and promoters of Malay-Muslim interests and Islam in general. PAS's image as an Islamist opposition party meant that henceforth UMNO would have to fight its struggle along an ideological frontier drawn by the discourse of Islam. Soon the conservative-nationalists were thinking of new ways and means to promote their own Islamic image and agenda; one of the first was the introduction of the annual *Qur'an* reading contest in 1960. The Islamisation race had begun.<sup>118</sup>

### *PAS in the Mainstream: The Party's Campaigns within the Malayan Political Arena*

After winning control of the state governments of Kelantan and Terengganu, PAS was quick to install its own party-political

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to 'wake up and play their part in the process of nation building' (Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, p. 143). The PAS leaders realised even then that the women's section of the party had an important role to play and that their Dewan Muslimat was much weaker than the *Kaum Ibu* of UMNO.

<sup>118</sup> UMNO leader Tunku Abdul Rahman regarded the *Qur'an* reading contest as one of the earliest UMNO victories in the Islamisation race in Malaya. In 1969, he wrote: 'Malaysia has led the way in *Qur'an* reading competitions. Since these competitions began in 1960, Malaysia has received great praise, being held in an esteem in the Muslim world accorded to no other country but Saudi Arabia, home of Mecca and Medina' (Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, *May 13: Before and After*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press, 1969, p. 41).

representatives. In Terengganu, Mohamad Daud Abdul Samad was invited to serve as Chief Minister.<sup>119</sup> The PAS leaders were keen to demonstrate that they were just as competent to manage the country as their UMNO counterparts. In Terengganu, the PAS administration under Mohamad Daud embarked on a number of development projects, most related to road-building and communications, with a limited budget of RM207 million in 1960.<sup>120</sup>

PAS was now established in the political scene, but its leaders realised that they would still have to work with the other opposition groups and movements to achieve any meaningful degree of success. To this end, PAS, *Parti Negara* and the Malay leftists of PRM worked together on a number of issues in the parliament of newly independent Malaya. Despite various setbacks — not least of which was their failure to press home their demands for a Malayan constitution drawn up on their terms — PAS and PRM under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam respectively still co-operated on the basis of an instrumental alliance based on shared political interests.<sup>121</sup>

From 1959, PAS began to make significant strides in its attempt to present itself as a mainstream political party with an Islamist agenda and concerns of its own. Its claim to fame was its call for an

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<sup>119</sup> Mohamad Daud's state government in Terengganu was made up of the following members: Chief Minister: Mohamad Daud Abdul Samad; Speaker: Mohamad Taib Sabri; state executive committee members: Abu Bakar Mat Salleh, Omar Shukri Embong, Ismail Yusof, Omar Abdul Rahman, Mohamad Sanari Yunus and Mohamad Azzam Hanafiah (Zulkifli Sulong, *Operasi Tawan Trengganu*, pp. 19–20).

<sup>120</sup> Though this administration was not destined to last long, the PAS government in Terengganu initiated a number of important road-building projects, including roads and highways in Besut, Dungun and Kemaman. They also built the Dungun district office.

<sup>121</sup> The friendship between the two compatriots was to last to the end of their lives. In his biography of Dr. Burhanuddin, Boestamam recalls with fondness the relationship he enjoyed with Dr. Burhanuddin. Although they sometimes disagreed over issues in the Parliament, their relationship remained cordial to the end (Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin*, p. 66).

Islamic state, which posed a growing challenge to UMNO's own standing as a conservative nationalist party that defended the interests of the Malay-Muslims. However, PAS's approach to the question of an Islamic state was not always a coherent or simple one. The two leaders, Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee, agreed in principle on the idea of an Islamic state but disagreed on the ways and means to create such a state. This difference in approach contributed to one of the earliest political crises within the party, that occurred in Terengganu in 1960-61.

After winning control of Terengganu at the 1959 election, state PAS leaders were divided on the question of Islamic law and the formation of an Islamic state. In time, this division broke into open confrontation between the intellectuals and the *ulama* of the party.

Matters were further complicated for the PAS leaders in Terengganu by their slim majority in the Dewan Undangan Negeri (state assembly): PAS had 13 seats, but UMNO, *Parti Negara* and MCA had five, four and two, respectively. This gave PAS a majority of only two in an assembly of 24. PAS's standing improved when *Parti Negara* assemblyman Ismail Abas defected to PAS, but this did not save the Islamists from the intrigues of their opponents.

As the conflict over religious and legal issues within PAS came out into the open, PAS's adversaries in UMNO turned the situation to their advantage. Some PAS assemblymen were encouraged to defect and join UMNO. As the pressure on PAS intensified, Onn Jaafar, leader of *Parti Negara*, attempted to broker a deal with PAS Chief Minister Mohamad Daud. Onn demanded the portfolio for Land Development and Resources be handed to one of *Parti Negara's* assemblymen, but Mohamad Daud refused. With the Chief Minister's refusal, *Parti Negara* withdrew its support for the Chief Minister, and Mohamad Daud was effectively isolated. The UMNO assemblymen began to call for a vote of no confidence and the wavering PAS members were encouraged to support them. Finally on 30 October 1961, the UMNO members of the state assembly cast their votes against the Terengganu state government of Mohamad Daud, with the support of two PAS assemblymen, Wan Said Mohamad Nor and Abdul Kadir Mohamad. Three other

PAS members chose to abstain.<sup>122</sup> Caught off-guard by the turncoats within their own ranks, the PAS leadership could only admit defeat. Mohamad Daud was forced to relinquish control over the state government of Terengganu. PAS's control of the state had lasted two years, four months and ten days.

After reverting to UMNO control, Terengganu was once again the recipient of federal government development assistance funds. While the neighbouring state of Kelantan under PAS was forced to struggle with numerous bureaucratic hurdles in its attempt to secure development aid, the UMNO state government of Terengganu secured RM100 million within the next two years. (PAS-controlled Kelantan, on the other hand, only received RM45 million over the next five years.)

The loss of Terengganu served as a reminder to PAS leaders that their hold on power was precarious: their adversaries in UMNO were always on the lookout for ways and means to rob them of their electoral gains and their small amount of power. As a result, the party leadership became increasingly preoccupied with the problem of gaining and retaining political power in the country.

Apart from the long-term struggle to form an Islamic state, PAS's leaders were also vocal in other areas of national and international interest. During the 9th, 10th and 11th PAS general assemblies, its president brought up a number of important international issues within the orbit of the party's concerns. These included the plight of the Palestinians under Israeli rule, the conduct of the French government in relation to its ex-colony Algeria, the repression of Muslims in Burma under the military regime of General Ne Win, the role of the US in Southeast Asia and the Tunku's support of the Western bloc, and American interests in particular. But in time, the PAS leaders became increasingly involved in two major areas: the thorny question of Malaya's relations with Indonesia and the equally sensitive issue of the communist insurgency at home.

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<sup>122</sup> They were Hasin Jusoh, Mohamad Azzam Hanafiah and Mohamad Ismail (Zulkifli Sulong, *Operasi Tawan Trengganu*, p. 21).

*PAS and the Indonesian Question*

Malaya declared its independence on 31 August 1957 while the country was still in a state of Emergency. The end of the Emergency was finally declared on 31 August 1960. By then, the MCP had been effectively checked and defeated,<sup>123</sup> but the financial and human costs of the conflict had risen to a staggering level. After 12 years of conflict, the total financial cost to the governments of the Malayan Federation and Britain was \$180 million. In human terms, the cost was also high: A total of 6,710 communist insurgents had been killed or wounded. On the government side, losses amounted to 1,865 Malayan and Commonwealth soldiers and civilians killed and a further 2,500 wounded. It was without a doubt the costliest and bloodiest episode of Malayan history. But as soon as the Emergency was over, the fledgling Malayan Federation faced yet another crisis involving its neighbours Indonesia and the Philippines.

Malaya's independence was a problematic and controversial issue for the other countries of Southeast Asia. Indonesia and the Philippines were particularly critical of the terms upon which independence had been granted. Prior to granting Malaya its independence, the departing colonial authorities had negotiated a

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<sup>123</sup> At the end of the first Emergency (in 1960), the MCP had suffered enormous losses to its leadership and rank and file. Many of its militia units were isolated and ill-equipped, while the leadership was no longer united over matters of strategy and party policy. The 10th Malay regiment was particularly ill-treated, with many troops given only the most rudimentary arms training and drilling (some were only taught martial arts). While internal squabbling and rivalry were eating away the support base and internal cohesion of the MCP, its secretary-general Chin Peng left Malaya for China via Hanoi. Lim Cheng Leng (*The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 213) says that while in Hanoi Chin Peng addressed the Workers and Communist Parties Conference and claimed that the armed struggle in Malaya would never be abandoned. Many other MCP leaders and activists such as Ibrahim Mohamad and Shamsiah Fakeh were also sent to China as the first Emergency came to its end. There they received political training before being sent to Indonesia to work with PKI to bring about the fall of the government of Malaya.

number of crucial bilateral agreements with the Malayan (Alliance) government to ensure the protection of British economic and strategic interests. These included pacts such as the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA).<sup>124</sup> Malaya's membership of the Commonwealth also meant that it was seen by its neighbours as a 'loyal compradore state' still serving the interests of its former colonial master.

The fiercely anti-Western President Soekarno of Indonesia condemned the creation of the Federation of Malaya as an Anglo-American imperialist plot to create a 'puppet state' that would thwart Indonesia's ambition for a leadership role in the archipelago. He also vented his wrath on the country's first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, calling him a 'Western stooge' who had sold out to the 'Olfos' (old established forces) bent on sabotaging the rise of the 'Nefos' (new emerging forces) of the Third World. Soekarno's attacks on the West were justified by the conduct of some ex-colonial powers (like America, Britain, France, Holland and Belgium) that were obviously bent on defending their economic and political interests in their ex-colonies at whatever cost. When Congolese nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba was brutally executed under the eyes of the Western powers and the United Nations in 1961,<sup>125</sup> other Third World leaders like Soekarno felt that the struggle for independence was yet to be won.

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<sup>124</sup> It is interesting to note that AMDA was negotiated before Malaya was given its full independence. Under the agreement, Britain was obliged to help defend Malaya in the event of an attack, while Malaya was obliged to help Britain in the defence of its remaining colonies: Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, North Borneo and Sarawak. The decision by Malaya to sign AMDA was met with much resentment from both the Malayan radicals and the communists and nationalists of neighbouring Indonesia, who saw it as an attempt by Britain to set up a pro-British neo-colony. (Abdullah Ahmad, *Tunku Abdul Rahman*, p. 26).

<sup>125</sup> Belgian Congo (later Zaire) achieved its independence in 1960. At the time, the anti-colonial struggle in Africa had thrown up a number of leftist nationalist leaders with socialist or communist sympathies; the Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba was regarded as one of the most vocal and articulate. He formally came to power as Congo's (Zaire's) *continued p. 163*

While the war of words between newly independent Malaya and Indonesia intensified (taking on increasingly paranoid proportions, coloured according to the monochromatic moral logic of Soekarno in particular), ties between the two countries were

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first Prime Minister in 1960. The rise of Patrice Lumumba and his supporters was greeted with alarm by the ex-colonial power, Belgium. Right up to independence, it was clear that Belgium was not about to relinquish power and control over its assets in the Congo. The country's economy was still very much tied to Western capitalist interests, and Belgian officers were in charge of the Congolese armed forces and intelligence agencies. Furthermore, Brussels was being supported by the governments of the US, Britain and France. President Eisenhower regarded Congo as of key strategic importance in the Cold War in Africa, and feared that the country would turn into an African Cuba with Lumumba as an African Castro. The Chief of CIA operations in the Congo, Lawrence Devlin, was ordered to kill Lumumba (with the use of poisoned toothpaste, of all things). In time, the governments of Belgium, US and Britain began preparing the way for the overthrow of Lumumba's government. The Belgian authorities planned 'Operation Baracuda', designed to capture Lumumba and eliminate him. However, in 1960-61, Congo was already in crisis. The economy had failed and the Katanga region unilaterally declared its own independence. Prime Minister Lumumba angered his opponents when he tried to bring Katanga back into the Congo and when he removed many of the Belgian officers in charge of the armed forces. Sixty-seven days after he had taken office, Lumumba was sacked by the President of the Congo. During this crisis, the army took the initiative. Led by pro-Western Colonel Joseph Desire Mobutu Sese Seko and Joseph Kasavubu, the Congolese army took over control of the state and detained Lumumba. Later it was decided that Lumumba should be flown to Katanga, where his enemies were ready to eliminate him. Lumumba and two others were flown to Katanga and taken to a mansion in the countryside owned by a Belgian planter. Along the journey he and the others were tortured by Congolese, Kantanganese and Belgian soldiers. In the evening, Lumumba was taken out to the jungle and shot by a firing squad commanded by a Belgian officer. Afterwards, the government of Katanga denied its involvement in the killings, and attempts were made to cover up the execution. Lumumba's body was dug up, hacked to pieces, dissolved in acid and

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inevitably strained. Matters were complicated even further by a number of radical Malay nationalists of the left (including Ibrahim Yaakob) taking refuge in Indonesia and working to discredit the Malayan government from abroad.

PAS leaders found themselves in a very difficult position. As we have seen, the development of the Malayan Islamist movements and parties was closely linked to developments in neighbouring Indonesia. PAS's links with the Indonesian Islamists were well known, and many in the party were praying for the victory of the Islamist camp in Indonesia. This, however, was not meant to be.

Shortly after independence, the Indonesian Islamists began to suspect Soekarno's agenda. Modernist Muslim leader Muhammad Natsir (well known as a democrat and constitutionalist) began to criticise Soekarno for meddling in the political process and the republican constitution.<sup>126</sup> Natsir opposed the federalist inclina-

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the remnants burnt. In the wake of Lumumba's overthrow, Congo (Zaire) came under the leadership of pro-Western military dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled the country for 30 years. Colonel Mobutu's period of rule was marked by rampant abuses of human rights, corruption, abuse of power and Zaire's move closer to the Western bloc. Colonel Mobutu's government was defeated by Laurent Kabila and he was forced to flee Zaire in May 1997. He later died of cancer while in exile abroad.

<sup>126</sup> Muhammad Natsir was known as a democrat and a constitutionalist, and was extremely popular and well-regarded by the modernist Muslim tendency in the country. President Soekarno was keen to win his support and offered him the post of Prime Minister. But Natsir refused to work with Soekarno when the latter attempted to turn the country into a political federation. Natsir argued that Indonesia needed to remain a unified country governed by a central government bound by the republican constitution. He opposed the moves towards federalisation and in 1950 put forward his 'integral mission' calling for the unification of Indonesia. Soekarno then promoted him to the post of Prime Minister. However, Natsir's Cabinet lasted only seven months because of PKI conspiracies against him. As the country began to fragment, Natsir's attacks on PKI grew in frequency. When Soekarno attempted to disband the political parties in Indonesia and introduce his own version of 'guided democracy', *continued p. 165*

tions of Soekarno and his close advisers, and resented the growing influence of PKI on the President. When Soekarno began to dismantle the party-political process in his efforts to introduce 'guided democracy' Natsir and the Islamists objected on the grounds that it was against the spirit of the constitution and could only lead to dictatorship. The rift between the Islamists and the nationalists finally led to the ill-fated PRRI and PERMESTA revolts in Sumatra and Sulawesi, and served only to alienate the Muslims even more from the central government.

Apart from concerns about the state of the constitution, Indonesian Islamists were also wary about Soekarno's insistence on the *pancasila* (five pillars) ideology of the state. Many Islamists had come to see the *pancasila* as an ideology meant to defend Javanese mysticism which they regarded as *shirk*. They also feared the slow infiltration by the communists of PKI who were also among Soekarno's close supporters.<sup>127</sup> PKI under its new chairman, Dupa Nusantara Aidit, was gaining ground as well as support among the people as it began its own unilateral land reform campaign — which merely brought it into conflict with Muslim landlords and landowners who were more inclined towards Masjumi.<sup>128</sup>

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Muhammad Natsir was one of the first to attack the President and declare that 'guided democracy' was nothing more than legalised dictatorship. Natsir then transferred his loyalties to the leaders of the armed forces in Sumatra, and supported the *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) revolt that began in the late 1950s. The revolt was later crushed by the armed forces loyal to Soekarno, and it led to the elimination of many non-Javanese commanders. Natsir himself was alienated and black-listed as a result of his involvement in the PRRI movement.

<sup>127</sup> In the 1955 elections, PKI secured 16.4% of the votes while the Islamist NU won 18.5%.

<sup>128</sup> When D. N. Aidit took over the leadership of PKI, he began to re-orient the party to bring it closer to Soekarno and the nationalists to gain protection from both the Islamists and the Indonesian armed forces who were distrustful of PKI, especially after the Madiun affair of 1948. At the same time, Aidit encouraged PKI to work towards  
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By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the tension finally led to the eruption of a number of popular Muslim revolts such as the *Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* (PRRI) revolt in Sumatra (1958) and the *Darul Islam* rebellion in Sulawesi (1950–65). Soekarno's response was to come down hard on these Islamist movements, and Masjumi was banned in 1959.<sup>129</sup> The Islamists in Malaya were understandably concerned about the plight of fellow Islamists in the neighbouring country.

Pak Doktor's own sympathies for the radical Indonesian nationalists and Islamists was well known by then. Apart from his admiration for leading Indonesian leaders such as Soekarno, Hatta and Muhammad Natsir (head of Masjumi), Dr. Burhanuddin also personally knew many of the radical Malay nationalists who had fled into exile in Indonesia, such as Ibrahim Yaakob, Ibrahim

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land reform, following the model set by Mao's regime in Communist China. By 1957 PKI was one of the biggest parties in the country; its main support base was among the rural peasantry who were open to its ideas of land reform and land redistribution. In 1959, PKI began its land reform campaign by sending its agents and operatives down to the farms to introduce political education to the peasants. PKI claimed that most of the landlords and landholders were 'traitors' working against the interests of the people, and encouraged the seizure of land by the farmers themselves. This brought the communists into open conflict with the landowning classes, mostly Muslims who supported the Islamist parties. Under pressure from PKI, Soekarno's government passed the 1960 New Agrarian Law which set a limit on the amount of land each family could own. This was seen as a direct attack on the monopolies of the Muslim landowners and farmers, many of whom were linked to Masjumi.

<sup>129</sup> On 17 August 1959, Soekarno officially banned Masjumi and began to work against the modernist Muslim movements (while being goaded on by PKI and its leaders like D. N. Aidit). Masjumi's leaders were detained and from 1960–66 Muhammad Natsir was detained. After the fall of Soekarno and the destruction of PKI in 1965, Natsir was released. He tried to revive Masjumi, but was prevented by anti-Islamist elements within the armed forces and the New Order of President Soeharto. Natsir was then forced to concentrate in the areas of education and social work, and in 1967 he formed *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII) in Jakarta.

Mohamad and Shamsiah Fakeh. When chief adviser to PKMM, Dr. Burhanuddin had given his approval for the move to Indonesia when it was felt the organisation was no longer able to organise effectively in Malaya.<sup>130</sup> On several occasions he had defended the calls for the re-unification of Malaya and Indonesia on the grounds that the peoples of the Malay archipelago shared many cultural, religious and political commonalties, and were fundamentally one nation. Earlier he had said:

There is no plausible reason why our desire to maintain a closer relationship with Indonesia should be subject to such vile attacks. The Malay and Indonesian people come from the same stock and thus it is natural for them to want to come closer, to be united. This aspiration has a long history, ever since we and the Indonesians came under the yoke of foreign rule, of European imperialism. This is the aspiration for which we have been fighting. But it is not yet known as to what form the unity and consolidation of Malaya and Indonesia might be, when it finally materialises. Only let me say loudly and strongly that whatever form it may be, it will neither result in bringing Malaya under the rule of Indonesia nor vice-versa. ... Thus if Malaya in the not too distant future wishes to have a special link, a special form of solidarity and friendship with Indonesia, this process cannot and should not be regarded as contradictory to the historical development of the two nations. Our relation with Indonesia should be strengthened in all phases of our life: political, economic, social and cultural because this relationship is demanded by historical reality.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The transfer of the remaining members of PKMM took place in 1950. Shortly afterwards, PKMM was officially proscribed by the British in Malaya. Dr. Burhanuddin and Ibrahim Yaakob had thus managed to save what little was left of PKMM by their decision to relocate it to Indonesia, at Jogjakarta. Renamed *Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka* (Independent Malaya Union), PKMM was under the leadership of Ibrahim Yaakob, who spent the following years helping the Indonesians in their campaign to discredit the newly created Malayan Federation as a neo-colonial entity. During the period of *Konfrontasi* between Indonesia and Malaysia (1963-65), Ibrahim aided the Indonesian effort as a propagandist for the Indonesian cause, calling for the reunification of Malaya with the rest of Indonesia.

<sup>131</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin's acceptance speech, 1956. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 83.

Thus while the Malayan Islamists were concerned about Soekarno's rough handling of the Islamist movements and organisations in Indonesia, they were not prepared to join in the chorus of anti-Indonesian sentiment being whipped up by the Malayan government. Their sympathy for their fellow co-religionists and fellow Malays in Indonesia prevented them from taking sides with the conservative Malayan nationalists led by men like the Tunku. However, this precarious state of affairs could not be maintained forever as the stakes in the struggle between Malaya and Indonesia were being raised all the time.

During a luncheon talk in Singapore on 27 May 1961, the Tunku revealed his plan to create a 'Greater Malaya' that would include the soon-to-be independent British colonies and protectorates in Borneo. Soon a number of anti-Malayan groups began to protest against the Tunku's proposals and Soekarno came out in support of them.<sup>132</sup> Anti-Malayan sentiment began to grow within the region, particularly amongst the leftist movements in Indonesia. When the tiny Malay kingdom of Brunei experienced its first major revolt in 1962 (dubbed the Azhaari revolt),<sup>133</sup> the communists of

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<sup>132</sup> One such incident took place on 8 December 1962 when anti-Malayan groups in North Kalimantan (Borneo) protested against the plan to create a Malaysian Federation. Soekarno expressed his support for these groups openly, much to the frustration of Kuala Lumpur. (See *Malaysian Issue: Background and Documents*, Djakarta: Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs, 1964, p. 47.)

<sup>133</sup> Brunei was, at that time, a British protectorate still a long way from independence. In the 1962 election *Partai Rakyat Brunei* (PRB) won the highest number of votes, but this sudden change was read as a direct challenge to the power of the ruler of Brunei. Soon after the results were announced, Brunei was in a state of chaos which turned into a violent revolt against the palace led by Ustaz Azhaari. The Legislative Council was disbanded by the Sultan, who turned to the British for military assistance. British troops were sent to Brunei to put down the revolt, and hundreds of political refugees fled the country. Many ended up in Malaya, which suggested to some people that Kuala Lumpur had somehow played a role in the disturbances. The peace in Brunei remained fragile and the last elections in Brunei were held in 1965. In 1967, Sultan Omar abdicated in favour of his  
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Indonesia were quick to point the finger of accusation at Kuala Lumpur, claiming that Malaya was bent on expanding its sphere of influence within the archipelago.

PAS leaders were also wary of the Tunku's plans, and on 15 July 1963 they launched a protest in parliament over the postponement of the sitting to discuss the Malaysian issue.<sup>134</sup> Despite the open resistance shown to the Tunku's project, his plan was finally realised on 16 September 1963 when the Federation of Malaya was expanded to include the states of Sarawak and Sabah (British North Borneo). Six months before the merger was finalised, the Tunku had engineered the elimination of the radical left in Singapore by sending Malaya's leading covert operations expert C. C. Too to Singapore to infiltrate and cripple the leftist elements within the People's Action Party (PAP) led by Lee Kuan Yew.<sup>135</sup> Brunei's Sultan Omar Ali

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son Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, who later cultivated a special relationship with Britain (epitomised by the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in 1979) and Brunei only gained its independence in 1984. Under the rule of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Brunei has remained a highly conservative state ruled by an authoritarian form of monarchy. The Sultan also ensured that Brunei remained firmly allied to the West, and in the 1980s this close relationship came out into the open after a series of hugely embarrassing scandals which linked the Sultan with the Reagan administration and several puppet regimes in Latin America (dubbed the 'Iran-Contra' affair).

<sup>134</sup> *Malaysian Issue*, p. 32.

<sup>135</sup> The plan to infiltrate PAP and to contain the 'leftist threat' within it was called Operation Cold Store. By 1963 it was well known that PAP had been practically taken over by communist elements of MCP's South Malayan Bureau. The formation of the Singaporean Socialist Front in 1960 had sent warning signals to Kuala Lumpur, and the Tunku feared the prospect of integration with Singapore should the island state fall to the communists and socialists. Lee Kuan Yew was no longer in total control of his own party and so Tunku sent C. C. Too on a covert mission to Singapore to assess the situation and identify ways to help Lee contain the leftists within PAP. Following Too's advice, the Malayan, Singaporean and British authorities decided on a sudden sweep to arrest all the leftist leaders in Singapore. This led to Operation Cold Store in February 1963, six months before *continued p. 170*

Saifuddin III was also keen to bring his state into Malaysia, but pulled out of the negotiations at the last minute. The federation henceforth became known as the 'Malaysian Federation'.

The Malaysian Federation project was a highly controversial issue throughout the region. Sarawak and Sabah were both ex-colonies formerly under British rule. When Britain relinquished control over the two states, it assumed that they should be encouraged to join the Malayan Federation. This in effect meant that all the ex-British colonies were being brought together by the departing colonial government as a single political entity that would remain within the Commonwealth and thus maintain their links to Britain. The problem was that both Sarawak and Sabah were on the island of Borneo, the southern half of which was part of Indonesia. The Indonesians had naturally assumed that as soon as independence was granted the states in northern Borneo would join Indonesia. Their expectations were not met, and the hastily conducted (and highly controversial) referendums in Sarawak and Sabah indicated that the populations of both states preferred to become part of the Malaysian Federation.

When the creation of the Malaysian Federation was announced, the Indonesians and Filipinos reacted immediately. For Soekarno this was evidence of the international plot to carve up the Malay archipelago by the old colonial forces and was therefore tantamount to neo-colonialism. President Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippines also lent his support for Soekarno's anti-Malaysian campaign — though he was himself a beneficiary of American support and was helped to the presidency by the CIA.<sup>136</sup> Goaded

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Singapore was to merge with Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia. (For a fuller account of the covert operation launched by C. C. Too, see Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, pp. 191–207.)

<sup>136</sup> Diosdado Macapagal began his career as a nationalist Filipino politician who struggled for the national liberation of his country. During the 1940s and 1950s he campaigned for Philippine independence and attempted to mobilise popular support against the Americans who had returned to the Philippines after World War II. During the presidency of Ramon Magsaysay, Macapagal was one of the most vocal  
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by Indonesian communist leader Dupa Nusantara Aidit and the ideologues of PKI, the Soekarno government finally declared a state of open confrontation against Malaysia, which became known as *Konfrontasi*.<sup>137</sup>

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critics of the Magsaysay government, accusing the President of being a hostage to American business and military interests. But by then the American presence in the Philippines was overpowering (the CIA had helped to run and organise Magsaysay's successful 1953 election campaign) and Filipino politics was virtually run by the American-created Civil Affairs Office (CAO) headed by the CIA operative Lt. Col. Edward G. Landsdale. After the death of Magsaysay in a plane crash in 1957, the Americans began courting other Filipino politicians. Macapagal was then working with and for the Americans, providing them with information about the communists and other dissident groups in the country. The Americans in turn responded by taking Macapagal under their wing and offering him tactical and financial support. Through the CAO, the CIA was able to support and sustain Macapagal's election campaign in 1961 (Blum, *Killing Hope*, p. 44). After winning the presidential election in 1961 with US support, Macapagal proved to be another loyal crony to American interests in the Philippines. (See also Edward G. Landsdale, *In the Midst of Wars*.)

<sup>137</sup> *Konfrontasi* lasted from 1963–65. During the conflict the Philippines supported Indonesia in its efforts to discredit the newly established Malaysian Federation. When Sabah and Sarawak joined the federation, the Indonesian communists (led by Dupa Nusantara Aidit of PKI) immediately criticised the move as part of a Western plot to create a pro-Western puppet state in the heart of Southeast Asia. The Indonesian communists were also being supported by radical Malaysian leftists who had escaped into exile in Indonesia, such as Ibrahim Yaakob. The PKI communists pressured Soekarno to declare war on Malaysia in 1963. Soekarno, who was under pressure to keep his own coalition of nationalist, religious (Islamist) and communist forces intact under the NASAKOM pact, was forced to give in. The failed Azhaari revolt in Brunei in 1962 (which PKI claimed was planned by Malaysia) was used as the pretext for declaration of hostilities. In the Philippines, the Macapagal government was also under pressure from the opposition parties who claimed that Sabah was technically part of the Philippines as it was once under the dominion of the Sultanate of Sulu. This gave the Philippines justification to  
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Soekarno's decision to declare *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia came as the biggest blow to the links between the Malaysian and Indonesian Islamist movements. Although some senior Indonesian army officers were making secret arrangements with the Malaysian government and security forces to minimise the harm from the conflict, the damage to Malaysian–Indonesian relations (and the cross-border networks between the Islamists) was done.<sup>138</sup>

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support Indonesia's open declaration of hostilities against Malaysia. During the confrontation, only Indonesia launched open attacks against Malaysia. Attacks on Sarawak had begun in 1962, and attacks on the Malay Peninsula began in 1963 with bombings in Malacca and Singapore. However, the Indonesian army, though stronger and larger, was poorly led and suffered from inadequate intelligence sources. The Indonesians made the mistake of including Chinese communist guides in their landing forces in Johor and along the west coast of the peninsula. The Indonesian troops gained little sympathy from the local Malays, who had come to hate the Chinese communists for the atrocities they committed in Malaya during the Emergency of 1948–60. The Indonesian forces who landed were quickly rounded up, captured or killed by Malaysian defence forces and local volunteers. The Indonesian airforce also performed badly during the conflict. Casualties were borne mainly by the Indonesian side, and both economic and human costs of the conflict were enormous. By 1965 inflation in Indonesia had risen to more than 600% and the economy was spiralling out of control. Soekarno's decision to go to war against Malaysia also led to massive capital flight from Indonesia, which wrecked the economy even further. In Java alone more than one million people were starving. Malaysia, on the other hand, received sympathy and support from the West and the conflict only brought the country even closer to the Western bloc. The confrontation also failed to create a popular movement in Malaysia against the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, something which Soekarno desperately wanted. In the end, the conflict was terminated by 1965 when the failed GESTAPU revolt by the communists led to persecution of PKI and communist sympathisers in the country and the rise of General Soeharto.

<sup>138</sup> Hefner notes that many senior Indonesian army generals were unhappy with Soekarno's decision to declare open war with Malaysia, as they felt it was a pointless conflict forced on the country *continued p. 173*

In Chapter 1 it was argued that the level of contact and movement between the peoples and countries of the Malay archipelago was exceedingly high and had remained so over the centuries. Even during the height of colonial power and influence in the region, the movement of people, goods and ideas within the archipelago was never arrested or fully controlled. However, as soon as hostilities were declared it became practically impossible for the Islamists of Malaysia to maintain contact with their Indonesian counterparts. Malaysian students studying in the *madrasah* and Islamic colleges and universities in Indonesia were immediately ordered to return home and then re-directed to Europe or Mecca and al-Azhar instead, through the use of funds collected by groups such as UMNO's *Kaum Ibu*.<sup>139</sup> After centuries of cross-channel contact, the Malay-Muslim world was split as a result of Soekarno's decision to bend to the communists' will.

As hostilities between Malaysia and Indonesia increased, PAS leaders began to condemn the stand taken by the Malaysian government towards Indonesia. At the 12th PAS general assembly in 1964, Dr. Burhanuddin openly attacked the Malaysian government's campaign against Indonesia. PAS leaders were incensed by the government's willingness to court and accept military support from Western powers like Britain and other Commonwealth countries during the conflict. Citing the historical relations between the Malay peoples of the peninsula and the rest of the archipelago as an example, Dr. Burhanuddin attacked the position taken by

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by PKI which had opted for *aksi sepihak* (unilateral action) that brought the NASAKOM coalition to an end. During the conflict, Indonesian officers leaked vital strategic information to the Malaysian side to ensure that the casualties and damage on both sides would be kept to a minimum. (Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 49.)

<sup>139</sup> Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change*, p. 87. During the confrontation with Indonesia, UMNO's *Kaum Ibu* helped to organise aid for Malaysian troops involved in the fighting. Many *Kaum Ibu* members also joined the territorial army as part of the effort to defend Malaysia's borders against Indonesian incursions.

UMNO leaders and the government as going against the tide of historical developments. Dr. Burhanuddin also condemned many policies and bilateral agreements (such as AMDA) of the Malaysian government with the Anglo-American powers, condemning the Tunku and his ministers as traitors to the cause of Malay unity in terms somewhat similar to the Indonesian nationalists.<sup>140</sup> (Later, these polemics would be used by the government against Dr. Burhanuddin himself, when he was charged with aiding Indonesia in its attempts to destabilise the country during *Konfrontasi*.)

### *PAS and the Communist Insurgency*

The other problem facing the country was the communist insurgency being fought in the countryside. In the late 1950s, Malaya was still under a state of national emergency. MCP insurgents had taken to the hills and the jungles in 1948 in their attempt to overthrow both the colonial and post-colonial Malayan governments, but with little success.

Though not entirely in agreement with the ideology and approach of the MCP, PAS under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin did not condone the methods used by both the colonial and post-colonial governments in dealing with the communist insurgency. Although PAS did not support the outlawed MCP, Pak Doktor nevertheless condemned the government's use of force and violence against the MCP guerrillas and their supporters among the rural peasantry

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<sup>140</sup> In his acceptance speech in 1956, Dr. Burhanuddin condemned the policies of Tunku's government: 'We should oppose strongly and positively the attempts of the imperial powers to turn Malaya into a military base, because they are a menace in Asia and worse of all a menace to the dignity and sovereignty of our Indonesian brothers. Our independence will be meaningless if in the ultimate analysis our homeland will become the playing ground for foreign, aggressive, imperialist military forces. Let us not for once believe that the presence of foreign troops in this country will strengthen or safeguard our independence, our prosperity or our well being.' (Dr. Burhanuddin's acceptance speech, 1956. Quoted in *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 84.)

during the Emergency of 1948–60. Dr. Burhanuddin's own stand on the issue was elaborated thus:

PAS is completely opposed to Communism. Islam and Communism cannot be and shall not be reconciled with each other. But PAS has shown that it has its own attitude towards Communism and towards the solution of the Communist problem within this country. We believe that Communism is a disease of society, but it arises out of the age-old practice of domination and suppression of the people. We believe that we have our own strength to meet this challenge. We believe in the sanctity and the purity of our ideology of Islam. We believe that in the peaceful competition between Islam and other ideologies, it is Islam that will ultimately triumph. It is for this reason that PAS demands a peaceful solution to the problem of Communism in this country. We want it to be so in the interest of peace and the well-being of the people of Malaya. Our experience after eight years of Emergency is full of chaos and destruction. The extent of the war will only bring about further chaos and destruction, hardship and suffering. The imperialists have failed to settle the problem through the use of military might, by means of force. It is now time for us to tackle it by constructive peaceful solutions.<sup>141</sup>

Dr. Burhanuddin's call for a peaceful resolution of the conflict was also motivated by personal interests that went beyond politics, for many Malay leaders of the MCP (especially those leading the MCP's 10th Malay regiment) had worked with him during the anti-colonial struggle in Malay organisations like KMM and PKMM. Among the more prominent Malay communist leaders whom he knew personally were Abdullah Cet Det and Rashid Mydin; both had been with Pak Doktor in the failed PKMM experiment. Pak Doktor's reluctance to endorse the government's policy of all-out war against the MCP was therefore understandable.

PAS continued to campaign against the Emergency regulations and the military and para-military tactics used by the postcolonial government in the war against the communist insurgents. Though PAS failed to secure a cease-fire or bring about negotiations between the government and the communists through its own initiatives, it did try to question the government's own propaganda against the communists in general. The party's 'soft' stand on the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

communist issue only began to harden in the 1970s, after Asri Muda took over as PAS president.

By the mid-1960s, PAS had been able to make its presence felt in no uncertain terms. Not only did the party put forward its own political claims and Islamist agenda, it was also willing and able to engage with the state and publicly condemn the government's policies. The party leaders had chosen to concentrate on highly controversial and problematic issues, which made the party appear even more radical and militant than before. The Malaysian government, however, was not prepared to sit back and passively suffer the polemics of the Islamists and Malay leftists. Deteriorating relations with neighbouring Indonesia, and the close links between the Islamists and leftists in Malaya and their Indonesian counterparts, soon gave the government the excuse it needed to clamp down with force on the Malay opposition.

In 1963, soon after the outbreak of *Konfrontasi* between Malaysia and Indonesia, the Alliance government began yet another massive round-up of opposition politicians and activists. Among the hundreds arrested and detained in 1963–64 were Ahmad Boestamam (PRM president), Ishak Haji Muhammad (PBM president), Abdul Aziz Ishak (head of GERAM), Wahab Shah (head of PRM Singapore), Kampo Radjo, Tan Kai Hee, Hussein Yaakub, Hasnul Hadi, Tajuddin Kahar, Tan Hock Hin and Dr. Rajakumar.<sup>142</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, who was arrested in February 1963, was accused of supporting the failed Azhaari revolt of 1962 in Brunei and working with Indonesia to bring about the destruction of the Malaysian Federation project.<sup>143</sup> Many others were accused of being pro-Indonesian and also communist sympathisers. The crackdown on the opposition parties in Malaysia continued even after Malaysia and Indonesia had agreed to a cease-fire on 23 January 1964.

Apart from attacking the *Fron Sosialis* parties head-on, the UMNO-led government also began its campaign against local unions and workers' associations in key areas such as the urban-

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<sup>142</sup> Ahmad Boestamam was the first Malaysian MP to be detained under the ISA. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy was the second (in 1965).

<sup>143</sup> Ahmad Boestamam, *Merintis Jalan ke Puncak*, pp. xxvii–xxviii.

based manufacturing industry and the local press. While PRM members were being vilified as fifth columnists who threatened the country from within, UMNO also began a series of manoeuvres to take over control of the highly influential Malay newspaper *Utusan Melayu* which was then seen as being anti-establishment. In 1961, UMNO started buying shares in the newspaper, which led to a strike by its journalists on 21 July 1961.<sup>144</sup> Eventually, the party succeeded in gaining control of the paper and the Tunku managed

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<sup>144</sup> *Utusan Melayu* was one of the earliest popular vernacular Malay newspapers in the country. Founded in 1939, it played an important role during the initial stages of the struggle for independence. *Utusan* was widely seen by the British colonial authorities as fervently anti-colonial and anti-British, and it was suspected of harbouring leftist-nationalist tendencies. Some of its writers and editors later assumed more prominent roles in society and politics. (Its editor Yusof Ishak, for instance, left the paper in 1958 and later became President of Singapore.) After independence in 1957, Tunku Abdul Rahman felt that UMNO urgently needed its own media organ. The party began to buy shares in *Utusan*, despite protests from the editors and staff of the paper. The editorial stance of *Utusan* was seen to be too radical by the Tunku's standards. When the editors wrote an anti-American article over the Cuban incident, the editor Said Zahari was summoned by the Tunku to explain his position. The editors were also attacked by the Tunku when they wrote a number of critical articles chastising some Malay leaders for their pro-British attitude. In 1961, the Tunku appointed Ibrahim Fikri to manage the takeover of *Utusan*. Ibrahim presented the editorial board of the paper with a four-point plan which effectively sought to turn the paper into UMNO's propaganda arm. This led to a 93-day strike by its journalists and editorial staff which started on 21 July 1961. During the strike, the Tunku dubbed the striking journalists 'communists and insurgents' who were plotting the downfall of Malaya. The editor Said Zahari, a Singaporean, was sent back to Singapore and banned from re-entering Malaya. Other prominent editors and journalists such as Samad Ismail were also forced to leave the country. (Samad Ismail went into exile in Indonesia.) In Singapore, Said Zahari attempted to form *Parti Rakyat Singapura* (People's Party of Singapore), but was soon branded a communist agent by the Singaporean premier Lee Kuan Yew. He was subsequently imprisoned for 16 years. In 1989 he was allowed to return to Malaysia after the Tunku's ban was lifted by Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

to send many of the leading editors and journalists of *Utusan* (including Said Zahari and Samad Ismail) into exile. As a result of this sweep, the Malay leftist parties were effectively leaderless and they fared badly at the 1964 election.

Malaysians went to the polls again on 22 March 1964, at the same time that Crown Prince Faisal took over the effective management of Saudi Arabia with the backing of the Wahhabi *ulama*. Despite the restrictions imposed by the UMNO-led government, the election showed that the democratic system was still alive and well. The voter turn-out rose considerably to 78.9%. A combination of vigorous campaigning, control of the media and the government's crackdown on opposition parties allowed the UMNO-led Alliance to improve its performance somewhat. The Alliance's share of the votes increased from 51.8% to 58.5%. Once again the Alliance was well served by the first-past-the-post system: its seats in parliament rose from 74 to 89 (85.6% of seats) (see Table 2.4).

Notwithstanding its difficulties, PAS earned 14.6% of the vote and won 9 seats (8.7% of seats) in parliament. (The party had contested 52 seats.) Its share of state assembly seats also dropped considerably, from 42 (in 1959) to 25. Eight of PAS's parliamentary seats were in Kelantan; the remaining one was in Terengganu. Dr. Burhanuddin could not stand in the election as he had been barred by the Electoral Commission on the grounds that he was implicated in a failed business venture.<sup>145</sup> Nonetheless, he and other party leaders were at the forefront of mobilising the party membership in the run-up to the election. The 1964 election made PAS

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<sup>145</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin was barred from participating in the election on the grounds that he had been convicted in court. Earlier he, along with Hajjah Aishah Abdullah (wife of the German-Malayan Shipping Company secretary), had been convicted by Syed Hassan al-Jefri, president of the Sessions Court, of several offences under the Companies Act. He was accused of financial irregularities related to the shipping company of which he was director. (The German-Malayan Shipping Company was responsible for transporting Muslim pilgrims from Malaya to the Arabian peninsula during the *haj* (pilgrimage) season.) During the first round of trials Pak Doktor was defended (unsuccessfully) by Rajendra Ponnudurai. *continued p. 179*

realise that its contest against UMNO was bound to become increasingly heated and difficult. Having earlier lost control of Terengganu because of defections of PAS leaders to UMNO, the Islamist party found that its own standing in the Malaysian political arena was under direct threat from the UMNO-led political machinery of the Alliance. Despite renewed pressure from the Alliance, PAS managed to hold onto the seats in the north that they had previously won.

In the 1964 election PAS enlarged its share of the vote in the north in general (see Table 2.5). In Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah, its share of the vote was 57, 32.7, 37.1 and 25.1% respectively. Overall, the party won 301,187 votes (14.6% of the total votes). The biggest losses in the north were in Terengganu, as a result of the defection of PAS leader Ahmad Azam and his followers to UMNO in 1961. Nonetheless, a rise in total percentage of votes was registered in Kedah and Perlis. The same, however, could not be said of the party's performance in other parts of the country. PAS's performance in the south was as dismal as before.<sup>146</sup>

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Dr. Burhanuddin and Hajjah Aishah were fined RM25,360 each for contravening the Companies Ordinance. They were also threatened with imprisonment should they fail to pay the enormous fine. Pak Doktor appealed against the charges before Justice Gill in the High Court, defended by lawyer Mahadev Shankar. Justice Gill dismissed the appeals by Dr. Burhanuddin and Aishah, but held that the Sessions Court president did not have the right to fine them more than RM4,000 each. Dr. Burhanuddin's lawyer M. Shankar managed to get him off all the charges save one, for which he was fined. Justice Gill reduced their fines to RM3,170 each and set aside the order of imprisonment for six months in default of payment. After the trial, Pak Doktor was said to have thanked his lawyer M. Shankar personally by saying '*Inilah satu hutang budi yang tidak dapat di bayar*' (This is a debt of honour I owe you). (I would like to thank Mahadev Shankar for relating this personal anecdote.)

<sup>146</sup> In the southern state of Johor, for instance, PAS only fielded two parliamentary candidates in the 1964 election, in the constituencies of Pontian Utara and Johor Timur. Both candidates were defeated. PAS also fielded 11 candidates for the state assembly; none won. PAS's share of the vote increased slightly to 7,673 (for parliamentary candidates) and 7,873 (for state assembly seats), but this increase was far from enough to alter the party's performance and political fortunes in Johor.

PAS could not rely on outside help as their allies in *Fron Sosialis* had their own problems. The leader of PRM, Ahmad Boestamam, had been detained under the ISA and the party was suffering a leadership crisis. *Fron Sosialis's* share of parliamentary seats was considerably reduced, from nine seats to five, which was only 4.8% of total seats. (But once again, the Malay leftist parties had actually won more votes than the Islamist party: *Fron Sosialis* won 26.2% of the votes compared to PAS's 14.6%.) The poor performance of *Fron Sosialis* marked the end for PBM. Shortly after the 1964 election the party was disbanded and many of its members joined PRM.

Due to the state of Emergency, local municipal elections were not held in 1964. Instead, the local authorities were told to make their own nominations for local government posts. In many cases, the responsibility for this task went to the local district officer. The local town councils and municipal authorities won by the opposition parties in the 1959 election were swiftly replaced with new boards made up of pro-government members. While PAS was finding itself marginalised in constituencies all over the country, its allies in PRM and PBM were also being put under pressure. Because of the anti-communist hysteria whipped up during *Konfrontasi*, many socialist movements and organisations were put under surveillance and control. Soon PRM and PBM branches all over the country were being declared illegal and shut down.

PAS's initial success on the domestic political scene was therefore short-lived. The MCP was not the only radical political party to be declared a national threat: By the late 1950s and 1960s, PAS-controlled villages and *mukim* were also being described by the government as 'black areas' under opposition control. The UMNO-led federal government under Tunku Abdul Rahman was quick to mobilise all efforts to win back the 'lost' rural villages, districts and constituencies and, through the combined use of force, patronage and persuasion, they soon succeeded. Although the Islamic and leftist camps of the radical Malay opposition had managed to regroup and co-operate with each other, the failure of the Malayan opposition movements in the national political arena meant that the discursive terrain was now in the hands of the conservative ruling élite. After winning control of the post-colonial state and its apparatuses of government and policing, the ruling Alliance

government led by the Tunku utilised all possible means to further stigmatise and isolate the opposition groups that stood against them: be they Islamists, socialists or communists.

### *The Kerajaan's Response: 1964-1969*

Shortly after the clampdown on the Malay leftists which began in 1963, PAS also suffered its own setbacks and grievous losses to its leadership.

Less than two months after the 1964 election, the Islamist party lost its deputy president Ustaz Zulkiflee Muhammad, who passed away in a car accident along with his wife Ustazah Aishah on 6 May 1964.<sup>147</sup> Dr. Zulkiflee's unexpected death was a major blow to the Islamists in PAS. He had served as the deputy president of the party for eight years, and his writings and speeches had helped to develop the party's Islamist philosophy to a great extent. For many party members Dr. Zulkiflee had been the 'spiritual pillar' who stood by the 'political pillar' of the party, Dr. Burhanuddin. He died as he had lived, as an Islamist activist. In his final moments, Dr. Zulkiflee spoke about his project to launch an Islamic educational foundation at Nilam Puri and the need to build an Islamic university in the country. Years later, Dr. Zulkiflee's dreams came to fruition when Ma'ahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah Nilam Puri was finally built.<sup>148</sup> With the passing of Dr. Zulkiflee the post of party deputy president went to Kelantanese leader Mohammad Asri Muda, who was already the PAS Chief Minister of Kelantan.

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<sup>147</sup> Dr. Zulkiflee and his wife Ustazah Aishah were killed when their car was hit head-on by another vehicle. Ustazah Aishah died on the spot, while Dr. Zulkiflee passed away on his way to hospital (Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 202).

<sup>148</sup> Ma'ahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah Nilam Puri became one of PAS's flagships of success: It was built entirely with state funds collected by the PAS government of Kelantan (*Jenayah Akademik Pemimpin UMNO: PAS Jawab Pembohongan Mahathir*, Klang: Pencetakan As Saff, 1995, p. 85).

In January 1965, the party suffered its second major loss when its president Dr. Burhanuddin was detained under the ISA. Dr. Burhanuddin and another prominent PAS leader Dato' Raja Abu Hanifa were accused of being pro-Indonesian collaborators working against their own country and of wanting to set up a government in exile in Algiers<sup>149</sup> (or the Islamic Republic of Pakistan according to other sources).<sup>150</sup> A government white paper published in that year claimed that the PAS leadership had received US\$105,000 from Indonesian agents for use in the campaign to undermine the effort to create the Malaysian Federation in 1963. Dr. Burhanuddin's early speeches (where he openly declared support for the Indonesian nationalists) were cited as proof of his pro-Indonesian sympathies and revolutionary tendencies. To complicate matters even further, during the fasting month of Ramadhan in 1965 the MCP had sponsored an Islamist party of its own, *Partai Persatuan Islam* (PAPERI) (Islamic Brotherhood Party). Citing various *Qur'anic* verses and *Hadith* — and using Jawi as its main script — the leaders of PAPERI tried (in vain, it must be added) to argue that Islam was in fact compatible with communism and revolutionary politics.<sup>151</sup> The emergence of this radical Islamist party only served to further tarnish the image of PAS, and provided the authorities with the pretext and justification for the crackdown on Dr. Burhanuddin and other PAS leaders.

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<sup>149</sup> Alias Mohamed, *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition: Past, Present and Future*, Kuala Lumpur: Gateway Publishing, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>150</sup> Boestamam records in his memoirs: '*Dr. Burhanuddin ditangkap oleh Kerajaan Perikatan dan ditahan karena dituduh hendak mendirikan 'Kerajaan buangan' diluar negeri atau tegasnya di-Pakistan'*. Translation: Dr. Burhanuddin was arrested and detained by the Federal Government authorities on the charge of wanting to set up a 'government in exile' outside the country, particularly in Pakistan (Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin*, p. 67).

<sup>151</sup> Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior* (p. 181) notes that the PAPERI leaders were keen to promote the idea that the MCP's revolutionary struggle should be seen as part of a 'just' and 'holy' struggle against oppression. The party leaders also accused the UMNO leaders of violating the tenets of Islam and of being traitors to their *ummah*.

That Pak Doktor was accused of being *both* a radical Islamist as well as a leftist-nationalist was in itself a reflection of the magnitude of concerns that drove him throughout his political life. The detention of Dr. Burhanuddin meant that by 1965 practically all the Malay opposition parties in the country were incapacitated. PAS, PRM and PBM had all lost their leaders.

During 1965-67, PAS was caught in a state of limbo while the party ranks were divided over the issue of leadership. By then, the party had already matured into a political force in the country with branches and divisions in every state of the peninsula while its bedrock of support remained the largely agrarian Malay-dominated states of Kelantan and Terengganu in the northeast. In the absence of both Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee, Asri Muda was for all intents and purposes the *de facto* leader of the party. Asri's supporters began to call for him to be made the party's president,<sup>152</sup> but many other members wanted Pak Doktor to retain the official post of party president.

The PAS leaders were aware that their internal problems were not helping with their image and appeal to the electorate in general. Furthermore, there was a constant threat from their opponents in the conservative-nationalist camp who were not about to sit by and suffer their Islamist polemics quietly. The UMNO-led government had the necessary resources to take over the process of Islamisation, thereby diluting the appeal of PAS as the main Islamic party in opposition.

While PAS was still grappling with its own internal crisis, other political parties and movements that reflected the popular will for change in the Malaysian political system appeared:

After the untimely demise of PBM in 1964, an opening was made for the rise of a new party. The Democratic Action Party (DAP) was formed on 18 March 1966 as a result of the split within Singapore-based PAP led by the (then) leftist lawyer and political activist Lee Kuan Yew.<sup>153</sup> When the PAP split apart after Singapore

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<sup>152</sup> Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>153</sup> The DAP was formed as a result of the split between Malaysia and Singapore. Elements of the PAP still based on the Malay Peninsula *continued p. 184*

broke away from Malaysia in 1965, its Malaysian branches reorganised themselves under the banner of the DAP. Lee Kuan Yew led Singapore after it broke away from Malaysia and performed a number of ideological U-turns of his own which revealed the more repressive side of his character.<sup>154</sup>

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reorganised themselves and formed the DAP. The party based its struggle on the ideology of democratic socialism and identified itself with other socialist parties and movements throughout the world. From the beginning, DAP's membership was drawn mainly from the urban-based ethnic minorities, especially the Chinese. The party's ideological stand was left-of-centre and it was committed to social democracy as well as a pluralist secular society. Its leaders were often accused by the Tunku's government of harbouring communist sympathies.

<sup>154</sup> Lee Kuan Yew was born on 16 September 1923 in Singapore. A Cambridge-educated Chinese lawyer and activist who, during his early days in politics, showed clearly leftist political sympathies, Lee was regarded by the Tunku as a closet communist who was opposed to the Tunku's vision of the future. Lee led PAP from its formation in 1954 and became the Premier of Singapore after it became an independent state in its own right in 1965. After coming to power, however, Lee adopted a more conservative approach to politics. From the 1970s, Singapore became more and more open to the West as it embraced the ideology of liberal capitalism. Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew also developed a highly efficient and ruthless state security service which continually exercised its power to control and repress the political opposition in the country. Lee was regularly re-elected until he stepped down from power in 1990. During the 1980s, Lee inherited the Tunku's obsession with communism, and the threat of a Marxist conspiracy against the state became his favourite justification for the political repression in Singapore. Under Lee, Singapore actively engaged and traded with South Africa, had close links with Israel and was the only Third World country that followed the US and Britain (then under Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher respectively) out of UNESCO (Jomo K. S., 'Race, Religion and Repression: National Security and the Insecurity of the Regime', in *Tangled Web*, Kuala Lumpur: CARPA, 1988, p. 13). During the late 1980s, the Singaporean state security agencies worked closely with those of Malaysia and Indonesia in their concerted campaigns to eliminate political opponents in their respective countries.

Another party formed in the mid-1960s (1967) was *Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (Gerakan) (Peoples' Movement Party of Malaysia), the second attempt to create a multiracial party in Malaysia (the first was the IMP led by Onn Jaafar in the 1950s). The party was led by a number of prominent urban-based academics and intellectuals based in Universiti Malaya, the major university of the country then. The first president of Gerakan was Dr. Syed Hussein Alatas, an academic, and the party leadership comprised other intellectuals such as Prof. Wang Gungwu, Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, Dr. Lim Chong Eu and V. David. Lim Chong Eu's entry into Gerakan effectively broke the monopoly then held by the MCA in Penang in particular. The Malaysian political arena was now more crowded than ever before.

### *PAS during the Second Emergency*

By the late 1960s, the UMNO-led federal government was cognisant of the new political realities of the land. UMNO and the Alliance now stood before a wide spectrum of opposition movements and parties, ranging from the clandestine MCP, the openly leftist DAP, the liberals of Gerakan to the Islamists of PAS. The state's own intelligence services had warned the government about the threat of another military campaign waged by the MCP — an ominous warning backed up by Radio Peking's call for a mass uprising against the governments of Malaysia and Singapore in 1968.<sup>155</sup> The Malaysian government did not have to wait long

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<sup>155</sup> On 19 June 1968, Radio Peking (then being transmitted from southern China to north Malaysia) issued a statement in support of the MCP's call for a return to armed conflict. During the broadcast, the station issued a statement calling upon MCP units and supporters in Malaysia and Singapore to 'intensify the struggle in the various fields especially the armed struggle; launch a sustained and vigorous offensive against the enemy and fight to the end in order to overthrow the Anglo-American imperialists and their lackeys the Rahman-Lee clique' (Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 146). The message was intercepted by Malaysian security services, but not continued p. 186

before the armed units of MCP's MNLA responded to Peking's clarion call: On 17 June 1968, a government outpost was attacked by troops from MNLA's 12th regiment, opening the way for the second Emergency which lasted for another ten years.<sup>156</sup> Despite the threat of growing militancy from the MCP and its guerrillas in the jungles, the Malay-Muslim UMNO leaders were always aware that the biggest threat to their own political survival came from the

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before it had been copied and circulated among MCP units and their sympathisers all over Malaysia and Singapore.

<sup>156</sup> After the failure of the *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia (1963–65), the MCP decided to return to its military offensive against the Malaysian government. Hostilities resumed when a surprise attack against a government police outpost was launched by the MNLA's 12th regiment on 17 June 1968. By then some of the MCP's fighting units had been reorganised and re-equipped for combat. The 10th Malay regiment had been relocated to the border areas between Malaysia and Thailand (close to the Kelantan border) and was then under the leadership of Abdullah Cet Det and Abdul Rashid Mydin. But by the late 1960s, the MCP was already in disarray. The South Malayan Bureau (MCPSMB) had been effectively neutralised in Singapore after a series of crippling joint operations by Malaysian and Singaporean security forces and Special Branch (SB). The 8th regiment (then active in the Kulim and Gubir regions) had broken away to form its own faction called the Malayan Communist Party Revolutionary Faction (MCPRF), while the 2nd District 12th regiment had formed its own Malayan Communist Party Marxist-Leninist faction (MCPML). Both factions remained autonomous and independent of the MCP leadership until their surrender in 1987. As such, the MCP High Command could not hope for a coherent and sustained military campaign against the security forces of the state, and the war dragged on for nearly a decade. One of the few military successes of the communists was the killing of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Hashim in 1974. The killing was carried out by mobile units of the MCPML from the Malayan Peoples Liberation Front (MPLF). However, as the conflict wore on, public support for the communists waned and the state security forces were able to contain the threat of communist expansion by using the same tactics employed during the first Emergency. By 1978, the Malaysian government was able to declare that the MCP had been defeated once again, and that the second Emergency was officially over.

Islamists who would always threaten the natural constituency of UMNO. The war against the MCP and MNLA may have been fought in the jungles, but the fight against PAS had to be carried out in UMNO's own backyard.

In 1968, the government took one of its first steps towards controlling Islamic affairs by establishing the National Council for Muslim Affairs in Kuala Lumpur. The council, headed by the Prime Minister, came under the control of *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Centre) and the Prime Minister's Department.<sup>157</sup> PAS, which had precious few resources under its own control, could only watch as the state machinery began to encroach on their discursive space and political concerns. The only respite came from the fact that UMNO was also divided against itself because of the growing unpopularity of Tunku Abdul Rahman. UMNO's poor performance during the following election was due in part to the internal critiques being levelled at the UMNO leadership from the 'young Turks' within the party.

The internal problems within both PAS and UMNO, and the growing hostility between the two parties, eventually came out in the open in the lead-up to the 1969 election. The campaigning period witnessed a prolonged round of accusations and counter-accusations on both sides. Dr. Burhanuddin and the PAS leaders were then in a position to exploit the government's growing unpopularity with the people. Due to the negative impact of the commodity crisis (1956-70), the growing government deficit (incurred as a result of the government's decision to maintain a high level of public expenditure) and the growing rate of unemployment (7% in 1967/68),<sup>158</sup> the Alliance government was seen to be standing on shaky ground. Irregularities in the use of government resources also did not help the UMNO ministers and officials: PAS leaders accused them of abusing state funds and services

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<sup>157</sup> The National Council for Muslim Affairs was meant to co-ordinate the activities and administration of Islamic affairs in all states with the exception of Pahang, Kedah and Johor, which refused to come under its control.

<sup>158</sup> Samuel Bassey Okposin and Cheng Ming Yu, *Economic Crises in Malaysia*, p. 63.

to help with their pre-election campaigns.<sup>159</sup> One of the Alliance leaders' most controversial moves was the offer of development projects worth RM546 million to Kelantan (dubbed 'the biggest election bribe in Malaysian history') prior to the election. The offer was turned down by the PAS supporters in the state, but it was a clear indication of the extent to which the ruling coalition was prepared to go to neutralise the threat of PAS once and for all.<sup>160</sup>

During this pre-election period some sections of UMNO also began to resort to the use of confrontational tactics. *Kumpulan Pemuda Tahan Lasak UMNO* (UMNO Hardy Youth Movement) was one group that disrupted the 1969 election process. PAS leaders compared this group to the Quraisy tribe who tried to obstruct the Prophet from spreading his message by attacking him and his followers.<sup>161</sup> They claimed that this was further proof of UMNO's willingness to use whatever means necessary to prevent the spread of Islam in the country and to blunt the political challenge of PAS.

While UMNO was being accused of stirring up trouble during the election campaign, the ruling party had its own way of dealing with the challenge from PAS. UMNO pointed to the development that it had brought about in the rural areas in particular (where the Malay vote bank has traditionally been based). In the 1969 pre-election manifesto, the UMNO-led alliance reminded the public of all that it had done in the field of rural development and agriculture, something that PAS was not able to match. The Tunku accused PAS of poor economic management and pointed to the comparatively poor record of development in the PAS-controlled state of Kelantan in particular. He also claimed that sections of PAS were working with the banned MCP known to be operating along the Malaysia–Thai border.

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<sup>159</sup> Writing in the PAS official paper *Bulan Bintang*, Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif claimed UMNO politicians were using official cars as well as planes and helicopters of the Royal Malayan Airforce in their campaign tours (Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 120).

<sup>160</sup> Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 224.

<sup>161</sup> Alias Mohamad, *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition*, p. 16.

UMNO leaders also accused PAS of playing up racial issues and indulging in a smear campaign to besmirch the Islamic image of UMNO. The Tunku was the target of numerous personal attacks and on at least one occasion was even accused of being 'more Siamese than Malay' and of practising Buddhism in his private life.<sup>162</sup> Other UMNO leaders like Cabinet minister Khir Johari were also targeted by PAS propagandists who were on the lookout for UMNO leaders whose private scandals and personal weaknesses could be used as foils against the nationalist party during the election campaign. The fact that it was Khir Johari who approved the foundation of the Chinese Tunku Abdul Rahman College and called for the switch from Jawi (Arabic) script to Roman script when he was Education Minister meant that his own standing in Malay-Muslim circles was already weak. Just before the election a photograph of Khir Johari dressed in Mandarin costume was widely circulated and used to suggest that UMNO leaders had betrayed the interests of the Malay-Muslims and were working with the Chinese business community to exploit ordinary Malay workers and peasants.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> In his account of the events leading up to the 13 May 1969 riots, the Tunku pointed out that he was personally attacked on several occasions by PAS propagandists. Shortly before the elections, doctored photographs began to circulate. One photograph showed the Tunku dining in a Chinese restaurant with several friends. Superimposed on the photograph was an image of a roast suckling pig; this was obviously intended to shock the Tunku's Malay-Muslim supporters (Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13*, p. 32). On other occasions, the Tunku was accused by PAS speakers of being of Siamese descent and a Buddhist (*ibid.*, p. 30).

<sup>163</sup> The photograph of Khir Johari and his wife was taken in a Chinese restaurant and later sent to the Chinese members of his constituency as a Chinese New Year card. The Tunku defended it on the grounds that his minister had donned the costume in jest and the card was meant to show that UMNO leaders were not prejudiced against the Chinese *per se*. Khir Johari, the Tunku insisted, was a liberal and open-minded individual who bore no hatred or suspicion of the other communities in the country, and the card was proof of his good intentions. The move backfired when the card fell into the hands of *continued p. 190*

As PAS began to up the stakes in the Islamisation race once again, the government responded with its own programmes and policies. In April 1969, just one month before the election, Malaysia hosted the International Islamic Conference with 23 countries in attendance. The conference was well publicised and the pro-establishment media claimed that it was yet another example of how the Malaysian government had succeeded in its efforts to promote and defend the interests of Islam and Muslims worldwide. The Tunku claimed that 'it was, of course, a coincidence that this conference should take place during the election campaign'.<sup>164</sup> His opponents in the Islamist camp had, understandably, an entirely different view.

Enmity between the two parties intensified right up to election day. A significant section of the non-Malay community was also disappointed with the performance of the Alliance government in general, which made matters worse for UMNO and the ruling Alliance. A number of factors had eroded the standing of the conservative Malaysian Chinese Assembly (MCA) in the eyes of the Chinese electorate: The MCA leadership was rocked by a number of scandals and its leaders were seen by the Chinese as too accommodating to the demands of the Malay élite. Many of the Chinese community were also shocked and angered by the death sentences conferred on twelve Chinese communists and leftists accused of helping the Indonesians during the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia in 1968.

The leaders of PAS and the other opposition parties exploited this groundswell of anger and frustration to their advantage. The mood soon turned sour, and frustration was turned into violence. On 24 April an UMNO worker, Kassim Omar, was killed by members of the opposition. On 4 May, an opposition party worker, Lim Soon Seng, was killed by the police when he and other

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PAS activists who cited it as proof of UMNO's secret dealings with the Chinese business community. Crude though the accusations were, they did have some effect on the Malay-Muslim electorate (*ibid.*, p. 30).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

activists resisted attempts to disperse them. The Chinese opposition party then organised a march in the capital in honour of its martyred member.

By then it was clear there was about to be a major swing against the Alliance government at the coming election. The Tunku spent the final few days of the election campaign touring his own state of Kedah. On several occasions he met and interviewed Chinese voters in the streets. They all stated that they would abandon the MCA (UMNO's ally in the Alliance) and vote for the opposition. Alliance leaders were perturbed by reports that a significant section of the Chinese electorate would actually vote for PAS as a sign of protest against the UMNO-dominated Alliance. True to form, the Tunku could only conclude that this was evidence of an elaborate conspiracy between the Islamists, socialists and communists — a fear made all the more real by the nightmare he had the night before polling day, which seemed to him an omen of the crisis that loomed ahead.<sup>165</sup>

On 10 May 1969 the voter turn-out in the federal election dropped once again, to 73.6%. The Alliance fared very badly because of the growing unpopularity of the Tunku among the Malays, internal conflicts within UMNO, MCA's loss of credibility among the Chinese electorate and the open tension between the Malay and Chinese élite within the Alliance. The Alliance's share of the vote plummeted to 44.9%, making this the first minority government in Malaysian history. However, the coalition was saved by the electoral system that gave them 74 seats (51.4% of seats) in parliament (see Table 2.6).

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<sup>165</sup> The Tunku later admitted that on the night before polling day, he had a nightmare which he interpreted as a warning about the future. In his dream he saw himself walking down a deserted road where the pavements were covered with rats and flies. On the morning of election day itself he broke his *tasbih* just after he completed his *fajr* (dawn) prayers. The former he interpreted as a warning about the nation being overrun by communists and other insurgent forces. The breaking of the *tasbih*, on the other hand, symbolised for him the breaking of the bonds of the Malay-Muslim community and the shattered *ummah* (ibid., pp. 197-201).

PAS won control of Kelantan despite its internal leadership struggle, its chronic lack of resources and harassment from its opponents. The party won 20.9% of the votes and 12 seats (8.3% of seats) in parliament: seven in Kelantan, two in Terengganu and three in Kedah (PAS contested 59 seats). PAS also won 40 state assembly seats, most in the northern states (see Table 2.7). Dr. Burhanuddin had been released from detention in 1967, but he could not take active part in the campaigning process because his health had deteriorated badly while in custody. As always, PAS's biggest gains were in the north. In Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah the party's share of the votes was 52.2, 49.4, 43.8 and 41.3%, respectively. Overall, the party won 501,123 votes (20.9% of total votes).

The biggest surprise, however, was that PAS managed to break UMNO's hold on Kedah. PAS had never won any seats in the state before, but in the 1969 election it won three out of 12 parliamentary seats and eight out of 24 state assembly seats. Its share of the vote in Kedah also rose to 41.3%. More significant was the Islamists' defeat of three major UMNO candidates: Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (defeated by his distant relative Ustaz Yusof Rawa by 989 votes), UMNO secretary-general Senu Abdul Rahman (defeated by PAS candidate Ustaz Abu Bakar Umar by 88 votes) and Zahir Ismail (defeated by Haji Mawardi Lebai Teh by 1,689 votes). Even more impressive was the fact that the Islamists came close to unseating Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (whose majority was halved by PAS candidate Aziz Abdullah).

PAS's share of the vote also increased in Perak, Selangor, Malacca and Perlis. UMNO won these marginal seats because of the non-Malays who were persuaded to cast their lot with UMNO instead of PAS. The Islamist party's only weakness lay in the south, where UMNO's influence was still very strong. PAS failed to make any significant gains in Johor in particular. There the party's difficulties increased with the sudden, last-minute defection of Johor division secretary Khatijah Sidek.

In the wake of the election, UMNO leaders were quick to blame PAS for their electoral misfortunes. The Tunku identified PAS as one of the main reasons why UMNO did badly, claiming that PAS had endeavoured to break up the Malay community and by doing

so put in jeopardy the economic and political lot of the Malays as a whole.<sup>166</sup>

The other major winners in the 1969 election were Chinese-dominated DAP and multiracial Gerakan that won 13 and 8 seats in Parliament respectively. DAP's biggest gains were in the predominantly Chinese-dominated urban settlements in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Malacca. Gerakan, on the other hand, managed to take control of the Penang state assembly by winning 16 of the 24 seats. The gains made by DAP and Gerakan were mostly at the expense of the MCA. In Penang, Gerakan defeated Dr. Lim Swee Aun and Dr. Ng Kam Poh, both MCA Cabinet ministers. In the wake of the disaster, the MCA momentarily dropped out of government altogether (though it remained within the Alliance). In the 1969 election, a new generation of outspoken Chinese leaders came to the fore: DAP leader Lim Kit Siang was one of those elected as a member of parliament for the first time. He soon developed his own reputation as a defender of minority interests; his first speech in parliament, when he called for recognition of the rights of the Chinese, Indians and other minorities as equal citizens of the country with the same cultural and political rights as the Malays, was met with shock and incredulity.<sup>167</sup> In the following years, he rose to become DAP president, a post he held until 1999.

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<sup>166</sup> In his last speech as president of his party on 22 September 1970, the Tunku claimed that PAS had deliberately entered into the 1969 electoral race in some marginal constituencies to ensure that UMNO would lose the seats. Though PAS did not win these seats, the Tunku claimed that the move had served the interests of PAS because it led to more losses for UMNO and the ruling Alliance. (See Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Detik Sejarah 22 September 1970*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press, 1970, pp. 27-28.)

<sup>167</sup> In a speech delivered in May 2000, Lim Kit Siang recounted that 'I can still remember the shock and disbelief when I spoke in Parliament about the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese and Indians to be accepted as full and equal citizens of the country, not only politically and economically, but also where their languages, cultures and religions are given full recognition and respect as an integral part of Malaysian national identity. It was as if I had done something sacrilegious in Parliament by raising issues of national  
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Malay-dominated PRM, however, failed to make an impact. Ahmad Boestamam won his parliamentary seat at Setapak and the party won two state assembly seats in Pahang and one in Penang, but these were the only Malay constituencies where the Malay leftists had some residual influence. The 1969 election marked the turning point when the Islamists of PAS emerged as the main opponents of UMNO and the political fortunes of the Malay left declined for good.<sup>168</sup> From then on, Malaysian politics was divided along the lines of three camps: the UMNO-dominated Alliance coalition of conservative-nationalist parties, the Chinese-dominated leftist opposition led by the DAP, and the Islamists of PAS.<sup>169</sup>

Once again PAS was robbed of the chance to savour the fruits of its victory. Immediately after the election results were announced a series of violent race riots erupted throughout the country, particularly in the urban areas of the west coast. The 'May 13' riots of 1969 became the excuse for the declaration of a state of Emergency once again, and the police and armed forces were ordered to take control of the streets.<sup>170</sup> A number of opposition leaders, including

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integration as the basis of nation-building.' Lim Kit Siang, 'Chinese of Malaysian Identity? Issues and Challenges', paper presented at the annual talk of the Centre for the Study of Chinese Southern Diaspora (CSCSD), Australian National University, Canberra, 1 May 2000.

<sup>168</sup> For a full analysis of the 1969 election results, see R. K. Vasil, *The Malaysian General Elections of 1969*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

<sup>169</sup> The Malay leftist parties PRM and PBM (and other leftist parties such as *Parti Marhaen* which was formed later) have never won a single seat in Parliament since the 1969 elections.

<sup>170</sup> The 1969 election results were known by 11 May. The riots occurred on 12–13 May when members of the opposition parties began to hold celebration rallies in the west coast towns of Georgetown, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru. These rallies soon turned into violent confrontations between supporters of the Chinese-dominated DAP and Malay UMNO. The violence escalated and resulted in race riots where Chinese property was vandalised and burnt. Many innocent civilians were caught up in the violence and killed. At 7 p.m. on 16 May 1969, the Tunku announced a state of National Emergency on *continued p. 195*

DAP leader Lim Kit Siang, were arrested and detained under the ISA on the grounds they were a threat to public safety and order.

While UMNO was torn apart by an internal power struggle that led to the (temporary) expulsion of some of its younger leaders, including Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, and the resignation of its president Tunku Abdul Rahman, the task of governing the country was effectively taken over by the *Majlis Gerakan Negara* (MAGERAN) (National Operations Council) (NOC) led by Tun Abdul Razak, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister and also deputy president of UMNO. The nine-member NOC was dominated by Malays, who outnumbered the non-Malays by 7 to 2.<sup>171</sup> This state of affairs remained until the national Emergency was finally declared over in February 1971.

With the nation placed under a state of national Emergency, activities of the opposition parties were restricted once again. Parliament was suspended and practically all forms of political activity were put on hold. With little to do on the national level, the PAS leaders had the time and opportunity to resolve their own internal disputes over the question of the party presidency.

Dr. Burhanuddin was, by then, gravely ill. The years of toil and struggle had taken their toll, and his stay in prison had further aggravated his medical condition. Pak Doktor finally passed away peacefully on 25 October 1969, at the age of 58, leaving behind him

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national television. During his announcement, the Tunku declared that the riots were the work of 'Communist terrorists who have worked out their plan to take over power' (Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13*, p. 105). Opposition parties DAP and PAS have always maintained that the May 13 riots were organised and led by UMNO members who wanted to create a state of disturbance so that national Emergency laws could be put into effect.

<sup>171</sup> The NOC comprised nine politicians and members of the security forces: Tun Razak (Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO deputy president), Tan Siew Sin (MCA), V. T. Sambanthan (MIC) as well as representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the head of the Civil Service and the heads of the Armed Forces and the Police. The nine-man NOC contained seven Malays, with only one Chinese and one Indian.

scores of loyal followers and admirers who had followed him to the end. Asri Muda then became PAS's fourth president.

In 1970, the Tunku himself was forced to step down to make way for a new generation of leaders in UMNO. The man who had spent so many years of his life trying to prevent his country from falling into the hands of the Islamists and communists was then chosen to become, of all things, the first secretary-general of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).<sup>172</sup>

While PAS was experiencing this leadership crisis, developments in the Muslim world at large were mixed, to say the least. The 1960s were an interesting era that witnessed the emergence of many (sometimes divergent) ideological and political trends within the global Muslim *ummah*.

In neighbouring Indonesia, the fate of the nation hung in the balance as President Soekarno tried to maintain his fragile coalition between the Islamists, communists and nationalists. As the NASAKOM pact began to fall apart, Soekarno turned to the communists of PKI for additional support in a desperate attempt to prop up his failing regime. The beleaguered President also revealed the side of his personality often overlooked by his

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<sup>172</sup> The Tunku became the first secretary-general of the OIC shortly after it was established in 1969; he served from 1970–72. The Tunku was personally suggested by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who felt that he was the least controversial leader in the Muslim world at the time. As a Malay, the Tunku was not directly involved in, or partisan to, any of the conflicts simmering in the Arab world. The Tunku's diplomatic style also made him the favourite among many of the other leaders. However, the Tunku was hampered in his task by the lack of organisational structure within the OIC. The organisation was still new and did not have proper institutional support. It also enjoyed little credibility and respect. The Tunku was forced to endure many humiliating encounters with Arab leaders who refused to see him. On many occasions he was forced to wait in the lobbies of Arab politicians who later told him that they did not have time to meet him. In 1972, the post of secretary-general of the OIC went to the Vice-President of Egypt, Hasan Tohamy, who nominated himself at the OIC assembly. The Tunku spent the rest of his life in Malaysia as an active participant in Malaysian politics. He died in Kuala Lumpur on 6 December 1990.

admirers such as Dr. Burhanuddin: namely, his authoritarian streak. As Indonesia's experiment with popular democracy began to falter, Soekarno elevated himself to the position of President for life with the somewhat grandiose title of Pemimpin Besar Revolusi Doktor Engineer Haji Achmad Soekarno.<sup>173</sup> One by one, the men who had risen up with him, such as Muhammad Hatta and Sutan Syahrir, were eliminated and removed through the now-familiar mechanism of show trials, 'disappearances' or exile.<sup>174</sup> The Indonesian Islamists of *Nahdatul Ulama*, Masjumi and *Muhamadijiah* who had come so close to carving their own space within the national political mainstream in the 1950s were left abandoned and disappointed by Soekarno. His growing dependency on PKI and socialist organisations meant that he ultimately lost the support of the Islamists from both the traditionalist and modernist streams. When the Islamists rose up in revolt in 1958, Soekarno's response was harsh and immediate: he banned Masjumi (in 1960) and sent in the army (ABRI) to do the dirty work of suppressing the Muslim rebellions in the outer islands of Sumatra, Sulawesi and Borneo.

After the ill-fated *Konfrontasi* with Malaysia, Soekarno himself was toppled. The failed communist take-over on 30 September 1965 (popularly known as the GESTAPU incident) led to the bloodiest anti-communist reprisals in the country's history, with between half a million and one million people killed. The Indonesian Islamist movements (particularly their student wings) played a key role in helping the army wipe out the communists, but in the wake of the 1965 *putsch* found that the new president, General Soeharto, was even more hostile to Muslim interests than Soekarno. While some sections of the Islamist movement welcomed the ban on PKI and all forms of communist activity in the country, Soeharto's 'New Order' regime (1966-98) also maintained the ban on the Islamist party Masjumi. In fact, it extended its

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<sup>173</sup> Translation: The Great Revolutionary Leader Doctor Engineer Haji Ahmad Soekarno.

<sup>174</sup> Sutan Syahrir was the first Prime Minister of Indonesia. In 1962, Soekarno turned against him and accused him of planning the uprising in Makassar. He was detained without trial in 1962 and finally sent into exile. He died in Zurich in 1966.

control over the Indonesian Islamists movements even further. Soeharto's New Order regime was therefore widely regarded as being anti-Muslim and dominated by pro-Western secular generals (such as Benjamin Benny Moerdani and Ali Murtopo), 'Westernised' technocrats and Catholic business interests.

The Malaysian nationalists and Islamists who wanted to maintain close operational links with their counterparts in Indonesia soon found they were being obstructed by the governments of both countries. Eager to repair the damage of the *Konfrontasi* period, President Soeharto dispatched the fiercely anti-Islamist General Benny Moerdani to Kuala Lumpur as Indonesia's diplomatic representative. (In his memoirs, General Moerdani later admitted that he had entered Malaysia many times earlier on covert operations.)<sup>175</sup> Under Soeharto's new regime, Indonesian Islamist activists were persecuted as never before and the Islamist parties were forced to come together under a clumsy and unmanageable conglomeration known as *Partai Persatuan dan Pembangunan* (PPP) (Development and Unity Party). The Islamists were no longer allowed to adopt the populist symbols that were so important in the formation of their identity. Under such conditions, maintaining close contact with their Indonesian counterparts was next to impossible for the Malaysian Islamists.

Further afield, the picture was hardly any rosier. The Muslims of Tanzania who had played such a prominent role in the struggle for independence in Tanganyika and Zanzibar soon found themselves politically marginalised and under-represented in the new republic that was the brainchild of the ostensibly secular Julius K. Nyerere. The political defeat of the Arab Muslim states during the Suez crisis of 1956<sup>176</sup> and the Six-Day War of

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<sup>175</sup> See: 'Benny's Boys in the Wings', *Impact International*, 30(10) (2000), p. 23.

<sup>176</sup> The Suez crisis of 1956 was prompted by the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company by Gamal Abdel Nasser on 26 July. Nasser had been trying to play the Americans and Soviet Russians against each other, as both sides tried to gain the right to help Egypt pay for the costly Aswan Dam project that would have put the Egyptian *continued p. 199*

1967<sup>177</sup> added to the demoralisation of many Arab secular nationalists (and the rise of even more militant Islamist organisations like *Jama'at al-Jihad, Takfir wa'l-Hijrah* and *Shabab Muhammad*), and forced Arab and Muslim intellectuals worldwide to consider the roots of

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government at their mercy. In the end, neither the Americans nor the Russians did as Nasser expected, leaving him with no choice but to nationalise the Suez Canal Company to obtain revenue to pay for the construction of the dam. Immediately after the nationalisation, Britain and France (both shareholders in the company) objected to Nasser's move in the strongest terms. In retaliation, the governments of Britain (then under Prime Minister Anthony Eden) and France plotted to destabilise Nasser's government and regain control of the Suez Canal. France persuaded Israel (then under Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion) to launch an attack on Egypt, which in turn retaliated by declaring war on Israel. Into the conflict stepped both Britain and France, claiming to be 'peacekeepers'. Egypt lost the most: Israel gained control of the Sinai Valley while Britain and France regained control of the Suez Canal, albeit momentarily until the US (then under President Eisenhower) intervened. But US intervention was not based on altruism or moral grounds: it was merely preparing the way for its own intervention into the affairs of Arab states, and Israel later proved to be its most important ally.

<sup>177</sup> The Six-Day War between Israel and the Arab states began on 5 June 1967. Shortly after daybreak, Israeli jet fighters and bombers launched a series of air strikes on 25 airfields in Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Within 80 minutes almost the entire Egyptian air force was destroyed or grounded, leaving Israel in command of the airspace above the Sinai desert and Suez Canal. At the same time, ground attacks were launched against Egypt, Jordan and Syria. The objective of Israel's invasion was to gain more territory in the Sinai region. During the attacks, Israel released false information to the news agencies claiming that Egypt had initiated the fighting and was responsible for the aggression. Israeli government sources were careful to conceal the number of their own troops involved, and the fact that Israeli forces had also opened fire upon (and killed) UN peacekeepers (including a UN contingent from India) in the course of their forward push towards Egypt. As news of the conflict broke, the Soviets were the first to ask the US to intervene to prevent the conflict from escalating and turning into an all-out Arab–Israeli war. Washington, however, prevaricated and watched the unfolding of *continued p. 200*

Muslim political weakness and vulnerability in the present. This led some Muslim leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt to contemplate even grander nationalist projects as solutions to the problem of Muslim weakness. One such project was the union of Egypt and Syria in 1958 through the formation of the United Arab Republic. The declining fortunes of Egypt and growing opposition from within the country ultimately drove Gamal Nasser closer to authoritarian rule.

Like Dr. Burhanuddin's other ill-fated hero Soekarno, Nasser finally succumbed to his own fears and insecurities in the face of opposition from groups like *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin*. His decision to imprison and later execute the highly popular and influential Islamist thinker Sayyid Qutb (and two other important *Ikhwan* leaders, Abd Fath Ismail and Muhammad Yusuf Hawwash) further alienated him from his own people and added to his image as a 'secular' leader opposed to Islam. Nor did the killing of Sayyid Qutb put an end to the worries of the Egyptian élite: Qutb's untimely death did little to dampen the commitment of *Ikhwan* members, who merely turned to Saudi Arabia for refuge and succour. This, in turn, opened the way for Saudi Arabia and the Saudi élite to play an even bigger role in the propagation of Islam in the Middle East and the Muslim world in general, and allowed them to use *Ikhwan* as the vehicle for the propagation of their own conservative Wahhabi brand of Islam.<sup>178</sup>

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events through their own spy planes and the spy ship *USS Liberty* (which was, ironically, attacked and torpedoed by the Israelis). The conflict was conducted with great speed, efficiency and brutality by the Israelis. At the town of El Arish, Israeli troops slaughtered Egyptian prisoners they had captured. Egypt lost more than 10,000 troops in the conflict. Despite the attack on *USS Liberty* and the loss of more than 30 of its crew (including its executive officer), the US government (then under Lyndon Johnson) ordered a press cover-up (see James Bamford, *Body of Secrets: How America's NSA and Britain's GCHQ Eavesdrop on the World*, London: Arrow Books, 2002, pp. 185–239).

<sup>178</sup> As Kalim Siddiqui has argued: 'the execution of Sayyid Qutb and other leaders of *Ikhwan* in Egypt and the suppression of the  
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In countries like Iran, Pakistan and Egypt, the experiment with modernisation and development undertaken by the respective regimes had encountered serious difficulties. Under the rule of the Pahlevi dynasty, Iran had developed its economy, military and bureaucracy, but at the expense of civil liberties and public freedom. In 1951, Iran experienced a political crisis when popular leader Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh and the Tudeh party came to power, marginalising Muhammad Reza Shah. The populist civilian government immediately set about nationalising Iran's oil industry, much to the chagrin of the international business community. In the CIA-orchestrated *coup* in 1953, Mossadegh was deposed and the Shah reinstated, though the stamp of American influence was keenly felt by all until the Shah's final overthrow during the Iranian revolution of 1978.

In time, the dependency of Muslims on the West, both in terms of direct financial and military support as well as a source of political theories and developmental models, became an issue in itself. Several modern Muslim intellectuals began to condemn the influence of Western ideas and secular values in the mindset of Muslims, claiming that the corrupting influence of 'Occidentalism' was the key factor explaining the intellectual and political frailty of the Muslim *ummah*. The Iranian intellectual Jalal-e Ahmad's book *Gharbzadegi* (Occidentalism) published in 1962 provided such a critique.

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movement by Nasser opened the doors for Saudi Arabia to make an attempt to take over and dominate the leadership of the Islamic movement in all parts of the world. The Saudis began by offering 'asylum' to the Ikhwan leadership that survived the Nasser purge. Thus it was that the Ikhwan 'revolutionaries' were turned into comfortable, middle class 'Islamicists' (a term coined by them to describe themselves) living and working in Saudi Arabia. In the late sixties and seventies, these Islamicists, now joined by some Jama'at-e Islami luminaries, began to travel the world to buy influence in existing Islamic institutions, ... especially in Europe and North America.' The *Ikhwan* and *Jama'at* networks thus came under Saudi influence and were effectively used as tools to extend Saudi hegemony in many other parts of the Muslim world (Kalim Siddiqui, *Stages of Islamic Revolution*, London: The Open Press, 1996, p. 21).

In the few countries where the Islamists had secured some kind of foothold on the political system, they found that their achievements were reduced to naught by secular anti-Islamist leaders who were not prepared to engage with the forces of Islamic resurgence. This was the case in Pakistan where *Jama'at-e Islami* (JI) had done better than expected in the 1958 election. On 7 October, Generals Iskandar Mirza and Muhammad Ayub Khan staged a *coup* that brought down the civilian government. Fed up with civilian politicians 'flirting with the *mullahs*', they then tried to reverse the trend of Islamisation in the country to lay the foundations for a secular state. The generals held onto power until the ill-fated Pakistani civil war in 1971, which led to the loss of East Pakistan and the collapse of General Yahya Khan's regime.

The creation of the World Muslim League and the OIC in 1969<sup>179</sup> did little to resolve any of these pressing issues as the Muslim world remained politically disunited while Muslim leaders and Islamist organisations were bent on pursuing their own (often mutually exclusive and irreconcilable) agendas according to their different interpretations of Islam.

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<sup>179</sup> In 1969, the Muslim world was shocked when an Australian attempted to destroy the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. It was later discovered that the man was a Christian fundamentalist who was thought to be mentally deranged. The arson attempt sparked an immediate reaction from the global Muslim community, and Muslim leaders called for a concerted effort to protect the holy sites of Islam. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia called for a meeting of Muslim governments and in the same year the heads of 25 Muslim states met in Rabat, the capital of Morocco. During the meeting, Faisal declared that Saudi Arabia would engage in a *jihad* against Israel to reclaim Jerusalem for Islam. The meeting ended with the decision to form the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to be based in Jeddah. The first secretary-general of the OIC was Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia. At that time the tenure of secretary-general was limited to two years, and at the next OIC meeting the position was taken by Hasan Tohamy, Vice-President of Egypt.

*The Torch-Bearer's Demise: The Achievements of  
Dr. Burhanuddin Reconsidered*

*Beliau keluar sebagai pembawa obor ... pembawa obor yang  
memberikan perkataan 'Melayu' istilah-nya yang paling luas  
dan progresip.<sup>180</sup>*

Ahmad Boestamam,  
*Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi:  
Putera Setia Melayu Raya*

Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi was very much a man of his time. His contemporaries were Third World intellectuals and leaders such as Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah. His fate was also similar to theirs: while Lumumba was assassinated and Nkrumah was deposed in a CIA-sponsored *coup*, Pak Doktor fell victim to the political realities of the time that divided the world into Eastern and Western blocs, with little space in between for the discourse of progressive Islam to emerge.

Like that other prominent Islamist intellectual and activist Ali Shariati,<sup>181</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin had tried to analyse, explain and

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<sup>180</sup> Translation: 'He passed away as the torch-bearer ... the torch-bearer who gave the term 'Malay' its widest and most progressive definition of all.' (Ahmad Boestamam, *Dr. Burhanuddin*, p. 76).

<sup>181</sup> The Iranian Islamist philosopher and activist Ali Mohammad Taqi Shariati was born on 24 November 1933. His grandfather, Akund Mulla Qurban-Ali, was the leading religious authority in Mazinan. His father, Muhammad Taqi Mazinani, was an accomplished and respected religious teacher who took on Western manners and style of dress to win over young Muslims from the influence of the communists in Iran. The young Shariati was exposed to many of the schools of Islamic philosophical, theological and political thought from an early age. During his school days Ali Shariati became involved in the student movement and was soon under the watchful eye of the Shah's secret police, SAVAK. In the 1950s, he joined the *Nehzat-e Khoda Parastan-e* socialists (Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists) founded by Muhamad Nakhshab. Along with many Iranian leftist and Islamist intellectuals, Shariati tacitly supported the government of Mohammed Mossadegh which tried to  
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resolve the contradictions of his own Malay-Muslim community through a progressive interpretation of their own traditional culture and belief-system rooted in Islam. Both men were also drawn to Sufism (Islamic mysticism), though this was kept secret from many of their followers.<sup>182</sup>

However, both fate and history have been kinder to Ali Shariati who was propelled into the limelight by the outbreak of the Iranian revolution, while the legacy of Pak Doktor has been forgot-

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nationalise Iran's oil industry and protect the local economy from Western capital penetration in 1953. After Mossadegh's government was toppled by the *coup* by pro-Shah elements (with support from the CIA) in August 1953, Shariati intensified his attacks on the government. In 1957, he was arrested during the Shah's crackdown against the Islamist opposition in the country. In 1959, he travelled to Paris to continue his studies. Upon his return to Iran, Shariati continued his teachings and public lectures and gained himself a number of supporters. For his controversial ideas, Shariati was attacked by both the *ulama* and the regime of the Shah. In 1971, he again attacked the Shah for his vainglorious celebration of 2,500 years of Iranian history at the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Persepolis. On 16 May 1977, Shariati, fearing for his life, was forced to leave Iran for exile in London. During his short stay in London, SAVAK officers arrested his wife and other members of his family in an attempt to force Shariati to return to Iran. Before he could make the journey home, Shariati died of a heart attack on 18 June 1977 at the age of 44. After his death, many of his supporters claimed that he was actually killed by SAVAK and Western agents. Shariati's body was later flown to Damascus and buried near the tomb of Zeinab, daughter of Imam Hussein. Two years later, the Iranian revolution broke out and the Shah's regime was finally toppled. Till this day Ali Shariati is regarded as one of the intellectual founders of the Iranian revolution — though during his own lifetime he had opposed the institutionalisation of religion and was widely attacked by members of the Shia clergy in Iran. (For a fuller biographical account of Ali Shariati's life and work, see Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati*, London: I B Tauris Press, 1998.)

<sup>182</sup> Ali Shariati's inclination towards Sufism is discussed in Ali Rahnama's book. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy's own attraction to Sufism has hardly been discussed in public by members of the party, but is alluded to in *Jenayah Akademik Pemimpin UMNO*, p. 97.

ten by those who came after him. The fact remains, however, that Pak Doktor saved the fledgling Islamist party from the brink of disaster and gave it a sense of direction and purpose when it needed it most in the 1950s and 1960s.

The combined leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad had helped to turn PAS into a modern political organisation. They were the leaders largely responsible for turning the movement into a political party with a rationalised organisational structure, a chain of command and links with other Islamic parties and movements abroad.<sup>183</sup>

During this period PAS began to develop its sub-élite strata of party-political functionaries consisting of PAS-supporting *ulama*, imams, *guru* and *dakwah* missionaries. The party also began to lay the foundations of a cadre system by developing its network of Islamic schools, though this effort met with less success as the party had just begun to collect its resources and manpower. The pragmatic approach of Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee in dealing with the enormous problems of organisation and control at a time when PAS still lacked basic necessities such as regular funding, a full-time central office staff, access to national media and other means of communications is something that cannot be ignored. As a result of their strenuous efforts, the party managed to expand its membership links all over the country, in particular in the Malay-Muslim heartland of the north.

Of even greater importance was the sense of ideological direction and focus that Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee gave to their party. Set against the broader context of developments within the Muslim world at the time, the ideology and vision of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy were very much in tandem with the developments of the world around him. This was an era when

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<sup>183</sup> In an interview with the author, Haji Yusof Rawa, the fifth PAS president, noted that Dr. Burhanuddin was primarily responsible for PAS's contacts with Islamist and nationalist movements in the Malay region (especially Indonesia), while Dr. Zulkiflee maintained contacts and channels of communication with Islamic parties and movements in the Arab world and the Indian subcontinent. (Interview with Haji Yusof Rawa, 18 August 1999)

Islamist thinkers and leaders like Ali Shariati<sup>184</sup> were contemplating the numerous alternatives that lay before them. Like many of the progressive Islamists of his generation, Dr. Burhanuddin had tried to graft together the streams of Islamist and nationalist thought with the intention of promoting a broad and universalist interpretation of progressive Islam that went beyond the narrow confines of ethnocentrism and race-centred politics.

The broad-based nationalism of Dr. Burhanuddin was not anchored solely on the essentialist categories of race or a politics of authenticity. He regarded national identity and cultural belonging

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<sup>184</sup> Ali Shariati agreed with the intellectual Franz Fanon on the need for Third World intellectuals and activists to return to their own cultural roots and to find the solution to the problems facing their societies from their own local traditions and beliefs. For Shariati, the Muslim intellectual's only real choice was to turn to his own religious tradition, which was Islam. Upon his return to Iran from France, Shariati continued his teachings and public lectures and gained himself a number of supporters. In 1969, his work *Eslamshenasi* (Islamology), based on his public lecture notes, was finally released. Shariati argued that his *Eslamshenasi* was the first attempt (in Iran, at least) towards a scientific, rational and analytical understanding of Islam. He proposed a reading of traditional Islamic sources — the *Qur'an*, *Hadith* and *Sunnah* — that was historical and which set the message of the Prophet in a contemporary context. Shariati interpreted the monotheism of Islam as a movement against social divisions and hierarchies. For him, monotheism was compatible with egalitarianism and a universal form of humanism which did not recognise boundaries and divisions of race, ethnicity, nationality or class. He attacked the feudal élite, the traditional *ulama* as well as the modern capitalist system for creating divisions and hierarchies in society that obstructed the individual's quest for gnosticism (unity with God), freedom and justice. In particular, the *ulama* were singled out by Shariati as being among the most conservative defenders of un-Islamic traditions, values and practices, and he accused them of being 'idol-worshippers' who perpetuated a culture of blind obedience and subservience among Muslims. In 1970, Shariati went on the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca and upon his return he developed his philosophy even further in his book *The Significance of the Hajj*. Shariati argued that Prophet Abraham's destruction of the idols and statues in Mecca was symbolic of Islam's opposition to social divisions, castes and classes in society.

as historically determined and evolving categories that needed to be developed on a sounder foundation provided by religion. To this end, he embraced nationalism from an Islamist viewpoint, with the intention of creating an Islamist-nationalist ideology to serve as a tool for both national liberation and socio-cultural development. This *mélange* of ideological streams gave PAS its complex and progressive Islamist philosophy while under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin. Chandra Muzaffar has noted that during this stage of PAS's development, the party leadership was actually comfortable with the label of 'Muslim nationalists'. Its leaders described themselves as 'Malay nationalists with Islamic aspirations'.<sup>185</sup> Kessler, in turn, has observed that during this phase of PAS's development it was 'exemplifying neither Islamic fanaticism nor Malay xenophobia' and that 'it primarily if imperfectly expressed class antagonisms' instead in its struggle against the conservative nationalists of UMNO.<sup>186</sup>

Under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, PAS developed into an Islamist party that was both nationalist and anti-imperialist in its outlook. With the Cold War looming in the background and the US star on the ascendant, the fledgling Malaysian Islamist party articulated concerns related to economic independence, the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonial

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<sup>185</sup> Chandra (*Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, p. 9) points out that 'The contrast between the PAS of the past and present is perhaps most vivid when it comes to the concept of the Islamic state. Right from the beginning, PAS has wanted an Islamic state. But the Islamic state it had in mind before the 70s was also meant to be a defender of Malay nationalism. As its president in the 50s and 60s, Dr. Burhanuddin, said: 'PAS and I are in content, character and orientation, Malay nationalists with Islamic aspirations'. His nationalism, it must be stated, was not of the narrow kind. Dr. Burhanuddin always maintained that PAS's principles were humanitarian and therefore all-encompassing. Nonetheless, the acceptance of nationalism as a major ideological dimension in PAS's early belief system distinguished it from the present PAS, which is unequivocal in its rejection of nationalism. This is in harmony with its professed commitment to an 'unalloyed', 'unadulterated' Islam which is pure and pristine.'

<sup>186</sup> Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 182.

hegemony as well as the need to promote a dynamic and issue-based form of Islamist politics. This was not as easy as it sounded then: The monochromatic moral universe of the Cold War meant that the boundary line between 'friends' and 'enemies' was clearly drawn, and those who flirted with the left were taking a major risk with their lives and careers. Many an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist leader had fallen because of their beliefs. The governments of men like Soekarno, Nasser and Patrice Lumumba were toppled as a result of the machinations of the dominant powers of the Western bloc. In Cuba, Fidel Castro's government was under a state of permanent siege, while others like Mehdi Ben Barka<sup>187</sup> and Felix Moumie<sup>188</sup> had met their end at the hands of assassins.

Also during the time of Dr. Burhanuddin PAS offered its ordinary members a consistent critique of capitalism and neo-colonialism, along with an intelligent and rational analysis of their own economic and political problems in the immediate present. Unlike the UMNO nationalists who saw the problems of the Malay-Muslims mainly in terms of inter-ethnic competition, Dr. Burhanuddin attempted to explain the dilemma of the Malay-Muslims in terms of class conflict

<sup>187</sup> Medhi Ben Barka was one of the North African leftist intellectuals and leaders forced to flee into exile in France in the 1960s. On 29 October 1965 he was kidnapped in broad daylight in the boulevard Saint-Germain des Pres in Paris by French secret agents and passed to the local Parisian gangster Georges Boucheseiche. Barka was tortured and asked to reveal his contacts with other Moroccan dissidents hiding in Paris at the time. He was then killed and beheaded, and his body secretly flown back to Morocco by agents working in Air France. When news of the affair reached the public arena, President de Gaulle was furious, as it showed how far the French secret services had gone out of control and were actively working with criminal elements. In the trial that followed, many key witnesses were conveniently killed before they could testify.

<sup>188</sup> Felix Moumie was the leader of the pro-independence movement in Cameroon. In 1960, the rebellion he led was finally crushed with the help of French forces, and Moumie was forced to flee into exile in Europe. He was finally forced to seek refuge in Switzerland, after being misled by French secret agents who disguised themselves as journalists. While in exile he was murdered by agents who poisoned his food.

and contradictions in the economic and political system installed by the departing colonial powers. It was the radical nationalists of the leftist-Islamist camp who had managed to make Islam a national political issue and related it to the broader struggle for political independence and economic rights.

This open and pragmatic approach had allowed the PAS leadership to form instrumental coalitions with other non-Islamist and non-Malay parties and organisations of the left, and had afforded PAS an ideological perspective different from UMNO's. While UMNO leaders continued to rally the Malays behind the banner of ethno-nationalism and communitarian politics, Dr. Burhanuddin and the PAS ideologues tried to convince the Malay-Muslims that the root of their problems lay in an unjust economic and political system developed by neo-colonial powers, international capital and the local compradore élite working hand-in-glove with them. Pak Doktor was not alone in this: neighbouring Indonesia had also produced a number of Islamist-leftists such as Haji Misbah and Tan Melaka. While Haji Misbah had categorically stated that a Muslim could not himself be a true believer unless he supported communism (and vice-versa), Tan Melaka had argued that the struggle of Islam and communism were the same in the sense that they were directed towards the same goals: justice and political emancipation.

The combined leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee also gave the party something it had sorely lacked in the 1950s: a global worldview that also encompassed the developments in other parts of the Muslim world. While PAS in the mid-1950s was very much a local phenomenon confined to the boundaries of British Malaya, the entry of Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee opened up the minds of the ordinary members and also turned their attention to developments abroad. The party began to see itself as an organisation that was no longer an isolated phenomenon but rather part of a global movement. By the late 1960s, PAS was no longer labouring under the narrow perspectivism of the '*katak di bawah tempurung*'.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> A common Malay saying which translates as 'living like a frog trapped under a coconut shell'.

The political philosophy of Dr. Burhanuddin stands in stark contrast to the position held by the current PAS leaders. The PAS leadership had openly committed the party to the struggle for an Islamic state, but the party's president grafted together elements of Islamist, nationalist, socialist and reformist thought in keeping with the intellectual current in the post-colonial world. Unlike the conservative *ulama*, Pak Doktor did not resort to the use of sanctimonious religious phrases or obscure esoteric terms to beguile his followers and opponents alike. Ahmad Boestamam once described Dr. Burhanuddin as the only Malayan Islamist leader who did not use the language of the '*lebai kolot*' or '*fanatik agama*'.<sup>190</sup>

It is important to note that while PAS under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin developed a clearer notion of the Islamic state it was fighting for, party leaders did not take it in the direction of cultural politics. Despite the formal establishment of the Ulama Council during the time of Dr. Burhanuddin's leadership, during the 1960s PAS did not fight for the Islamisation of society along culturalist lines. Its leaders were men and women less concerned about the politics of Islamic dress and customs, or with the definition of what constituted a good Muslim or proper Muslim behaviour. (These socio-cultural changes would come much later during the 1970s, will be seen in Chapter 3.) Instead, their focus was on changing the economic and political circumstances directly affecting the lives of ordinary Malaysians, so that they would be free to exercise their will and rational agency and by doing so be able to realise their full potential as independent (Malay-Muslim) subjects.

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<sup>190</sup> In his biography of Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam (*Dr. Burhanuddin*, p. 8) recalls the confrontation between Dr. Burhanuddin and the first leader of PKMM, the communist Mokhtaruddin Lasso. When Mokhtaruddin confronted Dr. Burhanuddin over the question of the existence of God, Dr. Burhanuddin's reply was rational and to the point. Boestamam noted that in his rebuttal of Lasso, Dr. Burhanuddin never once resorted to the use of religious *fatwa*, edicts or quotes from the *Qur'an* — something which impressed Boestamam considerably. Boestamam also noted that had Mokhtaruddin Lasso tried to confront a member of the traditional *ulama* in the same way, he would probably have met a violent end at the hands of the '*lebai kolot*' or '*fanatik agama*'.

Dr. Burhanuddin's practical approach to political and social struggles was one that placed human will and rational agency at the centre of the world. Human beings were, for him, the primary actors of history and his was a political universe where the conflict of power and interests was paramount. He was, like many other Islamist reformers and modernists of the 20th century, an Islamist who struggled in the 'here and now'. Unlike the more conservative and dogmatic Islamist thinkers of his time who continued to rely upon their invented traditions and history of the past 'golden age' of Islam, Dr. Burhanuddin's heroes and models were men of the day like President Soekarno of Indonesia and Gamal Nasser of Egypt. Dr. Burhanuddin's attempt to develop a progressive approach to political Islam addressed the problematic dynamics between universals and particulars within the religion itself and was nothing less than an attempt to demonstrate Islam's relevance in the arena of contemporary modern politics. His notion of the ideal Islamic society and political order was also one rooted in the developments of the present: rather than the Muslim community of Medinah during the time of the Prophet, he looked to the Bandung conference and the Pan-Arab alliance as models of collective political action.

Unlike many other Islamist thinkers, Dr. Burhanuddin also recognised that the universalism of Islam had its limits. Although he promoted an understanding of Islam that was universal in its scope, Pak Doktor also recognised that it could not appeal to those who did not share or agree with its final moral vocabulary. The universalism of Islam remained nonetheless a *particular* universalism that could not be entirely reconciled with other universalist discourses like communism, socialism and liberal humanism. In such cases, negotiation with difference and alterity was the key to political success and hegemony. Rather than concentrating on the differences between the ideological positions of the Islamists, nationalists and leftists, Dr. Burhanuddin preferred to stress the chains of equivalence that bound their projects together. This was why he was so successful in disseminating the message of political Islam to such a broad audience, spanned the entire political spectrum. His skills at negotiation also helped the party bridge the ideological gap between the Islamists and the leftists of

*Fron Sosialis*. While Muslim leaders in other parts of the Islamic world at the time were openly critical of the democratic project and other political and ideological systems (King Saud had rejected a draft for a democratic constitution on the grounds that the *Qur'an* was the oldest constitution in the world, while Ab'ul Al'aa Maudoodi, the leader of *Jama'at-e Islami*, had declared that 'whoever speaks about Socialism should have his tongue pulled out'),<sup>191</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin realised the practical need to form instrumental alliances with them.

Yet despite his achievements in broadening and pushing forward the agenda of political Islam, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy's reforms were dismantled in later years as a result of the manoeuvres and compromises made by the party while under the leadership of Mohammad Asri Muda from 1970-82.

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<sup>191</sup> *Pakistan Times*, 16 March 1969, p. 16.

### Chapter 3

## 1970–1982: IN SEARCH OF THE MALAY HOMELAND: THE ASRI YEARS

*Bangsa Melayu se-olah-olah seperti ayam mati kelaparan di kepok padi, seperti itek mati dahaga dalam ayer. Negara ma'amor begitu mewah begitu kaya, tetapi sebilangan besar ra'ayatnya tertindas malah terbiar dan tertinggal.<sup>1</sup>*

Asri Muda,  
Speech at the 17th PAS Congress,  
18 June 1971

### *Return of the Native Son: The Malay-centric Islamism of Asri Muda*

*Banyak orang berpendapat bahawa PAS itulah Asri dan Asri itulah PAS, oleh kerana Asri telah diinstitusikan oleh ahli-ahlinya sendiri. Setelah wafatnya kedua pemimpin besar PAS — Dr. Burhanuddin dan Dr. Zulkiflee — Asrilah yang membawa sinar gemilang dan obor perjuangan kedua pemimpin tersebut.<sup>2</sup>*

Yahya Ismail,  
*Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: Today when we look at the fate of the Malays we see that we have become like chickens that are dying of hunger in a field of rice, like ducks that are dying of thirst while surrounded by water. Our country is so rich, so prosperous, yet a large section of society remains oppressed, neglected and left behind. (Asri Muda, 'Uchapan Resmi Kongres PAS ke XVII, 18 June 1971'.)

<sup>2</sup> Translation: Many people were of the opinion that PAS was Asri and Asri was PAS, simply because Asri had been institutionalised by the *continued p. 214*

In 1970, the same year that Hafiz al-Assad launched the bloodless *Coup* that brought him to power in Syria, the leadership of the *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* was passed to the charismatic and controversial Mohammad Asri Muda, who led the party with an uneven hand up to 1982, when he was forced to abandon his post as party president and retire in disgrace.

The 'Asri years' were perhaps the most problematic episode in the development of PAS and till today the party remains unable to come to terms with some of the radical policy shifts and reversals introduced by its fourth president.<sup>3</sup> Like his predecessors Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee, Asri Muda developed the party and guided its orientation according to his own personal beliefs and worldview. In this respect, the Asri years reflected the extent to which PAS had evolved as a Malay-Muslim party very much bound to the personality of its leaders. To appreciate the extent to which Asri reinvented the party in his own image, we need to look at the personal history of the man himself.

Mohammad Asri Muda had an interesting and colourful political career before he joined the ranks of the PAS Islamists in the 1950s. He was born on 10 October 1923 in Kampung Masjid, Kota Bharu, Kelantan and received his early education at a number of vernacular Malay and religious schools there. Immediately after

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members of his own party. After the death of the two great leaders of the party — Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee — it was Asri who carried the flame and the torch of the movement's leaders. Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dinamika Kreatif, 1978, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> The author was present at the PAS annual *muktamar am* (general assembly) in Kuala Lumpur on 25 May 1999. During the opening session, party president Ustaz Fadzil Noor read a prayer of thanks to the previous leaders. The names of Haji Ahmad Fuad, Dr. Abbas Elias, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Dr Zulkiflee Muhammad and Ahmad Zawawi Hamzah were mentioned, but not Mohammad Asri Muda. Many contemporary scholars of PAS politics have noted the extent to which the memory of Asri Muda's leadership has been wiped out of the party's official archives and records as well as propaganda material.

World War II he made his first foray into the world of politics by helping to form the *Persekutuan Persetiaan Melayu Kelantan* (Union of Kelantan Malay Loyalists, PPMK) dominated by conservative nationalists. He became the organisation's secretary-general.

However, Asri's politics was of a much more radical tenor than the conservative-loyalists of the PPMK. He left the PPMK and soon he and his brother, Saad Shukri Muda, joined the ranks of the radical Malay nationalists of the PKMM under the leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Ishak Haji Muhammad. Asri served as the editor of the PKMM's Malay-language journal, *Penyedar*, and was also involved in the militant activities of the PKMM's youth wing, API, then led by Ahmad Boestamam. While Saad was known for his accomplishments as a Malay scholar, Asri was widely regarded as a fiery, provocative writer and speaker whose eloquence and persuasiveness could only be matched by a handful of other Malay leaders.

A staunch defender of the political status of Malay as the language of the Malays (and therefore the language of Malaya), Asri later formed and led the *Lembaga Pembangunan Sastera* (Society for the Development of Malay Literature, LEPAS) in Perak in 1952.<sup>4</sup> In the same year, he attended the first *Kongres Bahasa dan Persuratan* (Congress of Malay Letters) in Singapore and in 1954 he represented LEPAS at the *Kongres Bahasa Indonesia* in Medan, Indonesia. His zealous defence and promotion of the Malay language gained him a large following among the Malay and Indonesian vernacular press and intelligentsia. Those who heard him speak were impressed with the style of his oratory and delivery. PAS leader Mohamad Sabu once said of Asri: '*Kehebatan gaya bahasa pidato Asri boleh memberhentikan burung yang terbang dan membekukan air yang lalu.*'<sup>5</sup>

Other PAS leaders have also commented on Asri's ability to speak to large audiences and to convert them to his line of thinking

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<sup>4</sup> Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Translation: So great was his style of speaking that Asri could stop a bird in flight and freeze flowing water. (Quoted in *Tamadun*, August 1999, p. 37.)

with ease.<sup>6</sup> Long before he joined the Islamic party he had cultivated a large following among the Malay radicals and nationalists, who were impressed by his vocal defence of Malay-Muslim interests.

Asri Muda's activism in the world of Malay letters and his strong stand on the issue of Malay rights and privileges therefore placed him firmly within the camp of the radical nationalists. However, when the British banned the PKMM and API in 1948 (at the outset of the Emergency of 1948–60), many young Malay radicals were forced to flee into exile or go into hiding. While leaders of the radical nationalist movement, such as Ahmad Boestamam, were arrested and placed under detention, other radicals went underground or joined the ranks of the Islamists. Asri was among them; he became a teacher at the famous Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif at Gunung Semanggul, Perak run by Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Bakir (later the headquarters for the short-lived *Hizbul Muslimin*).

At the Madrasah Ma'ahad al-Ehya as-Sharif Asri met his future wife, Ustazah Sakinah binti Haji Joned, the daughter of a Sumatran teacher, Ustaz Haji Joned. At the Madrasah Ma'ahad Asri began to formulate his ecumenical ideology of Islamism combined with radical Malay nationalism. When *Hizbul Muslimin* was formed, Asri became its secretary. After the banning of *Hizbul Muslimin*, Asri turned his attention to other Islamist movements in the country. When PAS was first established in 1951 as the *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya*, he became one of its first members and, with the help of Osman Abdullah, was made a member of the executive committee.<sup>7</sup> (His wife, Ustazah Sakinah, eventually rose to become head of *Dewan Muslimat* PAS, the women's wing.) At first, Asri

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Dr. Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.

<sup>7</sup> In an interview with the author in 1999, Osman Abdullah (PAS secretary who later joined UMNO) pointed out that he 'was the one who got Ahmad Asri into the party committee in 1953. I asked Haji Fuad to take him as the party's executive secretary as we needed someone permanent to do the job. Ahmad Asri at that time was a poor rubber tapper from Padang Rengas. He was really poor at that time. We offered him a steady salary of 100 dollars and with that he was continued p. 217

worked as secretary-general of the party at its head office in Kepala Batas, Seberang Perai, but soon afterwards returned to Kelantan with his wife to establish his political base there.

The predominantly Malay state of Kelantan was, at that time, one of the most remote and isolated states in the peninsula and was viewed with a mixture of curiosity and contempt by the powers-that-be in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. Kelantan and Terengganu were less cosmopolitan than the west coast states. The number of non-Malays living in Kota Bharu and Kuala Terengganu was much lower than in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Georgetown and Melaka. Upon his return to Kelantan in 1948, Asri first worked as a petition writer in front of the Rex Hotel in Kota Bharu. Based in the capital of the state where all kinds of political groups and movements congregated, Asri found that the state was ripe and ready for political mobilisation. Asri surveyed the political terrain around him and acted accordingly.

Kelantan was always known as a centre of Islamic learning and Malay cultural activity, earning it the reputation of being both the heart of Malay culture in the peninsula and the *serambi* Mekah (porch of Mecca). (Pasar Mas, home to a number of reputable *madrasah* and *pondok* schools, was popularly referred to as the Qom of Malaya.)<sup>8</sup> A long-standing tradition of Islamic activism had been set by an earlier generation of Islamist reformers such as Haji Mahmood Ismail, Tok Kenali and Haji Muhammad bin Said in the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> By the closing stages of World War II, the state capital was

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persuaded to leave and to come and settle at Bukit Mertajam. Asri took over the office as its executive secretary after Haji Fuad left the party and our main office was moved to Kepala Batas. Asri was never an intellectual figure in PAS. He was not all that knowledgeable. But he won and took over because he was a popular figure and he managed to get the leadership in Kelantan.' (Interview with Osman Abdullah, 25 May 1999.)

<sup>8</sup> Zainal Epi, *Crossing the Waves: A Biography of Ibrahim Ali*, Johor Baru: Trade and Industry Media, 2000, p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> Wan Nik bin Wan Yusoff, 'PAS Mula Ditubuh di Kelantan', p. 3. From the homepage of Dewan Ulama of PAS, *Pusat Kajian Strategik Kelantan* (PAS Kelantan Strategic Centre), 26 November 1997.

already full of disaffected Malay radicals and nationalists who were talking of independence.

The emergence of these groups and movements was partly due to the influence of prominent Indonesian Islamist leaders from the Masjumi movement who had lived in exile in Kelantan from their own homeland since the 1930s. One was Sumatran radical Bustamin bin Ismail, who had arrived in Kota Bharu in 1932. These ex-Masjumi leaders and followers had established a network of contacts with other Islamist leaders and movements in the state and the rest of the peninsula. One of Bustamin's closest contacts was local petition writer Mohd Daud bin Salleh, a relative of Asri Muda.

With the help of Bustamin Ismail and Mohd Daud bin Salleh, Asri quickly set up a PAS branch in Kelantan. They did this entirely by themselves, relying on their own funds and ingenuity. Bustamin and Mohd Daud helped to collect donations from the local residents, while Asri organised talks and rallies to drum up support. Help also came from other PAS activists such as Amaluddin Darus, Omar bin Yusuf, Ustaz Abdullah Ahmad, Mohd Amin Yaakob, Ishak Lotfi bin Omar (later Dato' Ishak Lotfi) and Abdul Rahman Sulong. Due to their persistence and combined efforts, the first Kelantan branch of PAS was established in Kota Bharu in 1952. On 23 July 1953, PAS claimed the constituency of Pasir Mas as its first target for the upcoming election. Asri and his followers then began forming branches all over the state: Macang (1953), Kota Bharu (1954), Pasir Putih (1954), Tanah Merah (1955), Ulu Kelantan, Bachok (1956), Kuala Kerai (1958) and Tumpat (1959). The party leaders were duly impressed by the energy and commitment of Asri Muda, who had set up so many party branches in an under-developed state cut off from the rest of the peninsula.

Thanks to his success as a political activist, campaigner and propagandist, Asri was seen as one of the 'rising stars' of PAS in the 1950s. Though only in his late twenties, his reputation in Kelantan meant that he commanded considerable respect and clout within the party and among his own followers. He had become so influential that in 1953 he was one of three PAS members chosen to represent the party at the *Persidangan Kebangsaan* (National Convention) jointly organised by PAS's rivals UMNO and MCA to debate pro-

posals for the model of self-rule to be instituted once the British colonial authorities had granted independence to Malaya. At the assembly, Asri, with the other PAS representatives, Haji Ahmad Tuan Hussein and Osman Abdullah, called for the protection of Malay rights and insisted that Malayan citizenship should not be granted to non-Malays merely because they were born in the country. Asri took a strong Malay-centric stand, insisting that voting rights should not be automatically granted to non-Malays and that other Malay rights and privileges should be protected at all cost.<sup>10</sup>

For his part in furthering the cause of PAS, Asri was promoted to the status of *pesuruhjaya persatuan* in charge of PAS activities in Kelantan and Terengganu in 1955. However, his ambition to rise higher in the party's leadership strata was checked by the sudden entry of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy who was invited to take over the party leadership by its second president, Dr. Abbas Elias, in 1956. As a result, Asri found his own avenues for advancement were effectively blocked. From 1956-69, Dr. Burhanuddin dominated the party and was seen as the spokesman for progressive Islam in the land. The deputy presidency of PAS went to Cairo-educated Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad, a prominent Islamist thinker and spokesman for the Islamist cause.

Despite the setbacks to his political ambitions, the ever-resourceful Asri found new ways to project himself before the party members. At the 1956 general assembly, he (and Abdullah Bukhari) presented the party with its first official anthem.<sup>11</sup> Asri then launched the party's first official newsmagazine *Suara Islam* (The Voice of Islam). Its office was based in Asri's hometown of Kota Bharu. As its chief editor, Asri exercised full control over the contents of the publication, which was written in *Jawi* (Arabic) script.<sup>12</sup> Its second editor was Amaluddin Darus. Through *Suara*

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<sup>10</sup> *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> The music for the party anthem was composed by Abdullah Bukhari and its lyrics by Asri Muda. See Appendix II for a full transcript of its lyrics.

<sup>12</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. i.

*Islam*, Asri not only spread the message of the Islamic party far and wide — he also secured and strengthened his own reputation as a key Malay-Muslim leader in the country.

Soon afterwards, Asri was given the opportunity to expand his local support base when directed by the PAS executive committee to set up party branches in the predominantly Malay state of Terengganu. Asri had no difficulty operating in Terengganu which was, in many ways, similar to Kelantan. Like Kelantan, Terengganu boasted about its reputation as a centre for Malay political development and Islamic learning. While Kelantan was known as the *serambi Mekah*, Terengganu proudly declared itself the *serambi Madinah* (porch of Madinah) in the peninsula. The first PAS branch in Terengganu was set up in Dungun in 1956 under Asri's personal direction. From 1956–58, he set up a network of *ranting* (branches) that later expanded into *cawangan* (divisions) under his care all over the state. In return, Asri was made *pesuruhjaya PAS* for Terengganu as well as Kelantan and the ranks of his supporters swelled accordingly.

Henceforth, the marginalised Asri concentrated most of his efforts on the northern states of Kelantan and Terengganu, which became the base of his operations in the following years. Notwithstanding his own successes as a controversial figure on the national political stage, Asri's focus was always directed towards his own local constituency in the northeast. During these initial stages, Asri and his lieutenants relied on time-tested methods to spread their message to the local residents. Apart from lectures given at mosques, *surau* and *madrasah*, they also used the more informal modes of communication used by Islamist movements in other parts of the world. Like the founder of the *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin* in Egypt, Hassan al-Banna, Asri Muda preferred to win new supporters through informal personal contacts at places such as coffee shops. In this way Asri (like Hassan al-Banna) built up an impressive list of local contacts and party functionaries closely linked to him personally, and upon whom he could rely to mobilise followers and support.

Asri was also smart enough to know how to place and mobilise his supporters when and where he needed them. His comrade Amaluddin Darus became head of the PAS communications bureau in Kelantan, and Asri's followers and advisors were

quickly put in key positions within the party's local hierarchy. With his political network and power base established, Asri turned his attention to the local *ulama* and influential *gurus* (religious teachers) in his efforts to woo them to the cause of PAS.

Asri realised that when dealing with the local *guru* of the *pondok* schools and *madrasah* he had to adopt a very different approach. The local imams and *guru* of Kelantan were not particularly happy with the success of PAS, as it represented a threat to the *status quo ante*. Traditionally, the *gurus* and *imams* of the state were respected and revered as men of learning and wisdom, but they kept their distance from the world of politics. Winzeler, among others, has noted that the *gurus* of Kelantan were generally conservative and traditional in their outlook.<sup>13</sup> They tended to shy away from politics altogether and were reluctant to embrace any kind of Islamist movement that called for socio-political reform. Some were also tacit supporters of the traditional establishment, which was identified with the Kelantan royal family and UMNO, under Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Asri knew that he had to win over the support of this vital local constituency if he was to take over Kelantan for good. Failure to do so would leave him vulnerable to another Islamist grouping that might challenge his Islamist credentials. To win over these conservative and recalcitrant religious functionaries and leaders, Asri needed to adapt his own Islamist discourse to emphasise both his Islamist and his Malay-centric nationalist concerns. As Wan Nik Wan Yusoff notes:

*Ketokohan Dato' Asri yang boleh menggerakkan sentimen kefahaman politik Islam dengan gandingan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dan Hadis dan pandai bermain sentimen dengan menyelitkan unsur-unsur nasionalisme berjaya menarik guru-guru pondok menyertai PAS. Kesannya PAS telah menjadi tarikan guru-guru pondok, diantaranya Tuan Guru Haji Abdullah Tahir dari pondok Bubut Payong.*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Winzeler, 'Traditional Islamic Schools in Kelantan', *JMBRAS*, 48(1) (1975): 99-100.

<sup>14</sup> Wan Nik Wan Yusoff, 'Perkembangan PAS di Kelantan'. Translation: Dato' Asri's ability to awaken the Islamic political spirit through his quotations from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, and his ability to move the *continued p. 222*

Having won over both the ordinary Malays as well as the traditional *gurus* and *imams* of the *pondoks* and *madrasahs*, Asri Muda became the undisputed leader of PAS in the northeast. By the late 1950s, PAS had gained an impressive foothold in Kelantan and Terengganu. Much of PAS's success in Kelantan has to be attributed to the efforts of Asri Muda, whose charisma and charm were crucial to winning over the hearts and minds of the people. So strong was this hold on the mindset of the northeastern Malays that, though the party performed badly in the 1955 election, PAS secured solid victories for itself in Kelantan in the elections of 1959, 1964 and 1969.

Asri was elected for the first time in the 1959 election. He was then forced to divide his time and energy between his base in Kelantan and the federal capital of Kuala Lumpur. Nonetheless, it was clear that Asri's heart always remained in his home state of Kelantan. While the party weathered the storms of national mainstream politics in Kuala Lumpur, Asri concentrated much of his time and energy towards consolidating PAS's hold on Kelantan, assuming more and more control and power over party-political matters. Asri's flamboyant and highly individualistic leadership style was not always appreciated by other party members. In 1963, Osman Abdullah, one of the party's founders and its secretary, left PAS and joined UMNO when he could no longer tolerate Asri's leadership style. Osman cited Asri's overbearing personality, nepotism and favouritism as the main causes for the rift between the two men.<sup>15</sup>

In 1964–65, two major developments shaped the political career of Asri for good. First, he was made the *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) of Kelantan after the 1964 elections. The Sultan of

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sentiments of the people by injecting his speeches with elements of Malay nationalism finally managed to win over a number of the prominent *gurus* who then joined PAS. As a result, PAS became the party favoured by the *gurus* of the *pondoks*, and among them was the famous *guru* Tuan Haji Abdullah Tahir who came from the *pondok* of Bubut Puyong.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Osman Abdullah, 25 May 1999.

Kelantan then conferred upon him the honorific title of 'Datuk'. No other PAS leader dared to mount a challenge on Asri's leadership in the state, knowing that his network of connections and grassroots support was so strong. Second, Asri was finally given the opportunity to take over the leadership of PAS in 1964 when the party lost its deputy president Dr. Zulkiflee, who died in a car accident. Less than a year later, Asri became the *de facto* leader of PAS when its president Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy was detained under the ISA (in January 1965) while Malaysia was engaged in its *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia.

When Dr. Burhanuddin was detained, Asri's supporters called for him to be made president, but the move was rejected by others. Asri therefore served as PAS vice-president from 1964-69, though in effect he was also the party's *de facto* president. From 1965-67, Asri Muda effectively ran the party and decided party policy. When Dr. Burhanuddin was finally released in 1967 he was no longer able to play an active role in PAS politics as his health had deteriorated considerably during his detention. Thus by the late 1960s, Asri Muda was effectively holding three positions. As well as *de facto* leader of PAS, he was also Chief Minister and head of PAS in Kelantan. As the undisputed leader of PAS in the state, he was in a position to develop his own base of supporters, clients and network of grassroots activists in every district and constituency.

While serving as Chief Minister of Kelantan, Asri committed the party and its leadership to a number of contentious issues; some were politically sensitive and would later backfire on the party. One of the more litigious causes he championed was that of the Patani liberation movement, then operating along the Malaysia-Thailand border. Groups like the *Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani* (National Liberation Front of Patani, BNPP)<sup>16</sup> and the

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<sup>16</sup> BNPP was formed in 1959 by ex-leaders of the *Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya* ((United Greater Patani Malays Movement, GAMPAR) and the Patani People's Movement (PPM). Its founder, Tengku Abdul Jalal (@ Adul Na Saiburi), was the ex-deputy leader of GAMPAR. The original leaders of BNPP were mostly members of the traditional Patani Malay elite and religious functionaries like the *ulama* and *continued p. 224*

*Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (National Revolutionary Front, BRN)<sup>17</sup> were already active in the region and had operatives working in Malaysia. (Many BNPP and BRN agents were based in Kota Bharu, Kelantan and Kuala Lumpur.) In time, other organisations like the

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n. 16 continued

imams of mosques and *madrasah* in Patani. In the 1960s, BNPP opted for guerrilla warfare against the Thai security forces, working with rebels as well as criminal elements within Patani society. Apart from criminal elements, the organisation also gained the support of Patani Malay students who had studied in religious institutions in Patani as well as the Arab countries. In time, Islamist students like Badri Hamdan, Abdul Fatah Omar and Hannan Ubaidah who had studied in places like al-Azhar in Cairo also joined the movement and rose to become its leaders. BNPP tried to expand its support and recruitment base by opening more branches and networks in neighbouring countries like Malaysia as well as Muslim countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. But the BNPP's main weakness was its apparent lack of direction and ideological coherence. Its goal of national liberation remained vague, and many members were concerned about the dominance of traditional élite and aristocrats. In 1963, a splinter group, the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (National Revolutionary Front, BRN) was created by those worried about BNPP's call for the re-establishment of the Patani Sultanate. BRN aimed to create a Republic of Patani. In the 1980s, BNPP was influenced by the wave of Islamist activism unleashed in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution. In 1979, BNPP upgraded its military training programme to expand the scope of its guerrilla activities against the Thai security forces. At the same time, BNPP members called for the injection of Islamic values in their political struggle. In 1985, the more radical and militant elements of BNPP, led by vice-chairman Wahyuddin Muhammad, broke away to form the *Barisan Bersatu Mujahideen Patani* (United Mujahideen Front of Patani, BBMP). In 1986, the BNPP general assembly voted to rename the organisation the *Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani* (Islamic Liberation Front of Patani, BIPP) to emphasise its new Islamist credentials. (W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, p. 115 n. 8.)

<sup>17</sup> The BRN was formed in March 1963 as a result of a split within the BNPP (see n. 16 above) by Ustaz Abdul Karim Hassan, with the aim of creating an independent Republic of Patani. W. K. Che Man (*Ibid.*, p. 109) describes the BRN's ideology as 'Islamic-socialism'; the group continued p. 225

*Pertubuhan Perpaduan Pembebasan Patani* (Patani United Liberation Organisation, PULO)<sup>18</sup> also entered the fray.

Asri's support for the Patani Malay-Muslims was part of his own Malay-centric nationalism aimed at defending the interests of all

*n. 17 continued*

actively courted the support of other Muslim states like Algeria, Syria and Libya. In this respect, the BRN was akin to other secular Muslim liberation movements like the MNLF and the PLO. Unlike the BNPP, the BRN opted for political mobilisation and networking, rejecting the use of terrorism and guerrilla warfare. From 1963-68, the BRN concentrated on penetrating the local *pondok* and *madrasah* networks to recruit more members to its cause, but the constant in-fighting and counter-terrorist activities of the Thai government forced the BRN leaders to go underground in 1968. During this period the BRN was said to have made contact with Malaysian communist groups led by Abdul Rashid Mydin operating along the Thai-Malaysian border. Its activities were severely curtailed in the 1970s after a wave of arrests of BRN leaders by Thai security forces. The BRN's only fighting unit was effectively destroyed in 1977 when its leader Cikgu Din Adam was killed by Thai soldiers. The BRN received most of its funding from Thai Muslim workers in Malaysia and Arab Muslim states (notably Saudi Arabia). The BRN also widened its network to other Muslim countries, but was unable to maintain such networks because many of these Muslim states did not favour its 'secular' revolutionary approach. (The same problem was faced by PULO, est. 1968). The BRN's offices in Saudi Arabia, for instance, became practically defunct by the mid-1980s when the BRN was also torn apart from within due to political rivalries and ideological differences. It finally split into three groups. Its leadership under Cikgu Peng and Pak Yusuf tried to keep the BRN on its original political course, but leaders like Ustaz Abdul Karim Hassan opted for 'pure Islam' and other leaders like the mysterious Haji 'M' wanted BRN to renounce the use of violence altogether.

<sup>18</sup> PULO, the only Patani liberation movement founded outside Patani, was formed in 1968 in India by Tengku Bira Kotanila (@ Kabir Abdul Rahman), a graduate of Aligarh Muslim University, helped by a group of Patani students from Aligarh. Soon after the launching of PULO, Tengku Bira transferred himself and the group's main headquarters to Mecca, where he hoped to attract more support from Patani Muslims studying there. PULO's ideological orientation was largely secular from the start: it aimed at national liberation in the *continued p. 226*

Malay-Muslims. Asri, it must be remembered, had been a great defender of the notion of Malay unity since the days when he was a PKMM member. However, his open support for the Patani liberation movement and its guerrilla fighters also became an obstacle in the development of Malaysia–Thai relations and a cause of worry for the government. As the Patani guerrillas were operating in the same areas as the outlawed MCP guerrillas, the party was exposed to the accusation that it was indirectly helping the communist insurgents who were at war with the Malaysian state.<sup>19</sup>

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broadest sense, like the PLO and MNLF. It rejected the neo-feudal and traditionalist ideology of BNPP and the 'Islamic-socialism' of BRN. Its main recruitment grounds were the Arab states and Malaysia. Like the BNPP and BRN, PULO collected most of its funds from Patani Malays working overseas, particularly in countries like Saudi Arabia. Like the BNPP, PULO was at ease with the use of militant and guerrilla tactics. It recruited local gang members and bandits to help with its military operations in the region. It was also comfortable with militant Muslim states like Syria, Libya, Iran and Algeria (Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, p. 106). In 1979, PULO tried to work with the BNPP to co-ordinate their military operations in the Patani region. An agreement was reached at the 1979 Muslim World Summit, but this experiment ended in 1981 due to internal rifts within PULO and BNPP (Ibid.). During the early 1980s, PULO leaders tried to expand the movement's networks by establishing contact with other Muslim states like Syria and Iran. Tengku Bira attempted to forge links with the Ba'ath party in Syria and to open a PULO office in Tehran, Iran, but PULO's links with these non-Saudi countries upset the Saudi government and in 1984 its main office in Saudi Arabia was closed. Many PULO leaders were arrested and deported to Malaysia or Thailand. In the wake of the Saudi crack-down, Tengku Bira was forced to resign and the leadership was handed to Ustaz Abdul Hadi, his deputy. In the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution, PULO (like BRN) found its support base quickly eroding, due to the general shift towards the Islamist register by most Muslim organisations. Since then, PULO has based itself in the Patani region and many of its leaders operate in Malaysia.

<sup>19</sup> Alias Mohamed, 'The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party: A Critical Observation', in *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), 1978, pp. 167–168.

However, Asri courted the most controversy and deprecation in the area of economic management and finance. Asri's running of the Kelantan economy did not exactly match his skills as an orator and polemicist. By the late 1960s, a number of financial scandals had erupted in Kelantan, many inevitably linked to Asri himself. In May 1967, Asri was forced to admit in parliament that the Kelantan government had borrowed RM5 million from commercial banks to pay for state expenditure. In December 1967, Asri had to beg for a RM1.5-million loan from the federal government to pay the wages of government servants in the state. In 1968, Asri admitted that his state government was once again in debt — this time for RM10 million.

Despite the mounting scandals, calls for an inquiry went unheeded. Asri's uneven management of the state had brought the party into disrepute on many occasions and added to the growing ranks of malcontents who later opposed him in the 1970s. The Tunku's government claimed that there were at least ten prominent PAS leaders in Kelantan prepared to defect to UMNO (including Dato Nik Abdul Rahman Nik Mat, then Deputy Chief Minister of Kelantan) because of Asri's poor handling of the state's finances and his autocratic leadership style. The situation continued to deteriorate, but Asri was able to sidestep the main issues due to a number of major events which occurred in the following year.

In May 1969, PAS scored one of its most impressive electoral victories in the federal election. PAS once again triumphed in the northeastern states of Kelantan and Terengganu. In the months prior to the election Asri was again able to play his role as the champion of the Malay-Muslims, in particular the people of Kelantan. The 1969 election campaign was one of the most viciously fought in the country's history. It witnessed an escalation of hostilities between PAS and UMNO, and contributed to the further hardening of political boundaries within the Malay community along religious lines.

The 1969 election campaign witnessed the Alliance's use of all the resources and tools at its disposal, leading to a pre-election promise to the people of Kelantan of a massive RM546-million investment package. As soon as Alliance leaders made their offer public, Asri assumed the moral high ground above his opponents, accusing them of trying to buy over the people of Kelantan. His

rejection of Alliance's proposal was intended to bolster the pride of the Kelantanese in themselves, and was also couched in Islamist terms, as Kessler points out:

The Alliance, Muhammad Asri suggested, was seeking to satisfy its inordinate desire for power by appealing to the tenuously controlled wishes of the Kelantanese for worldly goods and comforts. Those who had succumbed to such temptation, who had allowed the Alliance to put a price on them, were now worthless. They had neither value nor values. But the Kelantanese, because they still retained their own values, had refused the Alliance's price. ... Recognising the self-interest in the Alliance's purported benevolence, they knew their opponents were inauthentic, insincere and untrustworthy.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, Asri out-maneuvred the Alliance leadership by representing their pre-election promises as temptations intended to weaken the *iman* and *taqwa* of the Kelantanese. Asri's appeal to early Islamic precedents not only painted the election campaign in an epic hue; it also helped the party maintain its hold on Kelantan. PAS also expanded its influence to other states. In the election, PAS's share of parliamentary seats increased from nine to twelve.

However, PAS's gains were not to be enjoyed in peace. As seen earlier, the country was thrown into yet another national crisis immediately after the 1969 federal election. The race riots of 13 May 1969 led to the declaration of a state of National Emergency, and parliament was suspended. PAS's electoral gains were therefore effectively neutralised. To make things worse, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, the party's president, passed away a few months later. It was during this period of chaos and confusion that Asri Muda took over as the fourth president of PAS.

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<sup>20</sup> Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 225.

*The 'Asri Years' Begin: Asri Muda as President of PAS, 1970-1982*

The ethnic factor, rather than the ideology of modernisation or the capitalist approach to development, is a better explanation for the nature and character of Islamic resurgence in Malaysia... And of all the leaders that PAS has had in its long and chequered history, it is perhaps Asri who was the most ardent advocate of the Malay position, or Malay 'nationalism' in the political parlance of the day.

Chandra Muzaffar,  
*Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*<sup>21</sup>

Asri Muda finally took over the leadership of PAS when he was elected as its president at the 17th annual congress in 1970. The deputy presidency of the party went to Asri's associate Hasan Adli Arshat, a long-time party activist who also enjoyed considerable support in the north.<sup>22</sup>

When he took over the leadership of PAS, Asri was concerned about the state of the party and its failure to gain substantial political power in the country. For Asri, PAS's main goal was to defend and improve the political, economic and cultural lot of the Malay-Muslims above all else. In his speech at PAS's 17th congress he argued that none of the Alliance government's policies had actually improved the economic status of the Malays and Bumiputeras

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<sup>21</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, pp. 26, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Hasan Adli Arshat was born in 1929 in Bagan Datok, Perak. He was educated at Madrasah Darul 'Ulum. Prior to entering politics he worked as a journalist and wrote about issues related to Malay-Muslim concerns. He later joined PAS and was awarded the title *Panglima Jihad* (commander of jihad) at the 1958 PAS annual congress. In 1964, he was awarded the *Sri Pendidik* prize for Islamic literature at the Perak Islamic Teachers Conference. He travelled widely all over the world as a representative of the party, visiting India (1961) and Indonesia (1963) and taking part in the Afro-Asian Journalists Conference in Bandung (1963). In the 1970s, he grew further and further apart from Asri's leadership because of the corruption scandals surrounding the leader. During the 'Nasir crisis' in Kelantan in 1977-78, Adli supported Mohamad Nasir and opposed Asri Muda and Dato' Ishak Lotfi.

of the country. The picture of the Malays that he drew was one of a race almost on the verge of extinction:

*Di akui sendiri oleh pemimpin Perikatan bahawa sisa-sisa dasar kolonial yang membiarkan bangsa Melayu jauh tertinggal di belakang, maseh di-malkan di negara kita ini. Di akui seterusnya bahawa segala dasar dan usaha kerajaan sehingga tarikh ini tidak memadai dan tidak menchukupi untuk memuaskan kehendak dan idaman ra'ayat jelata terutama golongan Melayu dan Bumiputera lainnya. Mereka dapati diri bangsa Melayu seolah-olah seperti ayam mati kelaparan di kepok padi, seperti itek mati dahaga dalam ayer. Negara ma'amor begitu mewah begitu kaya, tetapi sebilangan besar ra'ayatnya tertindas malah terbiar dan tertinggal.*<sup>23</sup>

Asri Muda's Malay-centrism was born out of an anxiety to protect the existence of the Malay-Muslim constituency itself. After the boom and bust cycles of the 1950s and 1960s, the Malaysian economy seemed to be in danger of falling into a major slump with unemployment levels rising alarmingly high among the Malays in particular. Years of pro-cyclical fiscal expenditure had not been able to get the economy on a stable upturn trend, but instead made the Malay stake in the economy seem even more precarious.

Apart from the structural problems within the economy itself, the Malays were forced to contend with increased competition from the other communities. By 1970, the Malays (who numbered 4,886,912 citizens) made up less than half (46.8%) of the population of Malaysia (see Table 3.1). Apart from being reduced to a minority in the country, the Malays also began to realise that their economic standing had deteriorated since the time of independence. From

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<sup>23</sup> Translation: The leaders of the ruling Alliance have themselves admitted that the remnants of the old colonial policies of the past that were responsible for keeping the Malays so far behind are still at work in this country. They themselves admit that despite their efforts and policies they have not been able to improve the condition of the Malays and the other indigenous races in the country. Today when we look at the fate of the Malays we see that we have become like chickens that are dying of hunger in a field of rice, like ducks that are dying of thirst while surrounded by water. Our country is so rich, so prosperous, yet a large section of society remains oppressed, neglected and left behind (Asri Muda, speech at the 17th congress of PAS, 18 June 1971, p. 4).

1957-70 income inequality among all the major ethnic groups had grown, but the Malay community was particularly badly hit.

While class, rather than race, was the real reason for these discrepancies, it was nonetheless believed that the economic lot of the Malays was made worse because of the encroachment of the non-Malays. The overall level of Malay equity ownership in the country was also staggeringly small. As Jomo has noted, prior to 1969 Malays and so-called 'Malay interests' owned only 1.5% of all share capital of limited companies in the peninsula, while collective Chinese and Indian ownership accounted for 22.8% and 0.9% respectively.<sup>24</sup> The rest of the country's economy remained in the hands of foreign (i.e., Western) companies and conglomerates. Collectively, the Malays were behind the Chinese community as well as foreign capital interests in the country.

To complicate things further, it was also clear that by the late 1960s and early 1970s the Malay-Muslims were lagging far behind the non-Malays in practically every occupational field. The 1970 census showed that in key fields such as medicine, engineering and architecture, the Malays, who made up more than half of the country's population, were under-represented (see Table 3.2).

One reason the Malay-Muslims lagged so far behind was that the education system was seen as biased against them. From the time of independence, the Malaysian educational system was very much based on the model left behind by the British colonial authorities. English remained the medium of education in many high schools and all the institutions of higher education.

The Malays were lagging behind in the race for development and wealth accumulation, and Asri was also worried about the non-Malay communities that were growing more influential by the

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<sup>24</sup> Local branches of foreign incorporated companies owned 29.7%, non-residents owned 26.4% and foreign controlled companies based in Malaysia owned 6.0% of the share capital of limited companies in the Malay Peninsula in 1969. The federal and state governments owned 0.5% of total shares in limited companies. (Jomo Kwame Sundaram, *A Question of Class: Capital, the State and Uneven Development in Malaya*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 254.)

day. Many vernacular Chinese and Indian schools for the non-Malays did not follow the national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. In 1968, the Chinese guilds and educational lobby laid the foundations for Tunku Abdul Rahman College, a Chinese college for higher education. Chinese community leaders had also begun to campaign for a Chinese university, to be called Merdeka University. For Asri and the more conservative Malay-Muslim leaders, this was proof that the Malay-Muslims were still being treated like second-class citizens in their own country.

Asri's constant attacks on the UMNO-led government's record in the area of cultural and language development was one of the factors that put UMNO on the defensive and forced the government of the Tunku (and, later, Tun Razak) to act. In 1970, under pressure from PAS and the other defenders of the Malay language and culture, the government implemented the National Education Policy that made the promotion of the Malay language one of its key objectives. In 1971, Tun Razak followed this up with the *Kongres Kebudayaan Kebangsaan* (National Culture Congress) that paved the way for the Malaysian National Culture Policy which also privileged Malay culture and identity above others.

Looking at the Malaysian situation from a broader perspective, Asri Muda was keenly aware of the progress achieved elsewhere by Islamist movements and parties. He lamented the apparent inertia of the Islamist movement in Malaysia compared to the more spectacular and turbulent developments elsewhere in the Islamic world. The 1970s was a time when Islamist movements and governments the world over were embarking on a number of grand projects and programmes directly or indirectly shaped by the worldview and values of Islam. Developments in neighbouring countries showed that the forces of political Islam were on the move once again.

In Indonesia, the *Orde Baru* (New Order) regime of President Soeharto was faced with the demands of the Islamist parties and movements that played such a crucial role in the elimination of the PKI communists in the aftermath of the failed *coup* attempt in 1965. In the Philippines, the lot of the Moro Muslims of Mindanao improved somewhat when they formed the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1969 under the leadership of the

secular academic-turned-Islamist revolutionary Nur Misuari.<sup>25</sup> Their armed struggle against the central government in Manila was predicated on the calls for autonomy for the Moros in the south. The Moro war of liberation that began in 1972 focused the

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<sup>25</sup> The MNLF emerged at a time when the Moro liberation movement in the southern Philippines was in a state of crisis and turmoil. Other Moro liberation movements like the Moro Independence Movement (MIM), the Union of Islamic Forces and Organisations (UIFO) and the *Ansar El-Islam* (AEI) had developed and were operational by then, but none was strong enough to unite the Moros against the central government based in Manila and the Philippine armed forces. Most of these organisations were led by elderly members of the traditional Moro feudal and aristocratic élite. Finally, a group of radical leftist student leaders decided in 1969 to form the MNLF, led by Nur Misuari, a leftist Moro activist and academic who was previously a leader of the radical Marxist *Kabataan Makabayan* (Patriotic Youth) movement based in Manila. Other MNLF leaders such as Abdul Khayr Alonto, Otto Salahuddin and Ali Alibon were also student radicals who had become committed activists and militants. In 1969, the seven core MNLF leaders were sent to Malaysia for training. At first the MNLF did not have institutional support or any assistance from external sources, but in 1970, the Moro Congressman Raschid Lucman formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organisation (BMLO) by bringing together the first batch of Moro guerrillas who had been trained abroad. The MNLF used the BMLO as its foundation for expansion. With the help of political leaders like Raschid Lucman, Nur Misuari was able to travel overseas to meet other Muslim leaders such as Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, who promised to help train and develop the MNLF and its militia units. In time, MNLF members were sent to Libya for arms training. The Libyan government preferred to support leftist-Islamist movements like the MNLF, in keeping with its own profile as an 'Islamic-socialist' state. Libya sent arms and aid to MNLF guerrillas who were trained in Sabah before returning to engage with the armed forces of the Philippines. When President Ferdinand Marcos declared a state of martial law in 1972, the MNLF was at the forefront of the fighting and its units were engaged in conventional warfare against government forces. One reason for the MNLF's early success was its loose formation, which lacked a centralised command structure. This allowed local commanders to act on their own accord and to plan their own strategies. Working as separate units, MNLF forces scored a string of successes  
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attention of the globe on this forgotten corner of the Muslim world, and it soon attracted the support of other Islamic leaders like Muammar Ghadaffi of Libya.

Further afield in Central Asia, Africa and the Arab world it seemed as if the Muslim world was about to witness yet another struggle between the reactionary forces of the *status quo* and the resurgent forces of revolutionary Islam. In Afghanistan, public unrest had grown to such an extent that the regime of King Nadir Shah appeared to be tottering on the verge of collapse. (In 1973, Nadir Shah was deposed and a republic was declared.) In Iran, the government of the Shah had embarked on a number of projects to highlight the pre-Islamic aspects of Iranian culture and history. This culminated in the spectacular celebration of 2,500 years of Iranian civilisation held at the tomb of Cyrus the Great near Persepolis, presided by the 'Light of the Aryans', the Shah himself. However, these moves simply further alienated the Shah from his own people by emphasising the enormous gulf of culture and class that existed between the ruling élite and the masses.

Elsewhere in the Muslim world, new regimes were desperately trying to reinvent themselves and their societies according to an Islamist mould. In Libya, the regime of Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi had deposed the government of Sultan Idris in 1969 and

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in places like Lanao, Cotabato and Sulu. At the OIC conference meeting in Jeddah in 1975, the MNLF was finally given official recognition as the *de facto* representatives of the Moro Muslim people of the Philippines. However, the lack of structural coherence also meant that the MNLF was vulnerable to internal rifts and in-fighting. In 1978, its vice-chairman Abdul Khayr Alonto surrendered to government forces after he had been removed from the MNLF central committee by Nur Misuari. In 1984, another MNLF leader, al-Azhar-educated Hashim Salamat, broke away to form his own Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) because he could not agree with Nur Misuari's secular approach to politics and wanted the MNLF to shift closer to the global current of Islamist activism. Hashim Salamat's MILF viewed the MNLF as being too secular; he wanted to fight for an independent Moro Islamic state governed according to the *shariah* (W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, pp. 77-81).

was embarking on the creation of a new Islamist-socialist programme of social reconstruction guided by Ghadaffi's infamous 'Green Book'.<sup>26</sup> The 'Green Book revolution' in Libya, in turn, inspired the revolution in the Sudan led by Colonel Gaafar Muhammad Nimeiri, who had taken over the government in 1969. In Egypt, Libya and Sudan, it appeared as if the star of pan-Islamism was on the rise once again.

Set against this backdrop of social and political upheavals in the Muslim community world-wide, PAS was faced with the task of renewing its Islamist struggle. With Dr. Burhanuddin gone, PAS's approach to the task of creating an Islamic state became an increasingly narrow one. Under Asri, PAS eventually broke away from its old allies on the Malay left. The parting of the ways between PAS and the parties of the Socialist Front was made all the easier due to the rise of a new generation of Malay socialist leaders like Kassim Ahmad,<sup>27</sup> who injected the struggle of PRM with the discourse of

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<sup>26</sup> Colonel Muammar Ghadaffi finally launched the '*jamahiriyah*' (people's revolution) in Libya in March 1977. The country's name was changed to the 'Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriyah'. Working according to the economic policy formulated in his *Green Book*, Ghadaffi later turned the country into a decentralised people's socialist collective where workers were encouraged to take control of factories and businesses. Private retail trade was wiped out, and citizens and workers committees took over local government. Ghadaffi also promoted his brand of 'socialist Islam' and attacked the *ulama*, whom he regarded as being backward and reactionary. The *ulama*, in turn, attacked Ghadaffi's version of socialist Islam as being *bida'h*.

<sup>27</sup> Socialist leader Kassim Ahmad was born on 9 September 1933 in Kedah. He received most of his education in Malaysia and studied at Universiti Malaya. In 1962, he left to study and lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Upon his return to Malaya he taught at the Abdullah Munshi School in Penang (in 1966). He was also known as a writer and poet. He contributed to a number of prominent radical Malay publications and his poetry was deeply influenced by both the realist school and notions of class struggle. He joined PRM, and in 1966 became its president while the party's first leader Ahmad Boestamam was in detention. As the new PRM president, Kassim Ahmad changed its name to *Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia* (PSRM), which adopted scientific socialism as the *continued p. 236*

scientific socialism, something which Asri regarded as anathema to PAS and its Islamist ideology.

Left on its own, PAS was still faced with the task of challenging UMNO. Asri realised that this would not be an easy task. Although his own rise to power within PAS took place in the same year that the Tunku was forced to resign from his post as UMNO president, it could not be said that the conservative-nationalist party had grown substantially weaker as a result of its internal leadership crisis. While some prominent UMNO leaders (like Dr. Mahathir Mohamad) were removed from the party and had subsequently spoken out against the leadership of UMNO on PAS's platform,<sup>28</sup> UMNO remained unsinkable. What was more, Malaysia was made even stronger because of the creation of new law enforcement bodies, such as the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in 1971, and the changes made to the constitution in the wake of the 1969 communal crisis. The Sedition Act of 1971, the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1971 and the Elections (Amendment) Act of 1972 made things even more difficult for PAS by prohibiting the use of religious symbols by political parties.

The Malaysian government was also able to weather the storms of political crises better than the governments of neighbouring countries. While Indonesia under Soeharto and the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos seemed to be struggling, Malaysia was functioning with all its political institutions intact. Asri and the other PAS leaders watched in amazement as UMNO recuperated

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main pillar of its ideology. For this, it was attacked by the UMNO-led government and accused of being communist and atheistic in its outlook. Kassim Ahmad finally stepped down from the post of PSRM president in 1980, when the post was given to Kampo Radjo.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was temporarily kicked out of UMNO after his open confrontation with the Tunku in 1969. During a by-election in Kampar, Selangor in 1970, Dr. Mahathir actually spoke against the UMNO leadership on a PAS platform (although he never joined the Islamist party). (Fadzil Noor, 'Mahathir Dihantui Mimpi', speech at Mergong, Kedah, 25 March 1999.)

and consolidated itself under the leadership of aristocratic leader Tun Abdul Razak.<sup>29</sup>

Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein became Malaysia's Prime Minister on 22 September 1970. Earlier, he had served as the nation's first Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister (earning him the honorary title of the father of the modern Malaysian Armed Forces) when he was only 35. His contemporary at Raffles College and in England, Lee Kuan Yew, who was a year younger, became Prime Minister of a self-governing Singapore in 1959 at the age of 35. Though Cabinet appointments and dismissals were his prerogative, Tun Razak was sensitive to the needs of those who had risen to the top of the political ladder under the Tunku, such as Khir Johari. Realising that he needed to remove some of the more influential figures in UMNO, Tun Razak sought the advice of senior UMNO leaders such as Datuk Wan Ahmad Omar, who was

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<sup>29</sup> Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussein was born on 11 March 1922 in Pekan, Pahang. He was a member of the Malay aristocracy and his father served as the personal advisor to the Sultan of Pahang. In his youth, Tun Razak studied at the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) and then at Raffles College, Singapore. He inherited his father's title of *Orang Kaya Indera Shahbandar* of Pahang in 1930, becoming the youngest *Menteri Besar* (Chief Minister) of the kingdom. In 1939, he joined the Malay Administrative Service which was part of the colonial bureaucracy. During World War II, he joined the *Wataniah* (Malay Regiment) of the British-led Force 136, and rose to the rank of captain. In 1947-50 he continued his studies in England. There he met Tunku Abdul Rahman. It was Tun Razak who persuaded the Tunku to accept the nomination for the post of UMNO leader and he was the Tunku's most loyal supporter and confidant throughout his career. In 1950, he returned to Malaya and became the leader of UMNO Youth. After the 1955 election he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister. In 1959, he became Rural Development Minister; in this position he used the tactics of the Emergency to help rationalise development in the rural areas. He was also responsible for the Razak Report on Education (1955) which pointed out the chronic problems faced by Malays in the field of education. After the crisis that followed the 1969 elections, Tun Razak headed the National Operations Council (NOC) that ruled the country during the Emergency of 1969-71.

soon to be his principal private secretary. Wan Ahmad, a Cambridge-educated civil servant from Kedah knew Khir Johari and the others quite well and was able to help Tun Razak with his policy decisions. Tun Razak appointed Khir Johari as Malaysia's ambassador to Washington. In the end, Tun Razak's Cabinet was dominated by three key personalities: himself, his deputy Tun Dr. Ismail and Home Affairs Minister Ghazali Shafie.

Those who expected a revolutionary change within UMNO after the departure of the Tunku were sorely disappointed as the transfer of power within UMNO from the Tunku to Tun Razak was just a change of party figurehead. The fundamental values and principles upon which UMNO had been built remained intact, and were further sedimented under the leadership of Tun Razak.

One reason why a major change of attitude and values did not take place within UMNO was because of the way the Tunku had helped to bolster the neo-feudal culture of the modern *kerajaan* when he was in power. The Tunku's period of rule (1957-70) was an era when traditional conceptions of authority and power based upon *adat*-ordained notions and values such as *taat setia* (absolute loyalty), *kuasa* (power), *daulat* (authority) and *derhaka* (treason) held sway in the political terrain of Malay politics. The reformist debates and anti-feudal critiques levelled at the institution of the *kerajaan* by UMNO radicals such as Mahathir Mohamad remained as insistent as ever, but during the Tunku's time a new factor tipped the balance of the debate in favour of the traditional order of things: the apparatus of the modern nation-state.

With the development of the modern Malaysian nation-state there also emerged a new class of Malay élite, namely the new breed of 'statist-capitalists' drawn from the upper echelons of Malay society who were the ones best prepared to reap the benefits of the postcolonial government's lopsided development policies.<sup>30</sup> These Malay élite found that not only could their *kerajaan*-oriented political culture be adapted to new institutional and political circumstances, but by grafting the modern institutional tools of the

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<sup>30</sup> Hua Wu Yin, *Class and Communalism in Malaysia*, Jomo K. S., *A Question of Class*.

nation-state with the traditional *adat* culture of the *kerajaan*, they could further perpetuate and extend the scope and magnitude of their power.

Keen to demonstrate that he was indeed a defender of Malay interests, Tun Razak initiated a series of policy reforms calculated to address the problem of Malay 'economic weakness' and marginalisation within the country. His main concern was to ensure the unity of the nation, in particular the Malay community. To secure these objectives, the UMNO-led government had formed a number of state agencies such as the *Majlis Amanah Rakyat* (MARA), Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA), Malaysian Rubber Development Corporation (MARDEC) and the *Perbadanan Nasional* (PERNAS) designed to help the underprivileged Malays of the rural interior through a series of state-sponsored agricultural subsidies, private loans and rural development programmes. Like the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) that had been set up in the 1960s, these state-sponsored marketing bodies eventually developed into state monopolies that were poorly managed, corrupt and inefficient.<sup>31</sup>

The establishment of these modern state institutions did not alter the fact that the residual feudal mentality of the Malay élite was at work, for at the core of Tun Razak's political thinking was the traditional feudal ideology of the *kerajaan*, which regarded the ruler as patron and protector. Tun Razak set about his task with the stated agenda of 'protecting' the interests of the Malays whom he and his contemporary generation of royal and aristocratic élite regarded as being somehow fundamentally 'weaker' in both body and mind than their non-Malay counterparts. This diagnosis was laid out in

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<sup>31</sup> Jomo has argued that bodies such as MARDEC, RISDA, FAMA and the LPN were often 'inefficient and corrupt', and that 'such bureaucratic machinery typically ended up enhancing monopolistic and monopsonistic tendencies because of the financial backing and authorities they received from the State. By thus reducing competitiveness within the marketing hierarchy, they inadvertently served to increase market margins, economic inefficiency and corruption at the expense of peasant producers, consumers and tax-payers.' (Jomo K. S., *A Question of Class*, pp. 41-42).

the book *Revolusi Mental* (Mental Revolution), published by UMNO in 1971 to coincide with the rise of the new élite generation. The weakness within the Malay community, the authors argued, was best treated by abandoning certain 'unproductive' cultural traits and cultivating a culture of loyalty and patronage. This approach merely consolidated the already pivotal position of the political rulers within Malay society and entrenched the feudal mentality that the élite were keen to cultivate even further. So strong was this paternalistic attitude among some sections of the UMNO leadership that *Kaum Ibu* was even giving out free recipes to tell the people what they should eat.<sup>32</sup>

Under the post-1969 leadership of Tun Razak the nation underwent a process of nation-building and national reconciliation. Within this new national framework UMNO was to provide the mass base of political support for the government. As Means has argued, UMNO was 'to be, much more than before, the foundation of the political system while all the other parties in the ruling coalition were to provide peripheral support'.<sup>33</sup> Linked to this was the creation of an 'élite accommodation system' developed to bring about a compromise between UMNO, MCA, MIC and other parties in the ruling coalition. This eventually led to the develop-

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<sup>32</sup> Farish A. Noor, 'When Porridge Meant Votes', *New Straits Times*, 9 February 2001. In 1972, the *Jawatankuasa Pelajaran dan Kebajikan Wanita Umno Malaysia* (Education and Welfare Committee of UMNO Women's Section) issued their five-year programme under the heading '*Pembentukan Masyarakat Dinamik: Tanggong Jawab Wanita*' (Development of a Dynamic Society: Women's Responsibility). The document outlined the main objectives of *Kaum Ibu*'s five-year plan, which included better education, health care and social welfare programmes. The document also contained a number of recipes to help rural Malay housewives prepare cheap and nutritious meals for their families. By today's standards the recipes would be considered a health risk, considering the amount of sugar and saturated fat-rich coconut milk that was prescribed. (*Jawatankuasa Pelajaran dan Kebajikan Wanita Umno Malaysia, Pembentukan Masyarakat Dinamik: Tanggong Jawab Wanita*. Petaling Jaya: Perchetakan Adabi, 1972.)

<sup>33</sup> Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation*, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 20.

ment of a national ideology encapsulated in the broad-based *rukunegara* (national principles).<sup>34</sup> With the formulation of the *rukunegara* principles, Tun Razak's government began the process of domesticating the political space of the country: in time, a ban was imposed on public discussion of 'sensitive issues' like race, religion and the status of the Malays as the *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) of Malaysia.

Tun Razak also worked to rectify the damage that had been done to UMNO's image by the successive attacks on the party leadership and its record of defending Malay interests. Affirmative action and positive discrimination policies were soon implemented under the aegis of the New Economic Policy (NEP) to improve the economic lot of the majority Malay-Muslim community (and in the process further strengthen UMNO's role as the 'protector' of Malay rights and privileges).<sup>35</sup>

Asri Muda and the PAS leaders therefore realised that the party's work was far from done and that the struggle was far from over. The state of Emergency declared after the riots of May 1969 only came to an end in February 1971. For nearly two years, the parliamentarians of the Islamist party were not able to make their presence felt on the national political scene. Now the party was

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<sup>34</sup> The five main pillars of the *rukunegara* are: (1) belief in God, (2) loyalty to king and country, (3) upholding the constitution, (4) rule of law and (5) good behaviour and morality. Means notes that 'this state of a national ideology was designed to assert that fundamental agreements that had been the result of inter-ethnic bargaining were not to be challenged in the ongoing process of politics' (Ibid., p. 13).

<sup>35</sup> The NEP, launched in 1970, was meant to achieve two important goals: the eradication of poverty irrespective of race, and the restructuring of the Malaysian economy so that economic differences were no longer identified with race. Jomo has noted that 'as it was officially elaborated, the first poverty eradication prong of the NEP was certainly not to be achieved by eliminating class exploitation. The established interests of the property owning classes were respected, at least in principle. Efforts to improve the lot of wage earners, beyond employment promotion measures, were virtually non-existent. The measures for poverty eradication that were announced did not offend existing propertied interests, and hence no land reform for example.' For a further critique of the NEP, see Jomo K. S., *A Question of Class*, pp. 256-260.

forced to revive itself once again and to take on the might of the UMNO-led federal government that had all the resources of the state and the mainstream media at its disposal. (Asri never forgot that when the Alliance had offered the development package worth RM546 million to the people of Kelantan in 1969, all he and the party had to counter it with were pious teachings and *nasihat*.)

Among the first alterations made under Asri Muda's presidency were changes to the name and official status of the organisation. In 1971, the *Persatuan Islam Se-Malaya* changed its name to the *Parti Islam Se-Malaya* (PAS), making it a political party both in name and in its constitution. Its orientation would henceforth be party-political and its parameters of activity confined to the political sphere. The goal would be to win political power through the democratic process in order to be in a position to create an Islamic state in Malaysia. These changes were not only practical but necessary as PAS now found itself confronted with a number of new Islamist movements and organisations led by a new generation of young Malay Islamist activists as well as its traditional nemesis UMNO.

### *PAS's Response to the Emerging Islamist Movements of the 1970s*

Throughout the 1970s, PAS was confronted by opponents on two fronts. On the one hand, there was its traditional adversary, the conservative-nationalist Malay-Muslim UMNO led by Tun Razak. On the other hand, there was a new generation of popular, urban-based Islamist movements under the leadership of highly educated and articulate Islamist leaders such as Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad and Anwar Ibrahim. Among the more prominent and influential of these movements were the *Tablighi Jama'at*, *Darul Arqam* and ABIM.

The *Tablighi Jama'at* was a transnational Islamist missionary movement that had originated in India. Although in terms of its outlook and approach to Islam the movement was widely regarded as being conservative and fundamentalist, it attracted little attention from the Malaysian authorities because it was viewed as being apolitical and harmless. It managed to attract a considerable following from Malay-Muslim blue-collar workers in the cities and was known for its success in reforming drug addicts

and petty criminals. For this reason it even managed to secure the tacit support and patronage of the state. The *Tablighi*'s intimate links to the Deobandi school (which later spawned the *Taliban* movement in Afghanistan) gave little cause for concern at that stage.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> By the 1970s, the *Tablighi Jama'at* was well established in Malaysia. Most members were ordinary Malay male blue-collar workers from the inner cities and industrial zones. The movement was particularly successful in attracting Malay drug addicts and petty criminals and reforming them through their missionary activities. That, coupled with *Tablighi Jama'at*'s apparent non-political nature, accounted for the lack of government repression against the movement. The origins of the *Tablighi Jama'at* go back to the Indian Deobandi movement started by Maulana Muhammad Qassim Nanotawi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi at the Deoband seminary in 1867. Like the Deobandis, the Tablighis were conservative fundamentalists inspired by the reformists of the Wahhabi movement from Saudi Arabia. Unlike the Deobandis who were educationists, the Tablighis were missionary-activists who sought to transform Muslim society and bring Muslims back to the path of true Islam. The movement was formed in the late 1920s by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (d. 1944), whose family was closely linked to the Deobandi leadership and its sister school, the Mazahiru'l-Ulum in Saharanpur. The *Tablighi Jama'at* was formed at a time of intense rivalry and hostility between Muslims and Hindus in India. The movement sought to purify Indian Islam of Hindu and Christian influence, and it tried to win back Muslims who had been converted by the Hindu revivalist movements in the country. For this reason, it was often criticised and attacked by radical Hindu fundamentalist groups who regarded it as a subversive force that intended to weaken the Hindu community from within. To deflect criticism from its activities, the *Tablighi Jama'at* rejected the use of violence and opted to remain apolitical. Unlike the Deobandis, its members avoided direct confrontation with Hindu or Christian groups. Metcalf notes that the *Tablighi Jama'at* could be compared to the Western Alcoholics Anonymous movement that started around the same time: both organisations sought to reform their followers from within and sought to improve their moral qualities while regulating their public behaviour. Rejecting politics and political activism of any kind, the movement emphasised its *sukun* (peaceful), passive and gradualist approach. Members were expected to take part in communal activities and join in their missionary efforts. They were expected to spend one night a week, one *continued p. 244*

The *Darul Arqam* movement was formed by the self-styled 'Sheikh' Imam Ashaari Muhammad al-Tamimi in 1968. It began as a study group among Muslim scholars, many of whom were university lecturers and academics. In time it evolved into a Sufi-inspired alternative lifestyle movement very much centred around the charismatic personality of its founder. Its activities were based

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weekend a month, 40 days a year and 120 days at least once in their lives with the members of the movement. This was seen as part of their *jihad* (struggle) for the sake of God and their religion. The movement spread all over the world from Europe to Asia and was held together by its close internal linkages and networks. In time it also penetrated many guilds, business communities and élite networks. In most cases, however, its members were ordinary Muslim males from the lower levels of society. The movement has always been able to attract such followers by its emphasis on the egalitarian ethos of Islam. By the end of the 20th century the regular congregation of Tablighis in Raiwind, Pakistan and Tungi, Bangladesh, could attract several million followers, making it the second biggest gathering of Muslims after the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Like the Deobandis, the Tablighis also had an ambiguous relationship with Sufism, rejecting many traditional practices and beliefs of the Indian Sufi *tariqa* on the grounds that they were contaminated by alien Hindu practices and ideas, but also sought to use Sufi methods and rituals when it suited them. Metcalf (p. 11) notes that 'among the Tablighis the holiness associated with the Sufi *Pir* was in many ways defused into the charismatic body of the *jama'at* so that the missionary group itself became a channel for divine intervention'. Like the Deobandis, the *Tablighi Jama'at* attempted to reproduce the strong *Pir-Murid* bonds in the Sufi *tariqa* within its own organisational structure, making it a very strong and intimately linked organisational network able to straddle enormous geographical distances. The Tablighis also adapted another feature of the Indian Sufi *tariqa*: the (sometimes extreme) veneration of the Prophet Muhammad and his life history. In *Tablighi Jama'at* circles, *Hadith* and *Seerah* literature concerning the Prophet was, and remains, of great importance. (See Muhammad Khalid Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, Leiden: Brill, 2000; Barbara D. Metcalf, *Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis and Talibs*, ISIM Papers IV, Leiden: International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), 2002.)

at Madinah Al Arqam Saiyyidina Abu Bakar As-Siddiq, Sungai Penchala near Kuala Lumpur. The movement's aim was to create an alternative model of an ideal Islamic society organised and managed according to the standards and norms set by the Prophet Muhammad himself and his *sahabat* (companions).

The movement grew in size until its membership expanded to tens of thousands. In terms of its philosophical and ideological orientation, *Darul Arqam* was an Islamic revivalist movement whose activities and approach to Islam were very much couched in terms of a discourse of authenticity. Its leaders hoped to bring their followers (and the rest of society, by extension) back to the golden age of Islam by following a literal interpretation of the *Hadith* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Its followers dressed and lived according to Ustaz Ashaari's interpretation of the *Sunnah*. The men wore green robes and turbans while the women wore black *hijab* all the time. The movement practised *pardah* and its female members were kept out of public view as much as possible. Ustaz Ashaari also encouraged his followers to take up 'authentic' Islamic practices and pastimes such as horse-riding, sword-fighting and archery. The modern lifestyle and practices such as television, radio, popular entertainment and other forms of 'hedonistic' culture were frowned upon. The movement set up co-operatives, self-help groups and links with other Islamic movements in the country and beyond. At one stage, *Darul Arqam* was even accused of being secretly funded by the Saudi government in its effort to eradicate Shia influence in the Malay archipelago.<sup>37</sup>

Such controversies helped to boost the group's image and appeal. The *Arqam* movement was always under the control of its charismatic leader, who built a personality and leadership cult around himself. Other leaders, such as Ustaz Mokhtar Yaakub and Ustaz Akhbar Anang, who dared to challenge the dominant role and status of Ustaz Ashaari soon found themselves kicked out of the movement. By the 1970s, Ustaz Ashaari was widely regarded as one of the most powerful, influential (if not controversial) *ulama* in the country.

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<sup>37</sup> *Tamadun*, August 1999, p. 38.

The other popular Islamist movement which emerged in the 1970s was the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, ABIM) formed on 6 August 1971 by a number of Malay university student activists from the National Association of Muslim Students led by Razali Nawawi, Anwar Ibrahim and Siddiq Fadhil.<sup>38</sup> (The movement was formally registered on 17 August 1972.) ABIM's first president was Razali Nawawi, who was elected at the movement's first general meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Its secretary-general was Anwar Ibrahim.<sup>39</sup> At the beginning, the

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<sup>38</sup> ABIM was launched at the 10th general assembly of the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students (PKPIM) at Dewan al-Malek Faisal, Petaling Jaya on 3–6 August 1971.

<sup>39</sup> Anwar Ibrahim was born on 10 August 1947 in Ceruk Tok' Kun, Bukit Mertajam, Penang. His early education was at Stockwell School, Bukit Mertajam. He then studied at MCKK from 1960–66. From 1968–71 he was a student at Universiti Malaya, where he read Malay studies. In 1968, he became the president of the National Association of Muslim Students as well as the Universiti Malaya Muslim Students Association. In 1969, he became the president of Universiti Malaya Malay Language Society. While at Universiti Malaya he and many of his fellow radicals came under the influence of Islamist thinker Prof. Syed Naquib al-Attas. Anwar developed a reputation as a staunch defender of Malay interests and Islam. As a student activist he organised and took part in many anti-government demonstrations on issues ranging from Malay rights and privileges to matters of international concern such as the Palestinian issue and American involvement in the Vietnam War. Anwar also condemned the policies of Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman on the grounds that the Tunku had not done enough to protect and promote Malay-Muslim interests. Together with other students and a number of older backers from both the public and private sectors, he helped to form ABIM in 1971 and in 1974 became its president. In the same year he was detained under the ISA (until 1976) for his part in the student demonstrations in support of farmers and peasants in Kedah. His activism and his detention earned him the admiration of many Islamist groups in Malaysia and abroad. Anwar held the post of ABIM president until 1982 when he left the movement and joined UMNO. As an UMNO politician, Anwar gained support from his followers in ABIM as well as UMNO members who supported the government's Islamisation programme. Anwar held the posts of Junior  
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organisation had only 40 members, but as it developed the movement became centred around the dominant personality of Anwar Ibrahim, who took over as the movement's second president in 1974 (prompting the Malaysian academic Jomo K. Sundaram to refer to ABIM as the 'Anwar Bin Ibrahim Movement').<sup>40</sup>

As the president of ABIM and the *Majlis Belia Malaysia* (Malaysian Youth Council, MBM), Anwar Ibrahim soon made an impact in Malay-Muslim circles by championing a number of controversial causes. One of his first public confrontations with authority came when he challenged Youth and Sports Minister Ali Haji Ahmad over the latter's suggestion that Malaysian students being sent overseas for further studies should be instructed on how to use condoms so that they would not contract any venereal diseases while abroad. Anwar and the other ABIM leaders argued that such a move was tantamount to encouraging Malay-Muslim students to engage in free sex, and as a result of the public outrage the minister was forced to back down.<sup>41</sup> Soon the movement was championing a number of other causes ranging from the status of the Malay language to the role of the US in Southeast Asia.

Intellectually, Anwar Ibrahim and the ABIM leaders were very much influenced by the ideas of Malaysian Islamist scholar Prof. Syed Naquib al-Attas. Chandra has noted that Anwar's thinking was also shaped by the teachings of Ab'ul Al'aa Maudoodi of Pakistan, the founder of the *Jama'at-e Islami*, Hassan al-Banna of Egypt, the founder-leader of the *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin*, Malek Ben Nabi of Algeria and American Islamist intellectual Ismail Raji Faruqi.<sup>42</sup>

In this respect, ABIM leaders were intellectually more open and dynamic than the PAS leaders. The movement's leaders were

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Minister (1982-83), Sports and Culture Minister (1983-85), Rural Development and Agriculture Minister (1985-86), Education Minister (1986-90), Finance Minister (1990-98) and Deputy Prime Minister (1993-98). By the late 1990s, he was widely regarded as the successor to the Prime Minister.

<sup>40</sup> *Tamadun*, August 1999, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Tamadun*, November 1998, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, p. 54 n. 23.

Malay-Muslim students from the liberal arts faculties of local universities such as Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). While ABIM's leaders were university graduates trained in the social sciences and modern modes of organisation and planning, the middle- and low-ranking PAS leaders were still drawn from those with more traditional forms of *pondok* and *madrasah* education. Both ABIM and PAS had already begun to promote activities such as *usrah*, *dakwah* programmes and anti-vice campaigns, but ABIM was far better organised and professional in all of these areas than PAS.

The changes taking place in the local campuses were not unique to Malaysia. In neighbouring Indonesia, a new generation of Islamist student-activists such as Nurcholish Madjid and Imaduddin Abdulrahim was also coming to the fore. The Indonesian students were rallying to the banner of the 'Salman movement' sweeping across the campuses of Indonesia, though the orientation and practices of the Salman movement were far more open and eclectic than ABIM's. On the Malaysian campuses, however, ABIM's impact was clear for all to see: the organisation's members were among the few who did not smoke and who dressed according to Islamic standards of decency and modesty. The young ABIM members were also reminded not to be in close contact with women, and to avoid shaking hands with them. They also encouraged their parents and the elders around them to follow their example. In time, the policing of sartorial and behavioural norms became one of the defining features of ABIM.<sup>43</sup>

ABIM's aim was to spearhead the struggle for Islamic reform and revival in the country, and to work towards 'Islamisation from within'. The movement sponsored a number of *pondok* and *madrasah* all over the country, such as Madrasah Sri ABIM at Kuala Ketil, Kedah and Ma'ahad Tarbiyyah Islamiah at Pokok Sena. It also established its own private school called Yayasan Anda. Like

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed account of the other social changes in Malaysia's campuses and society at large as a result of the activism of ABIM, see C. N. al-Afghani, *Rakyat Makin Matang*, Memali: Corak Memali Enterprise, 1999, pp. 9–11.

*Darul Arqam*, ABIM sought to create an Islamic *society* instead of trying to build an Islamic *state*. ABIM's leaders condemned secularism *per se* and other 'Western' ideologies that they regarded as antithetical to Islam, and called for the control and purification of Muslim culture in the interest of creating a healthy Islamic society. The movement constantly monitored developments in countries like Afghanistan, Palestine and the Philippines, and it eventually established links with other Islamist movements in the neighbouring countries of the region, such as *Muhamadijiah* in Indonesia. In time, it expanded its network to include movements like the *Jama'at-e Islami* of the Indian subcontinent and the *Ikhwan'ul Muslimin* of the Gulf region.

ABIM's involvement in international affairs did not stop at mere speeches and propaganda. The movement also took proactive steps in many cases. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, ABIM organised a number of mass meetings and demonstrations against the Soviets. As the leader of ABIM, Anwar Ibrahim travelled to Pakistan to deliver RM50,000 worth of aid to the *mujahideen* and collected additional information to put more pressure on the Malaysian government to act against the Soviets.<sup>44</sup> At the peak of the Afghan conflict, ABIM demanded that the Malaysian government send troops to Afghanistan to help the *mujahideen* in their struggle against the Soviets and their allies. In 1980, ABIM also organised demonstrations and rallies against 'fanatical Hindu aggression' in India in the wake of the rise of the BJP and RSS. Once again, ABIM applied pressure on both the Indian and Malaysian governments, and demanded that the latter use whatever diplomatic means available to defend the rights of Muslims in India.<sup>45</sup>

The emergence of movements like *Darul Arqam* and ABIM in Malaysia was symptomatic of the changes taking place in Malay-Muslim society as a whole. Thanks to the Islamisation race between UMNO and PAS that had begun in the 1960s, Islamic influences had penetrated even deeper into the political, economic

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<sup>44</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge and ISEAS, 1997, p. 79.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

and cultural environment of the Malays. The increase of Islamic discourse in Malay-Muslim society meant that Malay politics had begun to shift to a more Islamist discursive register. The 1970s witnessed not only the development of new Islamic movements, but also the first signs of popular Islamic resurgence in the form of dress, social norms, modes of communication and literature. Ironically, it was the contestation between PAS and UMNO that helped to create these new Islamist movements.

The appearance of Islamist movements and organisations like ABIM, the Islamic Representative Council (IRC)<sup>46</sup> and *Darul Arqam*

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<sup>46</sup> The IRC was a semi-underground student activist movement that first appeared on the campuses in the late 1970s. During the early stages of Islamist student activism from 1969–76, Muslim student movements on local campuses were dominated by Malay-Muslim students from the liberal arts faculties. This situation only began to change in 1977–78 when the leadership of the local and international university student movements switched to Malay-Muslim scholars from the science stream, whose approach was more dogmatic and militant. These students eventually formed IRC, which adopted a more covert approach. Like ABIM, the IRC was deeply influenced by the ideas of overseas Islamist thinkers and ideologues like Ab'ul Al'aa Maudoodi and Hassan al-Banna as well as contemporary Islamist intellectuals such as Khurshid Ahmad and Ismail Raji Faruqi. Little is known about the leadership, membership and organisational structure of IRC, which organised itself in cells to penetrate the local campuses and other organisations. These cells were often very small, with 5–12 members. Membership of the cells was often kept secret from other members of the movement, making detection and control by the authorities very difficult. The educational background of the IRC members played an important role in determining their outlook and interpretation of Islam. Coming from the predominantly science stream, IRC members had a more positivist worldview and a more pragmatic approach to politics. They wanted to see immediate and concrete results from their efforts, and their approach to Islam was likewise focused more on external rituals and practice. They adopted the view that the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia had to lead to visible changes in behaviour and attitude of the Muslims, and were keen to emphasise the importance of dress, personal morality and behavioural norms in the public sphere. The IRC also took a harder line against the government than ABIM, openly accusing it of being '*kafir*', *continued p. 251*

was among the earliest signs that the UMNO-led state's developmentalist ideology was losing its appeal to the Malay-Muslims. In an ironic twist of fate, the UMNO-led government had sowed the seeds of its own decline by creating these educational institutions that it could not effectively control. While the government could prove its worth by building such institutions of higher education for the benefit of the Malays, it could not control what was happening in them. While such 'radicals' (such as Syed Sheikh al-Hadi and the *Kaum Muda* in the 1920s and 1930s) had always existed in Malay society, by the 1970s they had the opportunity to spread their message to a captive audience (i.e. the students) who would rally behind their banner.

Confronted by the challenge represented by UMNO as well as the new Islamist movements like *Darul Arqam* and ABIM, PAS leaders were forced to react. Both *Darul Arqam* and ABIM were highly popular movements that attracted thousands of new followers because of the appeal of their charismatic leaders (Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad and Anwar Ibrahim). These movements also developed their own networks of schools, co-operative ventures, health centres, training and recruitment camps and other auxiliary institutions. PAS could only sit and watch as its own share of the Malay-Muslim constituency was eaten away by these *arriviste* Islamist movements that had only just popped up on the local political landscape. To add to its woes, Asri Muda and other PAS leaders could not prevent many party members from joining groups like ABIM.

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'secular' and 'Westernised', and called for a radical break from the political system inherited from the colonial era. The IRC condemned ABIM for its comparatively pacifist and gradualist approach, and accused ABIM of 'diluting' the message of Islam by trying to promote inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between the various ethnic and religious communities in the country. (For a further discussion of IRC and its activities, see Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 'Identity Construction, National Formation and Islamic Revivalism', in Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation States*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997, pp. 215-216; and Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students*, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Press, 1987, pp. 29-41.)

Oddly enough, PAS under Asri Muda did not respond to the challenge of *Darul Arqam*, ABIM and UMNO by raising the stakes in the Islamisation race. Instead, its president Asri Muda fell back on his calls for the defence of Malay rights and privileges. As soon as he became party president, Asri began to pepper the political discourse of PAS with themes and issues related to the Malay cause. These included the defence of the Malay language, the role of the Malay Sultans as guarantors of Malay interests, Malay land rights, Malay settlements, the place of Malay culture in the construction of the national culture and the special status of the religion of the Malays, Islam.

Asri Muda grew concerned that PAS should deliver the goods it had promised, and was keen to place the party in a position where it could live up to its role of defender of Malay-Muslim interests. This was becoming increasingly difficult as the victorious UMNO-led government chalked up more and more successes in the fields of both development and Islamisation. During the First and Second Malaysia Plans (1960–70 and 1970–75 respectively), the government had developed the economy at an amazing rate. GDP growth was 6.5% during the First Malaysia Plan and 7.1% during the Second. Furthermore, under Tun Razak, UMNO was already boasting that in 1970–73 it had managed to facilitate the conversion of 75,000 Malaysian citizens to Islam thanks to its own Islamisation policy.<sup>47</sup>

PAS was being beaten on all fronts, and UMNO leaders felt that the time was right to neutralise the Islamist party by bringing it into the Alliance coalition. Secret discussions were conducted among the UMNO leaders in December 1972 and soon afterwards Asri was approached by Tun Razak himself.<sup>48</sup> Asri agreed with UMNO's suggestion and, in a move that caught most party

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<sup>47</sup> The highest rate of conversions to Islam was in Sabah, then under Chief Minister Tun Mustapha Harun.

<sup>48</sup> Tun Razak chaired a secret meeting with UMNO leaders on 22 December 1972 to discuss the possibility of an alliance with PAS. On 28 December, Asri Muda met with Tun Razak at the Prime Minister's office in Kuala Lumpur to finalise the details of the agreement. Asri made his public declaration afterwards and PAS officially entered the Alliance four days later, on 1 January 1973.

members unprepared, Asri announced on 1 January 1973 that PAS would join the ruling UMNO-led Alliance on both federal and state levels.

*Back to the Malay Struggle:  
PAS's Entry into Barisan Nasional under Asri Muda*

*Sesuaikanlah tari dengan gendang yang sedang dipalu dalam negara kita ini. Walaupun dalam suasana yang kurang mengembirakan, namun kesempatan yang masih ada ini memberi peluang bagi kita untuk bergerak mengembangkan sayap kepartian kita.<sup>49</sup>*

Asri Muda,  
Speech delivered at the PAS Congress of 1971

PAS entered the UMNO-led Alliance at a time when the odds were in favour of the ruling coalition. UMNO had shown that it was able to adapt to changes in both the local and international political arenas, and this new pragmatic approach was summed up in Tun Razak's '*realisma baru*' (new realism) philosophy.<sup>50</sup> External variables were also on the side of the government, it seems. Later in 1973, Anwar Sadat's decision to send Egyptian forces into Israel brought about the Yom Kippur War and sparked off the world's first major oil crisis which momentarily boosted the Malaysian economy.

Asri Muda's decision to bring his party into the Alliance was controversial and problematic to say the least. By taking this

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<sup>49</sup> Translation: We need to adapt ourselves to the rhythm of the times. Although the circumstances of the present are not entirely to our liking, the opportunity remains for us to take advantage of the present circumstances so that we can expand our activities. (Mohammad Asri Muda, 'Uchapan Resmi Konggres PAS ke XVII, p. 20.)

<sup>50</sup> As early as 1971, Tun Razak had spoken about the need for a new approach to politics. In the political manifesto of May 1971, he summed up this approach with the catchphrase *realisma baru* (new realism). (Abdul Razak, *Manipol, 11 Mei 1971*, Petaling Jaya: UMNO Headquarters Central Printing Press, 1971.)

important step, Asri was not only breaking away from the policies of the previous generation of PAS leaders; he was also taking a calculated risk intended to strengthen the position and standing of PAS in the long run. As Kessler has argued, joining the Alliance was consistent with PAS's long-term goal of 'weakening UMNO by denying it popular Malay support, to make their own party irresistible to (the Malays) as a prospective coalition partner and thereby even to make a hostage UMNO adopt PAS policies as its own'.<sup>51</sup> With the entry of PAS into the ruling coalition, the political terrain of the country was significantly altered: there was no longer any Malay-Muslim opposition party to speak of, leaving the Chinese-dominated DAP to lead the cluster of small parties left outside in the political wilderness.<sup>52</sup> (The Malay leftist parties were, by then, marginalised and weak.)

PAS's entry into the UMNO-led Alliance was not an unconditional one. Asri had played his part in the bargaining process which revolved around 13 key demands, the chief of which was that PAS should be given the freedom to promote and defend Islamic concerns within the coalition and that the party should be free to reject and criticise any government policy that it felt was un-Islamic. Tun Razak and the UMNO leaders agreed to these demands in principle, and a special committee chaired by Tun Dr. Ismail was formed to help facilitate PAS's entry into the coalition.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 242.

<sup>52</sup> DAP had attempted to negotiate with the MCA after the latter's poor performance in the 1969 election. DAP proposed forming a substantial Chinese bloc to fight for a pluralist 'Malaysian Malaysia' and defend the economic, political and cultural rights of the Chinese in the country. In the end, the negotiations (then carried out in secret) broke down and the MCA remained within the Alliance. After PAS entered the ruling coalition, DAP formed an alliance with the *Parti Keadilan Rakyat Malaysia* (Social Justice Party of Malaysia, PAKEMAS), which won one parliamentary seat in the 1974 election but was soon absorbed by the other dominant parties.

<sup>53</sup> The committee, chaired by Tun Dr. Ismail (Deputy Prime Minister and UMNO deputy president) included Asri Muda, Ustaz Yusof Rawa, Abu Bakar Umar, Ustaz Kassim Ahmad and Dr. Muhammad Dali Muin of PAS.

However, it soon became clear that Asri had not been entirely open about his plans to bring PAS into the ruling alliance. Many senior PAS members later complained that they were not properly consulted over the decision to join the Alliance when Asri first considered it, and this led to accusations of 'one-man rule' among the party rank and file.<sup>54</sup> Those who rejected the new direction of PAS chose to leave the party or were promptly expelled from it by Asri. Members who left included men such as Amaluddin Darus, who had played a key role in building the party's support base in Kelantan and had served as the head of the party's information and propaganda bureau in Kuala Lumpur. After leaving the party he had helped to build for so long, Amaluddin wrote the book *Kenapa Saya Tinggalkan Pas* (Why I Chose to Leave PAS) in which he explicitly set out the reasons for his exit.<sup>55</sup> He attacked Asri Muda's autocratic style of leadership and accused him and the new generation of leaders of betraying the cause of Islam and the Islamist philosophy that had been set by men like Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee. After Amaluddin left the party on 15 June 1974, Asri Muda began a purge of Amaluddin's supporters within PAS, which led to more expulsions.

Other prominent PAS leaders who expressed their concern and dissatisfaction with Asri's move were quickly silenced. Asri sidelined a number of PAS leaders, including Ustaz Abu Bakar

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<sup>54</sup> In an interview with the author in 1999, Dr. Abbas Elias, the second president of PAS, pointed out: 'This was a difficult time for PAS. Asri had brought PAS into the BN coalition without consulting the members first. But on an issue of such importance, it is crucial for the President to consult the committee and the membership of the party. Generally, the rank and file of the party was against the entry of PAS into the BN coalition. The members were angry with him, and there was no way a compromise could be reached. In the end, Asri was forced to hand in his resignation and I was present when he handed in the letter to the party.' (Interview with Dr Abbas Elias, 23 May 1999.)

<sup>55</sup> Amaluddin Darus, *Kenapa Saya Tinggalkan PAS*, Kuala Lumpur: Harimau Press, 1977, pp. 35-37. See also Alias Mohamad, *Sejarah Perjuangan PAS*, Kuala Lumpur: Gateway Publishing House, 1987.

Hamzah<sup>56</sup> (ex-secretary-general of PAS), Mohamad Fakaruddin Abdullah (head of PAS Youth Wing) and Daud Yatimi. Protests against Asri were not confined to Kelantan. In the other states, many PAS leaders also spoke out against their president. In Perak, those who turned against Asri included Sukurnain Haji Ahmad (deputy head of PAS Perak), Abdul Karim Haji Idris (treasurer, PAS Perak) and Mahmud Zainal Abidin (ex-state assemblyman). All faced disciplinary action at the hands of Asri. In all, the PAS president expelled 15 party leaders from Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, Perak and Johor. Some PAS members who were not kicked out of the party chose to leave. One leader, Haji Yusuf Ayub, even

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<sup>56</sup> Ustaz Abu Bakar Hamzah was one of the most prominent and vocal PAS leaders during the 1970s and 1980s. An independent-minded thinker and activist, he offended the party leadership during the Asri (1970–82) and *ulama* (1982>) eras. During the 1960s and early 1970s, he rose within the party hierarchy and was elected as head of the *Pemuda* PAS (Youth Wing) and was made a member of the PAS executive committee. When PAS joined the Alliance government in 1973, he was made a parliamentary secretary. But Ustaz Abu Bakar opposed Asri Muda's plans to bring PAS into the BN coalition, and in 1974 he quit the party and stood as an independent candidate. In 1976, he briefly left the world of Malaysian politics and continued his studies abroad — in several colleges and universities in the Middle East and Europe. He returned in 1981 to become a lecturer at Universiti Malaya. He also rejoined PAS, with help from other PAS leaders such as Ustaz Pak Nik Lah. However, during the *ulama* era when Yusof Rawa was in charge, Ustaz Abu Bakar proved to be just as vocal in his criticisms of the party leadership. He attacked what he regarded as the excessive dogmatism and fanaticism of PAS members (which he claimed was encouraged by the PAS *ulama* themselves) and criticised Yusof Rawa for his promotion of the *ulama* to such an elevated status. Condemning those he called the '*ayatollahs*' of PAS, Ustaz Abu Bakar angered many younger party members who accused him of being a *kafir* and *munafik*. In 1985, he was challenged by the Young Turks of PAS at the annual *muktamar*. In 1986, his PAS membership was suspended and he was forced to give up his party posts. He was an active writer and Islamist activist, and he continued writing for newspapers and magazines such as *Mingguan Islam* and *Watan*.

went as far as joining the predominantly Chinese DAP as a sign of protest.<sup>57</sup>

Though controversial, Asri's decision was final and he worked hard to ensure its acceptance by the rest of the party. A special assembly was held to debate Asri's decision; veteran PAS leader Taha Kalu openly attacked Asri Muda once again. Driven to the point of tears, Taha Kalu claimed that: '*Kalaulah Dr. Burhanuddin atau Ustaz Zulkifli Mohammad masih hidup, sudah pasti PAS tidak akan menyertai perikatan yang ditaja UMNO itu.*'<sup>58</sup>

Despite the protests against his decision, Asri eventually had his way. When the assembly was finally asked to vote on the issue, the outcome was 190 votes in favour, 94 against, 19 abstentions and 30 absent. Asri regarded this as an endorsement of his decision. Other sections of the party were also invited to show their support for the venture. The move was later approved by the *Dewan Ulama* (Ulama Council) of the party, then led by Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat (who was also the executive secretary of PAS in Kelantan).

Notwithstanding the vocal objection from several sections of the party's membership, PAS leaders declared that the move was necessary after the trauma caused by the racial riots of May 1969. A Gaullist Asri argued that the experience of 1969 had shown how weak the Malays were in the economic sphere in particular, and called for Malay unity above all else. PAS, he argued, had a role to play in uplifting the economic lot of the Malays as a whole and this could only be done if the party was in a position to hold and exercise real political power. The centralisation of power in the capital and the creation of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur on 1 February 1974 made it even clearer to all that political power was being concentrated in the metropole. Asri insisted that those who remained on the margins would eventually be left out of the race permanently.

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<sup>57</sup> Hussein Yaakub, *UMNO Tidak Relevan*, p. 128.

<sup>58</sup> Translation: If Dr. Burhanuddin or Ustaz Zulkiflee Mohammad were still alive, it is certain that PAS would never join the alliance that has been created by UMNO (*Ibid.*, p. 129).

Though he was forced to allow the matter to be brought to the vote, Asri managed to get what he wanted and in the end PAS formally joined the Alliance. The same could not be said for the less-than-democratic procedure in UMNO, where the ordinary members were not given a chance to express their opinions at all.<sup>59</sup>

PAS's entry into the Alliance created the impression that the party had settled back in its niche as the Islamic affairs bureau of UMNO. A number of important PAS leaders were given posts in the Cabinet. Among them were Asri Muda himself (Land and Special Functions Minister), Abu Bakar Umar (deputy minister), Ustaz Abu Bakar Hamzah (parliamentary secretary, but he left when PAS joined the *Barisan Nasional* later)<sup>60</sup> and Ustaz Yusof Rawa (Malaysian ambassador to Turkey and Iran). Once they were allowed to sit on these important policy-making and steering committees, the PAS leaders were quick to adjust to the new realities of power. The party's third official publication, *Berita PAS* (PAS News), published in Kuala Lumpur, defended the decision of the party leadership and laid the internal disputes to rest. Unlike the previous two official party publications *Suara Islam* and *Bulan*

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<sup>59</sup> Despite the apparently opaque manner in which Asri had brought PAS into the Alliance, UMNO's acceptance of PAS was even less open and democratic. As Chandra has pointed out, Asri was, in the end, forced to hold a special meeting with his party members to vote on the matter of PAS's entry into the Alliance. (Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector?*, p. 126.) The same could not be said of UMNO: 'In UMNO, on the other hand, the issue was not even discussed at branch or divisional levels by the rank-and-file of the party. No special Assembly was called; indeed even the annual UMNO Assembly meetings in 1972 and 1973 did not probe the coalition question. It was the leaders in the Supreme Council who decided; the rest merely followed suit. It illustrated quite vividly the absence of a democratic outlook among both leaders and followers.'

<sup>60</sup> Ustaz Abu Bakar Hamzah was opposed to Asri Muda's decision to bring PAS into the BN government. He stood as an independent candidate in the 1974 election, against the PAS candidate who ran on the BN ticket.

*Bintang*, *Berita PAS* (written in Roman script) did at least have a Ministry of Home Affairs publication permit. This was a reflection of the extent to which PAS had come to play by the rules by the time of its entry into the ruling alliance in 1973.<sup>61</sup> Compromise and co-operation became the order of the day.

In 1974, the Alliance was disbanded and the *Barisan Nasional* (National Front, BN) coalition formed with UMNO at the head of the coalition.<sup>62</sup> The Alliance's symbol of a *kapal layar* (sailing ship) was changed for a set of *dacing* (scales). Asri Muda then declared that PAS would also join BN in its efforts to work together with the government and other political parties in the country for the sake of national unity and harmony. Asri argued that by doing so PAS would be closer to the centre of power and would therefore be in a better position to act as defender and spokesman for Malay-Muslim rights and concerns. Tun Razak also persuaded the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP), Gerakan and People's Progressive Party (PPP) to join the BN, and he promised the leaders of Gerakan that, come what may, Gerakan would have control of Penang if the BN were to win it in the coming election.

Asri's decision to remain with UMNO in the BN did not convince many of the party's middle-ranking leaders, particularly from the ranks of the *ulama*. Asri had demonstrated his power and control over the dissident elements within the party when he sacked and expelled many of its leaders who opposed him, but many sections within PAS still rejected the move made by Asri in principle, and accused the party leadership of betrayal. In March 1974, Asri was opposed by a splinter group within his party that called itself the *golongan revolusi* (revolutionary group). Its members began distributing leaflets and poison-pen letters accusing Asri and his close aides of cronyism, nepotism, high-level

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<sup>61</sup> *Berita PAS*, started in Kuala Lumpur in 1973, was published by the PAS head office, in cyclostyled format, so its distribution was much lower than the two previous official papers, *Suara Islam* and *Bulan Bintang*.

<sup>62</sup> The BN coalition was formed after a meeting of all the leaders of the Alliance component parties in Kuala Lumpur on 17 January 1974.

corruption and abuse of power in Kelantan.<sup>63</sup> These internal party disputes became more and more public, to the point where they were raised in Parliament. In response to a request for clarification on the issue, MP Abu Bakar Hamzah noted that:

*PAS, satu parti politik yang menjadi anggota Barisan Nasional telah membuat dan mengeluarkan fatwa bahawa tindakan parti ini memasuki Barisan Nasional sesungguhnya ditegah atau haram. Perbuatan itu adalah haram dari segi Shariat Islam, tetapi PAS terpaksa memasukinya buat sementara waktu.*<sup>64</sup>

The UMNO leaders were well aware of the internal disputes within PAS, but Prime Minister Tun Razak wished to promote BN's formula of a national compromise and to accommodate all sections of the political mainstream. A way had to be found to bring PAS into the fold of the BN and to keep it in check at the same time. Tun Razak's attempts to co-opt and neutralise the leadership of PAS did not, however, put an end to the hostility and suspicion between PAS and UMNO. As Land and Special Functions Minister, Asri was given the opportunity to strengthen his ties with the Malays in the rural areas. UMNO members

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<sup>63</sup> The anti-Asri campaign within PAS, which continued right up to the 1974 election campaign, cost the PAS leadership dearly. The *golongan revolusi* group focused most of their attacks on Asri Muda and Dato' Ishak Lotfi. In one pamphlet, the *golongan revolusi* members alleged that more than 500,000 acres of land had been given to Chinese logging companies in 1969-74. The group also claimed that a further 675,000 acres of land had been passed to other Chinese timber companies prior to 1969, when Asri Muda was the Chief Minister of Kelantan. The group accused Asri Muda and Ishak Lotfi of profiting from these deals with timber companies. (Alias Mohamed, *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition*, p. 70.)

<sup>64</sup> Jamal Mohd Lokman Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz*, p. 78. Translation: PAS, one of the parties that has entered the ruling National Front coalition, has made and issued a *fatwa* to the effect that its decision to do so is reprehensible and *haram*. This decision (to join the coalition) is *haram* according to the *shariah* of Islam, but for the moment PAS is forced to do so.

accused Asri of giving away land rights and grants to Malay peasants who were PAS members or sympathisers. They also complained that Asri was taking advantage of his control over agencies like FELDA to expand his network of party-political contacts even further.<sup>65</sup>

PAS's entry into the BN coalition meant that it was no longer in a position to break away from the policies implemented by the UMNO-dominated BN government, and its leaders were no longer allowed to express their discontent in public. The principle of collective responsibility meant that the PAS leaders would also be blamed for the mistakes of the BN government. While the PAS leaders allowed themselves to be co-opted by the UMNO-led BN government, the Islamist cause was taken up by the alternative Islamist movements. During this period, movements like *Darul Arqam*, ABIM, the *Majlis Belia Malaysia* (MBM) and the university students' unions came to the fore and occupied the centre stage as the most vociferous critics of the Malaysian government. The neutered status of PAS was most explicitly demonstrated when the party was forced to remain silent during the 1974 student uprising.

While PAS under Asri Muda was slowly working its way into the corridors of power, the local university student unions were leading the way in the 1974 street protests and demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur and the other major towns of the west coast. Many student leaders had become household names by then. They included Anwar Ibrahim (president of ABIM and MBM), Hishamuddin Rais, Adi Satria, Hamzah Kassim, Yunus Ali and Kamarazaman Yacob (leaders of PMUM (Universiti Malaya Students Union), Abu Zer Ali (head of the Socialist Students Club, Universiti Malaya), Ibrahim Ali<sup>66</sup> (president of KSITM (Mara

<sup>65</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, p. 15.

<sup>66</sup> Ibrahim Ali was born in Kelantan, into a family of humble origins. His father, Ali bin Muhammad (also known as Tok Gawa), was a village headman also known as a local 'gangster' (to borrow Zainal Epi's phrase). Ibrahim entered the world of Malay-Muslim student politics at ITM where he became president of KSITM and was a vocal critic of the government. With other KSITM members, Ibrahim  
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Institute of Technology Students Union)), Rahman Rukaini (UKM) and Fatimah Sham (USM). Some, like Anwar Ibrahim, Hishamuddin Rais and Kamarazaman Yacob, also enjoyed close ties with local representatives of Arab liberation movements, such as Yusuf Al Hantaz of *Al-Fatah*.<sup>67</sup> They had also formed links with the local Arab embassies, and were particularly close to the representatives of Palestine, Libya and Iraq.

The student unions organised a number of demonstrations aimed at highlighting injustices on the local and international levels. In 1973–74, their protests included one staged in front of the American Embassy in Kuala Lumpur on 16 October 1973 against US support for the Zionist regime of Israel and another, led by Hishamuddin Rais, at Subang Airport against the visit of Japanese premier Tanaka to Malaysia.<sup>68</sup> The students condemned the role of Japanese companies in Malaysia as a return to the days of Japanese imperialism in Asia.

Apart from issues of international concern, the students also focused much of their attention on domestic affairs. As usual, most of their venom was directed towards the corruption and abuse of

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attempted to reform the behaviour of Malay-Muslim students on campus by forming self-appointed guardian councils to patrol the campus to check on the conduct of others. In 1974, he was detained along with other student leaders, including Anwar Ibrahim, for his part in organising anti-government demonstrations. Ibrahim took part in the popular demonstrations against Asri Muda in Kelantan during the 1977 Kelantan government crisis, and later joined BERJASA, the party of Mohamad Nasir, Asri's main rival. In the following years, Ibrahim Ali distinguished himself by constantly hopping from one party to another — from BERJASA to UMNO, to Semangat '46, and back to UMNO. This earned him the nickname '*Ibrahim al-Kataki*' (Ibrahim the frog). In 1987, he was detained under the ISA for his inflammatory anti-Chinese speeches. (For a fuller biographical account of Ibrahim Ali's life, see Zainal Epi, *Crossing the Waves*.)

<sup>67</sup> For a comprehensive account of the student revolts of 1972–74 and the key personalities involved, see Kamarazaman Yacob, *Bersama Anwar ke Penjara*, Petaling Jaya: Transgrafik, 1994.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

power they saw among the ruling élite in the country. In 1970, they protested against the temporary expulsion of UMNO 'ultras' Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam from the party. Anwar Ibrahim was one of Dr. Mahathir's most ardent supporters, and he was one of those responsible for distributing contraband copies of Dr. Mahathir's book *The Malay Dilemma* that had been banned by the government.<sup>69</sup> Shortly after the opening of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), the students protested against UMNO leader Dato' Harun Idris, who was accused of reaping vast profits from the sale of timber during the construction of the UKM campus.<sup>70</sup>

In January 1974, the leaders of PMUM and PBMUM (Malay Language Society of UM) protested against the government's decision to allow the creation of Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College that had been one of MCA's major demands on UMNO. The Malay students of the local universities were particularly angry over the government's decision to allow a Chinese college to use English as the medium of instruction at a time when efforts were being made to make Malay the medium of instruction in all the other institutions of higher learning in the country. (Earlier, the students had defaced most of the campus signboards still in English.)<sup>71</sup> They also condemned the TAR College project on the grounds that as a privately run institution it would only serve as an additional source of funds for the wealthy MCA leaders. In October 1974, the students took part in the protests at Tasik Utara, Johor, when local Malay residents were forced out of their homes under the orders of the Chief Minister of Johor, UMNO politician Tan Sri Osman Saat. This cycle of protests and demonstrations culminated in the seizure and occupation of the local university campuses by the

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<sup>69</sup> This was later one of the charges levelled against him when in detention under the ISA.

<sup>70</sup> Kamarazaman (*Ibid.*, pp. 32-33) later noted that these protests were welcomed by some sections of the UMNO élite who were also worried about Harun Idris's growing popularity and wished to topple him.

<sup>71</sup> This was also one of the charges levelled against Anwar Ibrahim while in detention.

student unions in September 1974. Universiti Malaya campus was taken over by PMUM members led by Kamarazaman Yacob, who then formed *Majlis Tertinggi Sementara* (Temporary Supreme Council, MTS).<sup>72</sup>

In response to the growing tide of student discontent and restlessness, the university authorities, with the backing of the government and the Ministries of Education and Home Affairs, began to react. An attempt was made to regain control of the university campuses after the seizure and occupation of the UM campus by the PMUM. The Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Professor Ungku Aziz, regained control of the campus with the help of the *Majlis Tertinggi Nasionalis* (Nationalist Supreme Council, MTN) led by right-wing student leaders such as Ahmad Latif, Hamzah Zainuddin and Aziz Shamsuddin, president of the Malay Language Society.<sup>73</sup> The PMUM leaders eventually gave in to their demands and surrendered control of the campus to the authorities. This did not, however, put an end to the student demonstrations outside the campus.

The activities of the student unions reached a peak in December 1974 when the students came out in support of Malay rubber smallholders in Baling, Kedah who demonstrated against the government which, they claimed, had abandoned them after a bad year when the price of rubber had plummeted. Inflation had made matters worse, and the rural community in the north was badly hit by the rising cost of living. The situation was made even more confusing with the entry of the MCP into the fray and the constant broadcasts of the communists' Voice of the Malayan Revolution (VOMR) station which was feeding the students with more information about the situation in the north.<sup>74</sup> The rubber smallholders

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>73</sup> Kamarazaman Yacob notes that the right-wing student organisations were also backed by the local university Malay martial arts society. During the take-over, martial arts society members, armed with knives, clubs, chains and other weapons, threatened to confront the PMUM members (Ibid., pp. 113–114).

<sup>74</sup> According to Lim Cheng Leng, the VOMR radio broadcasts claimed that 'the people of Baling had been deprived and were starving'.  
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organised a 'hunger march' — 30,000 rural peasants came out in protest against the state government. The farmers' demonstrations in Baling soon caught the attention of the Islamist student leaders of the local universities.

On 3 December 1974, thousands of students protested in the streets of Kuala Lumpur in a show of solidarity with the farmers. They finally congregated on the grounds of the Selangor Club in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. While the government tried to play down the role of the radical Islamist student activists in the demonstrations, it was clear that the event was organised by Islamist student leaders who led MBM and Islamist youth movements like ABIM.<sup>75</sup> In response to the demonstrations, the security forces launched *Operasi Mayang* and arrested nearly 1,200 student protesters and detained many student leaders, including Anwar Ibrahim, Adi Satria, Hamzah Kassim, Salamat Ahmad Kamal and Ibrahim Ali under the ISA. Other student leaders such as Hishamuddin Rais and Yunus Ali managed to escape and leave the country with the help of foreign embassy officials.<sup>76</sup>

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(Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 160.) There was also an incident of a small child having died of natural causes, but claimed by the broadcast to be the result of famine. It caught the genuine emotions of many listeners. VOMR claimed that this was due to the poor rice yield, poor rubber prices and the lack of government foresight. The VOMR propaganda contained a veiled directive to induce a more aggressive rural programme and concentration among the elements of the MRLF and the Malayan New Democratic Youth League (MNDYL). As a result, the government assumed that many Malaysian students' movements were working hand-in-glove with the outlawed MCP and their units.

<sup>75</sup> Shamsul argues that the Malaysian government was not prepared to address the problem of Islamic activism among the student body. 'It would take the Malaysian government another five years to recognise that the protest was motivated by Islamic objectives and to take appropriate counteraction.' (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, 'Identity Construction, National Formation and Islamic Revivalism', p. 214).

<sup>76</sup> The student leaders were offered refuge by representatives of several Arab embassies in Kuala Lumpur. Attempts were made to smuggle  
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Kamarazaman Yacob was caught after failing in his escape attempt. A number of prominent academics were also detained under the ISA for showing their support for the students, including Prof. Syed Husin Ali, Prof. Tengku Shamsul, Dr. K.S. Nijar, Dr. Lim Mah Hui and Sabiha Abdul Samad.

On 8 December 1974, units of the *Polis Hutan* (Police Field Force) were allowed to enter and occupy the Universiti Malaya campus. Home Affairs Minister Ghazali Shafie warned that further protests would lead to even more violent reprisals, while Education Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad urged the students to concentrate on their studies. In 1975, the University and University Colleges Act (UCCA) of 1971 was amended to further restrict campus activities.<sup>77</sup> However, the government's heavy-handed action effectively turned the young charismatic student leaders like Anwar Ibrahim into political martyrs in the eyes of the public.<sup>78</sup> While he was in detention, the government made many attempts to convert Anwar Ibrahim to its cause. One official sent to persuade him was Ustaz Ibrahim Mahmood from *Pusat Islam*. The meeting was a failure as Anwar refused to compromise with the government. Instead,

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them out of the country through Kelantan and Thailand. In the end, Hishamuddin Rais and Yunus Ali managed to escape. Yunus Ali left to join the PLO in Palestine.

<sup>77</sup> The UCCA of 1971 was introduced to provide a coherent administrative basis for the new universities. The amendments introduced in 1975, however, were clearly designed to eliminate the possibility of political activities on the campuses. Article 7(1) of the amendment prohibited campus gatherings of more than five students without the permission of the Vice-Chancellor. Article 10(1) prohibited the publication and distribution on campus of political material and literature by the students. Article 11 prohibited student involvement in any form of political activities or membership of any political party outside the campus without permission from the Vice-Chancellor. The amendments effectively empowered the university authorities to take action against students on behalf of the government. (Chandra Muzaffar, *Freedom in Fetters: An Analysis of the State of Democracy in Malaysia*, Penang: Aliran Press, 1986, p. 11.)

<sup>78</sup> Anwar Ibrahim remained as the active president of ABIM and MBM even when in the Kamunting detention camp, Perak.

Ustaz Ibrahim was persuaded to leave the government service. He gave up his post at *Pusat Islam* and established his own *madrasah* in the village of Memali in Kedah. The *ustaz's* fateful decision would lead to tragic consequences that will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

While UMNO had managed to contain the threat posed by the 1974 student uprising and rode through the crisis with its credibility and constituency intact, the same could not be said of PAS. Many ordinary PAS members were sympathetic to the plight of the peasants and their student supporters, and were angered that PAS leaders were unable or unwilling to commit themselves to support their cause. Asri Muda and the other PAS leaders were not allowed to break ranks with the rest of the BN leadership, and thus shared much of the blame and anger meted out to the government by the public. Thus within a space of one year, PAS's entry into the ruling coalition was already beginning to incur an enormous price on the reputation and appeal of the party.

Sensing that it was now in a better position to capitalise on its political successes, the UMNO-led government began to pursue its own Islamisation programme in earnest. In 1974, the federal government excised a new territory under its administration to create its own Federal Religious Council and Office of Islamic Affairs. These came under the Department of Religious Affairs of the Prime Minister's Department. The Islamic Missionary Foundation was also formed by the federal government to conduct *dakwah* work among the Malays and other Muslims. It was clear that during the mid-1970s the Malaysian government was keen to promote its own image as a government that cared deeply and sincerely for Muslim affairs and that it was prepared to direct substantial funds towards promoting and defending Muslim concerns. Like the governments of Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Hafiz al-Assad of Syria, the Malaysian government was keen to promote itself as a government led by 'believing and practising' Muslims while also blunting the potential threat of Islamist opposition movements that were growing and operating outside the corridors of power.

This flexible strategy of divide and rule gradually secured the desired results for the UMNO-led government. UMNO had neutralised PAS by co-opting it within the BN, while the external threat represented by *Darul Arqam* and ABIM was significantly

reduced because neither movement was political in its orientation and was, therefore, not a contender at the polls.

During the general election on 24 August 1974, PAS ran as a member of the BN coalition and used the BN's symbol of the *dacing* (scales) instead of its traditional *bulan bintang*. Many PAS members angered by Asri's latest political moves chose not to work for the party during the election campaign. To aggravate the situation even further, a number of PAS members formed an opposition front called *Bebas Bersatu* (United Independents) led by a PAS MP, Cikgu Ahmad Fakharuddin Abdullah.<sup>79</sup> To the considerable embarrassment of Asri Muda, these dissident PAS members campaigned on their own tickets instead of that of PAS.

With voter turn-out registered at 75.1%, the BN coalition won 60.7% of the total votes. BN won 135 of the 154 parliamentary seats (87.7% of seats) (see Table 3.3). UMNO did particularly well in the election: of the 135 parliamentary seats won by BN, 62 were won by UMNO. The jubilant UMNO leaders, in particular Tun Razak, claimed that BN's success proved that the formula of inter-ethnic élite compromise had worked and delivered the results that many had expected.

PAS won 14 parliamentary seats, but the victory laurels went not to PAS but to the coalition as a whole. Even though it won overall control of Kelantan, PAS could no longer claim that it had the state under its exclusive control as it was now part of a power-sharing arrangement with other parties. The same was the case in Terengganu, where it won half of the parliamentary seats (three out of six) and nine of the 24 state assembly seats contested (see Table 3.4). (These seats had been allocated to PAS by the BN election committee.) The UMNO leaders had made sure that PAS would no longer be in a position to dominate the states that were once under its influence.

Asri may have had his way in the party, but the electorate was always there to remind him of the limitations of his power and appeal. The results of the 1974 election showed that a large section of the Malay-Muslim constituency in the north opposed PAS's move to

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<sup>79</sup> Hussein Yaakub, *UMNO Tidak Relevan*, p. 109.

join the BN coalition. In Terengganu, 30% of the total vote was won by the opposition PSRM, led by socialist Kassim Ahmad. Kelantan also registered the same level of anti-BN votes cast for PSRM and independent candidates.<sup>80</sup> The combined vote for the DAP and the Socialist Front parties stood at 18.3%, and although DAP's share of parliamentary seats had dropped from 13 to nine, its share of the vote had increased substantially. (Once again, none of the Malay leftist parties had managed to win a single parliamentary seat.)

Apart from the sway of votes to the parties on the left, the other surprise in the 1974 election was the sudden entry of Sanusi Junid, the leader of *Pertubuhan Kelab Belia Malaysia* (Malaysian Youth Council, MAYC) into the political arena. Sanusi had been another prominent youth leader who had worked with the ABIM leaders, such as Anwar Ibrahim. In 1974, he joined UMNO and contested the constituency of Jerlun/Langkawi. His decision to join UMNO was criticised by other Malay-Muslim youth leaders, including Anwar Ibrahim of ABIM, who accused him of being a *munafik* (hypocrite) and traitor to the Islamist cause.<sup>81</sup>

In the wake of the 1974 election, PAS found itself in a state of limbo within the BN coalition. While its leaders were given important portfolios in Cabinet and tasks to fulfil, members grew increasingly frustrated and angry over the lack of development and progress in the Islamist political agenda.

In the face of growing resentment and disillusion from his own members, Asri Muda tried his best to focus their attention elsewhere. While in the BN Cabinet, Asri returned to form as the pan-Malay ethno-nationalist of his younger days. He spoke at length about the need for the Malaysian government to support (or at least sympathise with) fellow Muslims fighting for independence and autonomy in other parts of the world, particularly in Southeast Asia. During his term as a member of the BN Cabinet, Asri called on Malaysia to help Muslim separatist groups in southern Thailand, such as BNPP, BRN and PULO. During his speeches in parliament, Asri highlighted the plight of fellow Malay-Muslims in

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<sup>80</sup> Clive Kessler, *Islam and Malay Politics in a Malay State*, p. 243.

<sup>81</sup> *Tamadun*, November 1998, p. 34.

Patani, Yala, Satun and Narathiwat who had borne the brunt of the Thai government's counter-insurgency campaigns in the southern provinces. Asri also highlighted the struggle of the Moro Muslims in Mindanao in the southern Philippines and publicly expressed his support for the Moro liberation organisations such as MNLF. In 1975, he even called on Malaysian Muslims to volunteer for an international Muslim fighting force to help the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel.<sup>82</sup>

Asri's sudden flights of fancy were a cause of concern and embarrassment for the Malaysian government. When Thai students took to the streets of Bangkok in protest against his calls for intervention, the Malaysian Prime Minister was forced to write personally to the Prime Minister of Thailand to apologise.<sup>83</sup> Asri's open support for the Moro struggle did not help improve ties with the Philippines either, and did little to ease the tension between Kuala Lumpur and Manila over the dispute regarding Sabah. Needless to say, the PAS leader's outspoken comments did not help the Malaysian government promote its concept of ASEAN as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN).

However, none of these causes could distract PAS members from the fact that Asri had blunted the Islamic thrust of the party. While they were prepared to follow Asri on his occasional crusades to defend the interests of Muslims elsewhere in the region, many ordinary party members remained dissatisfied with PAS's performance at home. Faced with increasing demands for a more radical approach to Islamisation, Asri could only present them with hazy promises and commitments to Islamisation and the reform of BN from within. At the party's 21st general assembly in 1975, Asri spoke of the need for social justice and equity in the most abstract terms imaginable:

*Sebagai sebuah parti yang matlamatnya sangat unggul, bagi memenuhi cita-cita Islam, maka unsur-unsur keadilan dan semangat negara utama —*

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<sup>82</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 63. Asri's call for Malaysian Muslims to join a pan-Muslim fighting force in Palestine was made during the 1975 PAS general assembly.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86 n. 31.

*madinah fadilah — di mana semua rakyat perlu hidup bahagia, hendaklah diusahakan untuk disempurnakan... Misi kita adalah tegas bagi mencapai matlamat itu dan segenap ikhtiar dan usaha untuk ke arah itu adalah dalam perhatian kita yang waspada.*<sup>84</sup>

Asri Muda's vague exhortations and calls for social justice were poorly received by the rank and file of the party, who felt that as a political organisation they had been effectively neutered. The condition hardly improved when the leadership of the country was passed on in 1976.

On 14 January 1976, Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak passed away while on medical leave in London.<sup>85</sup> Tun Razak had been suffering from leukaemia, but the state of his health was not known to the public until the final stages of his illness. Throughout his service Tun Razak had distinguished himself by his professional conduct and lack of ostentatiousness. After his passing, the leadership of UMNO, the BN coalition and the country as a whole went to Dato' Hussein Onn, son of Dato' Onn Jaafar. Dr. Mahathir Mohamad became Deputy Prime Minister, and Ghazali Shafie Home Affairs Minister.

Hussein Onn was widely regarded as one of UMNO's most respected leaders. He was a Johorean aristocrat by birth, a barrister by training and during the colonial era he had served as a commissioned officer in the British Indian Army. By 1976, he was already regarded as an elder statesman. As the son of Dato' Onn Jaafar, UMNO's founder, he commanded the admiration and respect of many of its veteran members. Like his predecessors, Hussein Onn was keen to show that he was fully in command of domestic political affairs. In the same way that the Tunku and Tun Razak had

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<sup>84</sup> Translation: As a political party that is dedicated to the noblest of causes, to fulfil the aims of Islam, the cause of justice and defending a united nation where all citizens will be able to live together in peace are objectives which we will have to fight for... Our mission is to reach that objective and every means to do so is kept in mind by the leaders of this party (*Detik*, 15 June 1999, p. 43).

<sup>85</sup> Tun Razak was interred at the *Makam Pahlawan* (Warrior's Cenotaph) in the National Mosque, Kuala Lumpur. Tun Dr. Ismail was also buried there, in August 1973.

flexed their political muscles by demonstrating the hold of Kuala Lumpur on errant leaders and the wayward periphery states and districts, the federal government under Hussein Onn demonstrated its willingness to bridle those disloyal state governments that did not toe the central government's line. In 1977, the Chief Ministers of Perak, Melaka and Kelantan were quickly expelled from their offices when they proved to be too independent-minded by the central government's standards. Tun Mustapha of Sabah (who was initially helped into power by the Tunku) was amongst those who learned that the will of Datuk Hussein was not to be thwarted.

The PAS leaders, however, had other ideas about Hussein Onn. Asri and his intimate circle of confidants believed that, behind the veneer of respectability, Hussein Onn was a weak leader whose own position in UMNO was precarious. The rise of the new generation of UMNO 'ultras' such as Mahathir Mohamad and Musa Hitam, gave the impression that a palace *coup* within the conservative party's corridors of power was imminent. The UMNO president was forced to deal with a number of other internal party problems and disputes that had festered during the time of Tun Razak's leadership, such as the scandal surrounding UMNO Youth leader Dato' Harun Idris who was finally sentenced to six years' imprisonment over charges of corruption and abuse of power in December 1977.<sup>86</sup> There was also much talk about Hussein Onn

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<sup>86</sup> Dato' Harun Idris was one of the most popular UMNO figures at the time. During the 1969 post-election crisis he was one of the party leaders who called for 'direct action' in dealing with those non-Malays whom he felt had challenged the position of the Malays in the country. Harun Idris was thought to be one of the Malay leaders who played an instrumental role in the racial clashes between the Malays and Chinese that followed. He was also patron of a number of Malay *silat* (martial arts) organisations and enjoyed the support of a number of militant Malay nationalists. When UKM was set up in Bangi, Selangor, Harun Idris was accused of profiting from the timber concessions that he received during the clearing of the area. The UKM students later protested against him, accusing him of corruption. In 1975, he became involved in a financial scandal for his role in the organisation of the boxing match between Muhammad Ali and *continued p. 273*

being regarded as 'too soft' on communism, and that his Cabinet had been infiltrated by 'communist agents'. Hussein was eventually forced to take a public stand on the issue; on 1 November 1976, he warned UMNO members that those with communist leanings should leave the party. This set the stage for a series of internal party purges that further weakened the party's leadership.<sup>87</sup>

Many political commentators and observers in the country felt that Hussein Onn's days in office were numbered. This gave Asri and his followers the added impetus to push their own agendas and make more demands upon the UMNO leadership, particularly Hussein Onn. However, in the end not only was Asri's estimation

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n. 87 continued

Joe Bugner in Kuala Lumpur. His questionable financial dealings led to massive losses by Bank Rakyat. Prime Minister Tun Razak had tried to remove Harun Idris from the party, but his sudden death left the new Prime Minister, Hussein Onn, to deal with the problem. The government offered Harun, then Chief Minister of Selangor, the post of Malaysian representative to the United Nations in an attempt to remove him from the local scene until the scandal had subsided. Harun flatly refused this offer and Hussein Onn eventually expelled him from the party, allowing legal proceedings to be taken against him. In the legal battle that followed, Harun Idris lost his gamble and was sentenced to imprisonment. He was only released in 1982 after the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad advised the King to give him a royal pardon. He remained in UMNO as a veteran member but his political career was effectively over. He passed away on 18 October 2003.

<sup>87</sup> Ghazali Shafie, then Home Affairs Minister, alleged that many members of Hussein Onn's Cabinet were working as pro-Soviet double agents. Among those accused were Ghafar Baba, Abdullah Majid and Abdullah Ahmad. On 21 May 1977, Abdullah Ahmad and Abdullah Majid were expelled from the Cabinet. Both were thought to be close supporters of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, then Deputy Prime Minister. Ghazali then ordered the arrest and detention of Abdul Samad Ismail, managing editor of the *New Straits Times* and Abdullah Ahmad. They were interrogated and later made to 'confess' they had links with communist movements abroad, especially in Indonesia and Singapore. Abdullah Ahmad was detained for six years, and only released in 1983. The supporters of Abdullah Ahmad and Ghafar Baba claimed that the entire exercise was meant to discredit Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and to open the way for Ghazali Shafie to become the next Prime Minister.

of Hussein Onn off the mark, it was PAS that came under the thumb of UMNO's quiet, soft-spoken leader.

*The Barisan Falters: Internal Dissent within the BN and the Kelantan Crisis of 1977–1978*

*Akhirnya muafakat politik yang dinikmati dalam pilihanraya 1974 itu berakhir dengan kesimpulan bahawa UMNO tidak boleh menjadi regu yang ikhlas. Ia berjiwa kecil dan pendiriannya tertutup, ia tidak benar-benar mahu menyatukan Umat Islam dibawah satu muafakat.<sup>88</sup>*

*Jenayah Akademik Pemimpin UMNO*

As we have seen earlier, the seeds of the PAS–UMNO confrontation were sown long before PAS entered the BN coalition. The leaders of both parties never had any doubts that their pact was an instrumental coalition based on pragmatic needs and concerns. Even when Tun Razak offered Asri and other PAS leaders an olive branch in the form of ministerial posts and positions within the religious bureaucracy, they realised that Asri and his lieutenants were bound to remain as loose cannons on the deck of the UMNO-led ship of state. This became increasingly clear by the mid-1970s when Asri began to make his own political demands and wanted to have his way in Kelantan.

Kelantan, as noted above, had always been the home base of Mohammad Asri Muda, who tolerated no challenges to his supremacy there. This was understandable considering the pivotal role played by him in developing PAS's foothold in the state that was once almost totally cut off from the rest of the country. It was

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<sup>88</sup> Translation: And in the end the political consensus that was achieved after the 1974 election came to an end and brought with it the simple conclusion that UMNO could never be a trusted political ally. Its worldview was narrow and closed, and it did not wish to unite the Muslim *ummah* under any kind of consensus. (*Jenayah Akademik Pemimpin UMNO*, p. 102.)

there that Asri made his name and reputation as the leader of PAS in the north and it was there that he had established his network of contacts and grassroots support.

While he served as the Chief Minister of Kelantan and later as Land and Rural Development Minister, Asri made sure he was able to expand and deepen his influence throughout the state in particular. Over the years, Asri had managed to build up an impressive party-political machinery for patronage and support in Kelantan. Thousands of farmers and rural smallholders felt personally indebted to him. However, this culture of neo-feudal patronage and dominance (which, incidentally, was no different from the neo-feudal culture of UMNO) also had its negative side. In time, many sections of Kelantanese society resented Asri for his arrogant and autocratic style, the clique of personal advisors and confidants he kept around him and the scandals surrounding him and his family.

Asri was not able to restrain some of his more ambitious and demanding colleagues and relatives. The manoeuvrings of his followers such as Dato' Ishak Lotfi, Datuk Nik Man Nik Mat, Wan Ismail Wan Ibrahim and his own wife, Datin Sakinah, earned them (and him) the resentment of many PAS members and ordinary people of Kelantan. Asri himself was hardly a tactful politician and he made numerous mistakes that exposed his own underhanded dealings to the public eye — many related to land and timber concessions.<sup>89</sup> In time, the word 'PAS' gained a new meaning while the party was under Asri's control: Asri's opponents began calling it the '*Parti Asri SeKeluarga*' ('Asri and family party').<sup>90</sup>

After joining the BN coalition in 1973, Asri found it extremely difficult to compromise and work with the UMNO-led government that began to exert its influence on the state he had come to regard as his own. The situation became even more complicated after the 1974 election. It must be remembered that Kelantan was won by the BN coalition (not just PAS) in the 1974 general election and the

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<sup>89</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>90</sup> Mohammad Sayuti Omar, *Salam Tok Guru: PAS Perintah Kelantan*, Kuala Lumpur: Tinta Merah, 1999, p. 141.

UMNO leaders wanted to have their say in the running of the state. Both Tun Razak and Hussein Onn were worried about PAS's hold on the state and Asri's strong links with the people there, but Asri was simply not able or willing to share control of Kelantan with anyone else or any other party. The opportunity for UMNO to break Asri's stranglehold on Kelantan came when a dispute erupted over the issue of Asri's management of the economy of Kelantan and the role of the Chief Minister.

By the mid-1970s, Asri was personally linked to a number of notorious and embarrassing scandals. As Land and Rural Development Minister, Asri had approved the lease of 350,000 acres of land to the Timber Mine Company of Singapore. He also approved the lease of 240,000 acres of land to Rik Seng Timber Company. These leases were eventually terminated by the federal government, much to the consternation of Asri. Later, Asri secured a loan of RM2.6 million to allow the PPP, a company owned by the state economic board (of which he was the chairman) to buy Malayan Tobacco Company's tobacco leaf-curing stations in Kelantan. This move was also made public, and it further reinforced the widely held view that Asri was using his office to bolster his own economic and political base in Kelantan.

As successive scandals and accusations of corruption and nepotism came out in the open, Asri chose to turn a blind eye to them and concentrate on developing his political base in the north. But one factor that Asri could not discount was Kuala Lumpur's interference in the affairs of Kelantan, his home state. When it came to the appointment of the Chief Minister of Kelantan, Asri favoured the local PAS leader Wan Ismail Wan Ibrahim, a close associate and friend. But Hussein Onn and the other BN leaders did not agree to this choice as it was well known that Wan Ismail was a staunch PAS member who held deep misgivings about UMNO. Hussein Onn suggested the post be given to Dato' Haji Mohamad Nasir, as he had previously served as deputy Chief Minister for two terms and therefore had more experience in the running of state affairs.<sup>91</sup> Mohamad

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<sup>91</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, pp. 21–22.

Nasir was also supported by Hasan Adli Arshat, deputy president of PAS.

When Mohamad Nasir was given the post of Chief Minister of Kelantan, one of his first actions was to stop the deals that Asri and his cohorts had been negotiating in the state over the years. In 1977, Nasir froze the logging and land concessions that Asri had granted. When Nasir threatened to expose some of Asri's underhanded dealings in the state, Asri found that he could no longer trust or work with his own Chief Minister. To complicate things further, Nasir was supported by a large number of Kelantanese and PAS members, including vice-president Hasan Adli. Nasir, Adli and their supporters were seen by Asri as a fifth column that threatened his own position in Kelantan. In the following year, Nasir publicly acknowledged the need for an official inquiry into the financial dealings that had been taking place in Kelantan and he opened the way for the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to look into the matter.

Asri was understandably perturbed by this latest turn of events, but was forced to accept Mohamad Nasir as the Chief Minister of Kelantan to keep the veneer of a united BN intact. However, behind the scenes, moves were made to remove Nasir from the post. Together with his close associate Dato' Ishak Lotfi, Asri sought ways to bring Nasir down. In the end, charges of corruption and abuse of power were levelled against Nasir.<sup>92</sup> When these charges were brought out into the open, Nasir and his followers were outraged. It became clear that Asri was trying to topple his own Chief Minister in favour of another contender. The repercussions in Kelantan were immediate: those who had resented Asri's autocratic style of leadership for so long used the issue as an example of Asri's authoritarian character, accusing Asri of wanting to turn Kelantan into his own personal fiefdom where he ruled unchallenged. Prominent PAS leaders like Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif questioned the reasoning behind Asri's move and accused him and Dato' Ishak Lotfi of taking things into their own hands and acting unilaterally without the consent of the executive

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

committee of the party. Ustaz Baharuddin argued that even though Asri was the party president, his conduct was unbecoming as he had gone against the party's own rules and regulations regarding disciplinary measures against members.<sup>93</sup> Nasir, in turn, began to mobilise his own supporters and turned to the BN leadership for help. As a result, UMNO was once again caught up in the internal politics of Kelantan.

Things finally came to a head on 25 Sept 1977 when the political crisis in Kelantan broke. In the streets of the state capital Kota Bharu, an estimated 80,000 supporters of Nasir came out in full force, chanting '*Hidup Nasir*' (Long live Nasir) and calling for the resignation of Asri Muda. Buildings were covered with posters and banners calling for Asri's expulsion from the party. Asri was publicly denounced as a traitor who had sold out to UMNO and the BN, and had betrayed the cause of Islam.<sup>94</sup>

Undeterred by these developments, Asri pressed ahead with his plans to remove Nasir. The Kelantan state assembly was asked to table a vote of no confidence against the Chief Minister, but not before the Sultan of Kelantan and the Kelantanese royal family also became involved. Hardly a friend of UMNO, the Sultan nonetheless wished to stall the vote of no confidence with the hope of

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<sup>93</sup> In his speech on the Nasir issue to the PAS executive committee, Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif criticised Asri's move on several grounds. He noted that Asri and Ishak Lotfi had not acted earlier when they headed PAS's central committee in Kelantan. (Ishak Lotfi was in charge of PAS Kelantan in 1974-75, Asri in 1975-77.) Furthermore, Ustaz Baharuddin argued that the whole campaign against Nasir seemed poorly organised, ill-conceived and bore the trademarks of a political conspiracy to topple a rival. The Kelantan division under Asri and Ishak had acted unilaterally, without consulting the PAS central executive committee. All in all, Ustaz Baharuddin noted that the whole affair had caused Kelantan to lose its reputation as the PAS 'model state' and had brought shame and disrepute to the party in general (Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, pp. 168-169).

<sup>94</sup> For a narrative account of developments in Kelantan, in particular Kota Bharu, during this time of crisis, see Lotfi Ismail, *Detik Mula Konfrontasi Nasir-Asri: 13.9.77-10.10.77*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Karangkraf, 1978.

installing a new Chief Minister of his choice. To this end, he instructed the Crown Prince of Kelantan to postpone the dissolution of the state assembly, but his efforts came to naught — both Asri and the federal government proved to be even more determined to ensure that their interests were secured.

Finally, on 15 October 1977, the Kelantan state assembly tabled a vote of no confidence against Mohamad Nasir. While the assembly sat to discuss the issue, pro-Nasir groups protested outside and in the streets of Kota Bharu. (Student leader Ibrahim Ali was one of those who had returned to Kelantan to support Nasir, and he led the biggest demonstration in the capital that day.)<sup>95</sup> Asri was counting on all the BN assemblymen to vote the same way so that Nasir could be removed from his post. This was yet another calculated risk on Asri's part and he hoped that the UMNO and MCA assemblymen would vote the same way as the PAS assemblymen to keep the BN united in Kelantan.

In the event, 20 PAS assemblymen voted in favour of the proposal, but the other BN assemblymen (13 from UMNO and one from MCA) staged a walkout instead, following last-minute instructions from Kuala Lumpur. Nonetheless, Asri secured the necessary majority. Mohamad Nasir was effectively removed from his post and kicked out of the party. With him went a number of prominent PAS *ulama* who rejected Asri's leadership. Asri then broadened the scope of his campaign against Nasir: thirteen PAS branches in Kelantan were closed or dissolved themselves in protest, and their members left the party to follow Nasir.

For Asri, the walkout staged by the UMNO and MCA assemblymen was the ultimate sign of UMNO's perfidy against PAS and he held Hussein Onn personally responsible. *The Star's* editorial noted that the walkout was 'as near as one could get to tearing up the *Barisan Nasional* formula in Kelantan'.<sup>96</sup> As a result of this duplicity by UMNO, the BN's facade of unity was torn to shreds and Asri prepared for an all-out confrontation on two fronts. He now found

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<sup>95</sup> Zainal Epi, *Crossing the Waves*, p. 82.

<sup>96</sup> *The Star*, 16 October 1977.

himself at war with Mohamad Nasir in Kelantan as well as Hussein Onn and the federal government in Kuala Lumpur.

Soon the streets of Kota Bharu were again clogged with protesters. The ousted Nasir called upon his supporters to openly show their anger and disgust against Asri and the PAS leadership. The mainstream media — largely in the hands of UMNO or UMNO-related interests — intensified the situation even further by depicting Nasir as the victim and Asri as the culprit in the whole affair. As tensions rose and the conflict intensified, rumours began to circulate that the federal government was about to take over Kelantan.

On 8 November 1977, the federal government under Prime Minister Hussein Onn intervened directly in Kelantan's internal affairs when it invoked article 150 of the federal constitution and declared a state of emergency in the state. For most observers of Malaysian politics, the declaration of emergency in Kelantan was seen as an obvious political move on the part of Hussein Onn and the UMNO-led government. When he tabled the 1977 Emergency Act for Kelantan in Parliament, Hussein Onn swore that he was not 'playing politics' in the state. His testimony was laughed at by members of the opposition.

With the state assembly and executive council of Kelantan suspended, Nasir was allowed to nominally retain his title of Chief Minister (albeit with no real power). The state of emergency was maintained for 95 days, and during this time Kelantan was run by the government-appointed minister Hashim Aman. The federal government's intervention in Kelantan was effectively the straw that broke the camel's back for Asri. The declaration of a state of emergency in Kelantan was seen as proof of the extent to which the local affairs of the state were now under the control of the powers-that-be in Kuala Lumpur. Far from helping Asri to maintain his increasingly febrile grip on the state, Kuala Lumpur's intervention in Kelantanese affairs had only made him look more like UMNO's whipping boy in the eyes of his own constituents. From that point onwards it was Asri Muda's, not Hussein Onn's, days in politics that were numbered.

In the midst of this confusion and uncertainty, PAS leaders attempted to salvage what was left of the party and its supporters.

In a bid to cut his losses, Asri Muda declared that PAS would leave the BN coalition on 17 December 1977. The experiment with cohabitation had finally come to an end. At the PAS general assembly on 25 December, Asri accused UMNO divisions in Kelantan of plotting to weaken the party by supporting different factions within it. Apart from venting their wrath on Hussein Onn, many PAS leaders blamed Kelantanese UMNO leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for masterminding the whole crisis from the beginning.<sup>97</sup> However, Asri's declaration had come too late; the damage to his reputation and the party was already done.

As a result of the split within the party (partly aided and abetted by UMNO), a significant body of ex-PAS members under the leadership of the ousted Mohamad Nasir now wanted to settle the score with Asri's PAS. Nasir and his followers formed another Malay-Muslim political party, the *Barisan Jemaah Islamiyyah Se-Malaysia* (BERJASA). As soon as BERJASA was formed it began to attract other PAS members who felt that the time was right to leave the party that Asri had (mis)guided for so long. The leading *ulama* of Kelantan, Ustaz Muhamad Che Wok, left PAS and joined Nasir in BERJASA. Nasir's party also attracted a number of young Kelantanese Malay-Muslims who were angry and disillusioned with Asri Muda's style of government. One was young student activist Ibrahim Ali, who became head of BERJASA's Youth Wing and was put in charge of the party's election campaign in Kelantan. BERJASA then announced that it would ally itself with UMNO and contest against PAS in the upcoming election.

### *The 1978 Election: The Collapse of Asri's Project*

In 1978, the same year that Nur Mohammed Taraki was brought to power after the communist *coup* in Afghanistan, Malaysia held its general election.

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<sup>97</sup> Zulkifli Sulong, *Operasi Tawan Trengganu*, p. 101.

For the 1978 general election Asri tried in vain to present his party as a Malay-Muslim political organisation that still promoted and defended the interests of Muslims and Islam. Desperate to regain some Islamist credentials, PAS adopted the new symbol of the *bulan purnama* (full moon) set against a green background. During the election campaign PAS was supported by ABIM members, including its president Anwar Ibrahim. ABIM's help in PAS's election campaign in Kelantan added Islamist credentials that it badly needed after the erosion of its own standing and popularity in the eyes of the public. However, despite these tactical efforts and manoeuvres, PAS was badly defeated because of combined pressure from UMNO and BERJASA.<sup>98</sup>

The general election on 8 July 1978 registered a voter turn-out of 75.3%. BN won 57.2% of the votes and 130 seats in Parliament (84.4% of seats) (see Table 3.5). Though BN's share of the vote had dropped (from 60.7% in 1974 to 57.2%) and it won five fewer seats in Parliament than in the previous election, it could not be said that the losses were entirely due to gains by PAS, for the Islamist party had its own share of problems. Due to the state of emergency, the election in Kelantan was held earlier, on 11 March 1978.

PAS performed very badly in the election (see Table 3.6). The party's lot was made worse by its internal leadership crisis. Just before the election, a number of PAS *ulama* and *ustaz* from the Nilam Puri Islamic institution accused Asri of using and abusing Islam for political gain.<sup>99</sup> Because of the declaration of a state of emergency in Kelantan, the party could not effectively mobilise its machinery in time. The party won only 15.5% of the votes and it

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<sup>98</sup> Despite its early success, BERJASA was not destined to play a major role in Malaysian politics. From 1978, BERJASA's fortunes began to tumble. By 1995, its last candidate in Kelantan lost in the election.

<sup>99</sup> A leaflet signed by a group of *ulama* and *ustaz* who were Kelantan Religious Teachers' Association members accused Asri of using and abusing Islamic terms and symbols for political purposes and referred to him as the 'Modern Muhammad' who had led his people astray. The leaflet was signed by Ustaz Lokman Haji Abdul Latiff (then head of the Kelantan Religious Teachers' Association), Ustaz Nordin Omar and Ustaz Abdullah Rawi Ismail.

won only five parliamentary seats (3.2% of seats) in total. In Kelantan, PAS won only two parliamentary seats; one was Pengkalan Chepa, held by Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. UMNO, on the other hand, was particularly successful in Kelantan: it won five of the 12 parliamentary seats contested. BERJASA won seven parliamentary seats in the state, which showed just how powerful and popular Asri's rival, Mohamad Nasir, had become.

The other three parliamentary seats won by PAS at the 1978 election were all from the northwest coast: two seats in Kedah and one in Penang. These victories were secured by the efforts of other PAS leaders like Ustaz Yusof Rawa, who later assumed a much more important role within the party.

In the state assembly the situation was even worse for PAS. During the special state-level election on 11 March, UMNO won 23 of the 36 state assembly seats while BERJASA won 11. PAS won only two seats. With only two parliamentary and two state assembly seats in its hands PAS totally lost control of Kelantan, which had been its (and Asri's) stronghold since 1959. The loss of Kelantan came as a major psychological blow to the party. As Yahya Ismail notes: '*kali ini bulan purnama gerhana di Kelantan*'.<sup>100</sup> The UMNO-led BN government then appointed a new Chief Minister to the state, Mohamed Yaakob.

PAS fared just as badly in the other states, though it did manage to increase its share of the votes in many constituencies.<sup>101</sup> In Kedah, PAS won two parliamentary seats and seven state assembly seats, but in Terengganu the party failed to win a single parliament or state assembly seat.

Apart from their defeat in the north, the party's poor performance was also reflected in the losses suffered by its leadership. A number of key PAS leaders were defeated, including Asri Muda, who chose

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<sup>100</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, p. 115. Translation: This time, it was the full moon (PAS's symbol) that was eclipsed in Kelantan.

<sup>101</sup> In Johor, PAS contested 12 parliamentary and 23 state assembly seats. Although the party failed to win any seats, its share of the votes increased to 32,512 (for the parliamentary seats) and 25,915 (for the state assembly).

to contest a seat in Kedah in a vain attempt to demonstrate his standing among the Malays in general and to prove that he was popular even outside his home state of Kelantan. The move backfired.

The main gainer among the opposition parties in the 1978 election was the DAP, which together with the Socialist Front parties won 19.1% of the votes. DAP's share of parliamentary seats increased from nine to 16 (10.4% of seats). The Malay-dominated PRM, however, failed to win a single parliamentary seat.

Discredited and demoralised, PAS was forced to come to terms with its losses. The party had to make do with its few parliamentary and state assembly seats. After the election, the few PAS leaders who were still active soon found themselves under pressure from the federal government authorities, including Tuan Guru Nik Aziz, who was forced to stop his *kuliah* (religious lectures) at Masjid Muhammadi in Kota Bharu.<sup>102</sup>

Immediately after the 1978 defeat, Asri and the PAS leaders held an emergency meeting — an electoral post-mortem. Asri laid the blame for PAS's defeat at the doorstep of UMNO. According to him, the main reasons for PAS's defeat were:

- The *fitnah* levelled against PAS by UMNO and BERJASA,
- UMNO's promises of development and investment to the people of Kelantan,
- The intimidation and abuse meted out to PAS members and activists,
- Corruption and bribery on the part of UMNO.<sup>103</sup>

However, none of these factors could explain how and why the party had lost so much support from its natural constituency, the Malay-Muslims of the northeast. Yahya Ismail argues that the leadership of PAS was over-confident and had badly miscalculated. Asri had overstepped the bounds of acceptability in his own conduct of affairs in the state, and he had underestimated the degree of resentment that had built up in Kelantan throughout the

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<sup>102</sup> Jamal Mohd Lokman Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz*, p. 44.

<sup>103</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, pp. 51–52.

1970s. Asri and the PAS leaders had also misread the political climate within UMNO and falsely assumed that Prime Minister Hussein Onn could be easily manipulated and held at ransom.<sup>104</sup> The truth, however, was just the opposite. UMNO under Hussein Onn was a much stronger party than its opponents thought, and its leadership proved more experienced and capable. In the end, it was UMNO that turned the tables on PAS.

PAS's biggest handicap was its apparent lack of ideological commitment and sense of direction. By then it was clear to many observers that as a political party and an ideological alternative PAS was no longer a match for UMNO. The party had lost its bearings and was not certain about its goals and aspirations. The PAS manifesto for the 1978 election was a hotchpotch of vague promises and grandiose projections for the future, most of which were not substantiated or fully explained to the electorate. Writing shortly after the election, S. H. Alatas noted:

*Manifesto pilihanraya 1978 Parti Islam SeMalaysia ini tiada dilandaskan atas pemikiran yang mendalam. Kita ummat Islam akan mengikuti dengan teliti jejak pemikiran tiap-tiap pertubuhan yang menggunakan nama Islam dan kita akan berharap agar usaha-usahanya itu bermutu tinggi dan bersikap luas. (Tetapi) lukisan-lukisan pemikiran yang telah dipamerkan oleh PAS adalah sangat sederhana dan tiada menunjuk keahlian. Secara singkat, PAS tiada mempunyai program yang teratur dan jelas dalam bidang-bidang yang mustahak, tetapi ianya mempunyai tujuan yang jelas dalam bidang-bidang yang kurang mustahak.<sup>105</sup>*

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>105</sup> Translation: The 1978 general election manifesto for the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party was not based on any deep thinking. As Muslims we are naturally attentive of any organisation that uses the name of Islam in its struggle, and we hope that they produce efforts that are broad and all-encompassing, worthy of the name. (But) the sketches of the political programme which have been given to us by PAS show that the thinking within the party remains quite mediocre and of low calibre. In brief, PAS still does not have any clear and ordered programme to deal with major issues, but instead wastes its energy on the most trivial of matters. (Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita Bersama Islam*, p. 159.)

Among the issues and concerns raised in the 1978 PAS election manifesto were social problems like vagrancy, the rise in the number of beggars, the need to clean the urban centres and cities, and the need to protect the moral standards of society. Critics like Alatas argued that the party's understanding of the root causes of these social problems was at best superficial and simplistic:

*Apa yang lebih penting adalah menghapuskan sebab-sebab (masalah ini). Sebab yang utama adalah pengangguran dan masalah ini adalah lebih besar daripada masalah lain seperti masalah pengemis. Apa program PAS untuk membasmi pengangguran? Tidak ada, sedangkan program untuk membasmi pengemis itu ada. ... Dalam manifestonya itu, PAS tidak mencadangkan apa-apa langkah untuk membasmi pengangguran, walaupun secara ucapan hasrat yang tidak jelas butir-butirnya ada sebagai berikut: 'Memberi perhatian keatas kaum buruh, bukan sahaja dari segi keselamatan sosialnya, tetapi yang lebih penting lagi ialah dari segi pendapatannya yang seimbang dengan keperluan hidup masyarakat.'*<sup>106</sup>

PAS's commitment to an Islamic form of economic management, banking and management of land was likewise vague. The party had no clear-cut solutions to the two major problems affecting the country's economy at the time: inflation and structural unemployment.<sup>107</sup> The 1978 manifesto called for land reform, but failed to explain what shape this reform would take. The same was true for

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<sup>106</sup> Translation: What is clearly more important is the need to eradicate the causes of these (social problems). The main cause of these social problems is the high level of unemployment in our society, and this problem is far more important than the problem of vagrants in our cities. Does PAS have a programme to deal with the issue of unemployment? No, although it does have a programme to deal with vagrants. ... In its manifesto, PAS does not offer any steps to eradicate the problem of unemployment, although in principle it agrees to such a goal in its statement of objectives which reads thus: 'To give special attention to the needs of workers, not only in terms of their social welfare but also to ensure that they receive adequate pay in keeping with the needs of living in society (Ibid., p. 160).

<sup>107</sup> Among the major negative side-effects of the boom and bust cycles of the 1970s (intensified by the effects of the 1973 oil crisis) were rising levels of inflation and unemployment. Inflation had risen considerably after the short-lived boom in the immediate aftermath of the *continued p. 287*

its calls for reform in the business and banking sectors. Apart from the oft-repeated claim that it would put an end to the practice of *riba* (interest) in the banking sector, the party leadership failed to provide an alternative system. Most important of all, the party failed to explain just how their reforms would make the economy, banking system and management of the agricultural sector 'more Islamic'.<sup>108</sup>

The confusion over the party's political goals was most explicitly illustrated in the manifesto itself, where it called for a radical overhaul of the country's constitution and the reappraisal of Islam's status as the official religion of the state. As Alatas pointed out:

*Satu pimpinan politik yang cukup daya-fikirannya harus dapat menyatakan tujuannya dengan jelas. Ambillah contoh satu lagi. Demikian bunyinya:*

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n. 107 continued

1973 oil crisis, due in part to the rise in GDP and income levels due to the increase in oil and commodity prices. Prior to 1972, inflation was kept relatively low (1.5-2.5%). From 1972-75, however, inflation rose to an average of 7.5%, partly due to increased local production costs and costs of imports, as well as increased export earnings. Unemployment also became a major problem during the 1970s. The Malaysian government attempted to remedy this problem via increased public expenditure, hoping it would create more jobs. But due to the rapid emergence of the new urban-based manufacturing sector (in a country whose economy had traditionally been geared towards commodity production), many in the labour market were not able to take up the jobs available. Thus the stimulative effects of government spending were cancelled out and the problems of structural unemployment remained. As Okposin and Cheng have pointed out: 'to be successful, vigorous efforts were required to attack structural unemployment and remove rigidities due to supply bottlenecks through improved training programmes, more efficient placements of available workers to jobs and carefully designed public employment arrangements to improve both the quality and mobility of labour'. (Samuel Bassey Okposin and Cheng Ming Yu, *Economic Crises in Malaysia*, p. 83.) Neither the government's economic managers nor members of the opposition parties were sensitive to these requirements, and the government's own attempts to address the problem of unemployment reflected a naive belief in fiscal remedies as the solution to such structurally generated problems.

<sup>108</sup> Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita Bersama Islam*, pp. 162-163.

'Sudah pasti langkah-langkah positif mestilah diambil dan yang pertama sekali ialah meminda perlembagaan negara kita agar pengertian ISLAM AGAMA NEGARA itu diberi takrif atau definasi yang tepat, sesuai dengan maksud kata 'Islam' itu'. Apa yang akan dipinda oleh PAS? Apa definasi yang tepat? Apa yang kurang dalam takrif sekarang? Ini semua tidak dajelaskan oleh PAS sedangkan soal pengemis, soal gas cecair, soal minyak, soal rumahsakit dan lain-lainnya dinyatakan oleh PAS. Ini menunjukkan daya-fikir PAS dalam soal-soal keislaman negara masih lemah.<sup>109</sup>

Thus by the end of 1978, the party was clearly in a state of deep ideological crisis. Unable to articulate its own demands for an Islamic state and Islamisation programme clearly and openly, PAS appeared as a muddled and hybrid political entity no longer sure of its own political and ideological stand on key issues. For the younger generation of Malay-Muslim students who had graduated from the local universities or had returned from higher studies abroad, PAS under Asri Muda no longer seemed to offer a credible Islamist alternative to the brand of conservative nationalism projected by UMNO. Some, like the radical Islamist activist Khalid Samad, even considered the prospect of forming an Islamic party of their own to take up the struggle that PAS had failed to defend.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Translation: Any political leadership that is intellectually competent should be able to state its demands clearly. But not so with PAS. Take another example. In the manifesto the party claims that: 'Positive steps must be taken and the first thing to be done is to revise our national constitution so that the notion of ISLAM as the STATE RELIGION is given a new meaning and understanding in keeping with the proper meaning of 'Islam'. What is it that PAS wishes to amend? Which definition is correct? What is lacking in the present definition? None of these points is clarified in the PAS manifesto, though it goes to great lengths to talk about the problem of vagrants, of liquid gas, of petrol, of clinics and other matters. This shows that PAS's own understanding of Islamic politics is still very shallow (Ibid., p. 165).

<sup>110</sup> Malay-Muslim student activist Khalid Samad returned from higher studies in Europe in the late 1970s, but was disappointed with PAS's performance under Asri Muda. Khalid considered launching a new Islamic party called *Parti Negara Islam* (Islamic State Party, PNI), but this did not materialise as the Registrar of Societies refused to issue a permit. Khalid only joined PAS in 1982, when the *ulama* faction took control. He later became head of PAS Selangor division, secretary of *Dewan Pemuda* and member of the *Jawatankuasa Agung*.

In the wake of the party's performance in the 1978 election, the *ulama* of PAS began to take over the running and management of the party.<sup>111</sup> Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat took over the administration of PAS in Kelantan and began a process of internal party reforms directed towards improving the organisational structure and expanding its scope of activities and influence. One of the first things he did was to increase the number of *kuliah malam* (evening lectures) and *kuliah Jumaat* (Friday lectures) that had been a regular feature in the local mosques and *madrasah*. Nik Aziz identified 35 locations for regular *kuliah*, and ensured that the speeches were directed towards themes relevant to party-political concerns.<sup>112</sup> In Terengganu, the leader of Dewan Pemuda PAS and contender in the 1978 election, Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang, also began to play a more visible role in directing the party at the local level.<sup>113</sup> The slow process of rebuilding the Islamist image of PAS by the *ulama* had begun. As Yahya Ismail describes it:

*Di atas kepingan-kepingan yang berkecai inilah nanti PAS akan bangun semula untuk mengumpulkan kembali tenaga yang terpisah itu. Ia hilang sebuah kerajaan tetapi ia tidak hilang matlamat politiknya yang berdasarkan Islam.*<sup>114</sup>

Following the deplorable performance of PAS at the polls and his own defeat in the state, Asri was forced to concede to the will of the Kelantanese, who were his only political power base in the country. Having lost their support, Asri realised that he could no longer hope to effectively lead the party of which he had been a

<sup>111</sup> Jamal Mohd Lokman Sulaiman, *Biografi Tuan Guru Dato' Haji Nik Abdul Aziz*, p. 83.

<sup>112</sup> Nik Aziz Nik Mat, *Kelantan: Universiti Politik Terbuka*, Nilam Puri: Ma'ahad ad-Dakwah wal-Imamah, 1995, p. 237 n. 19.

<sup>113</sup> From 1976-79 Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang was the leader of Terengganu Dewan Pemuda PAS. He contested for both the parliamentary seat of Marang and the state assembly seat of Manir in the 1978 election, but lost both contests.

<sup>114</sup> Yahya Ismail, *Bulan Purnama Gerhana di Kelantan*, p. 96. Translation: It was upon these shattered remnants that PAS was to rebuild itself and to gather together its scattered forces. The party had lost control of a state, but it did not lose its political objectives which were based on Islam.

member since 1951. Within PAS, Asri's critics pointed out that he had robbed the party of its own Islamist credentials because of his perilous misadventure with UMNO and the scandals surrounding his own leadership. UMNO, on the other hand, had effectively broken PAS's monopoly on Islamist discourse and had gained a degree of Islamist credibility as a result of PAS's entry into the ruling coalition.

However, Asri Muda's troubled days in PAS were not yet over. In the wake of the 1978 fiasco, he was faced with a leadership crisis within his own party that eventually destroyed his political career.

By the late 1970s, the mood within the party had changed radically. PAS members had grown tired of Asri's ethnocentric approach to politics and they pointed to the success of Islamisation programmes in countries like Pakistan as proof that Islamist movements needed to be more proactive and even confrontational to secure their objectives.<sup>115</sup> Other important developments such as

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<sup>115</sup> Pakistan's Islamisation programme began even before General Zia 'ul-Haq took over. In the mid-1970s, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced a series of Islamisation measures, which included a ban on alcohol and declaring the Ahmadis a 'deviationist sect' outside the Islamic community, due to pressure from the Islamist lobby in the country. But on 5 July 1977, General Zia 'ul-Haq launched a *coup* (codenamed 'Operation Fair Play') and took over the government. This came after the 1977 election when Bhutto claimed that foreign elements were trying to topple his government using Pakistani Islamist movements. General Zia deposed Bhutto, who was subsequently charged in court, found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. The death penalty was supported by a number of Pakistani Islamist organisations, including the *Jama'at-e Islami*. During this period General Zia began to co-opt the Islamists of the *Jama'at* to bolster his own Islamic credentials. Some *Jama'at* leaders were given key posts in Zia's government. Khurshid Ahmad was made Planning Minister. Under Zia, the Islamisation programme was intensified even further, culminating in the Hudud Ordinances (on 10 February 1979) which introduced Islamic punishments for crimes such as adultery, fornication, intoxication and homosexuality. Critics argued that it was merely a cosmetic attempt to gloss over the country's socio-economic problems and failed to address the key concerns related to uneven development, poverty, gender inequalities and abuse of power.

the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-76, Israel's attack on Lebanon (in 1978), the attacks on the *Ikhwan* in Syria (in 1979), the storming of the *Ka'aba* in Mecca (also in 1979), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (in December 1979) and the Iranian Islamic revolution all contributed to the intensification of conflict between Islamist opposition movements and their respective governments in the Muslim world. It was hardly a coincidence that in the same year (1979) Tunisian Islamist leader Rachid Ghannouchi set up the *Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Association) in Tunisia, the Egyptian nationalist leader Anwar Sadat ended his experiment with Islamism by openly calling for the separation of religion and politics in the state.<sup>116</sup> Everywhere in the Muslim world the frontier between Islam and secularism was being drawn once again, and Malaysia was no exception.

*Back to the Islamist Struggle: The Intensification of Conflict  
between PAS and UMNO during Asri's Final Years*

*Bersatulah wahai kaum Muslimin,  
Dengan semangat dan roh kebenaran.  
Berjihadlah wahai kaum Muslimin,  
Walau kalah atau capai kemenangan*

PAS's first party anthem.  
Lyrics composed by Asri Muda in 1956  
(see translation on p. 791; Appendix I)

In 1979, Asri Muda found himself isolated and marginalised in his own party. His political blunders in Kelantan had led to a split in PAS and the creation of a new Malay-Muslim party, BERJASA, in PAS's own backyard. The entry of BERJASA into the BN coalition in 1979 made the future seem even more bleak for PAS in the state. Understandably, Asri's main concern by then was to unite the

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<sup>116</sup> Immediately after he set up the *Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*, Rachid Ghannouchi was arrested by the Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba on the grounds of planning an Islamic revolution. In nearby Egypt, Anwar Sadat cracked down on Islamist movements in 1979 by introducing a ban on all Islamist student movements.

party and to somehow rally support. Circumstances, however, were no longer in his favour.

In the wake of the 1978 debacle, other PAS leaders and *ulama* such as Ustaz Haji Yusof Rawa, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang and Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif were growing increasingly confrontational towards UMNO and vocal in their support for Islamist movements abroad (following the Islamic revolution in Iran). The PAS *ulama* also attacked the UMNO-led government by accusing it of working hand-in-glove with the enemies of Islam. PAS leaders began to condemn the state-controlled media, which they accused of fanning the fear of Islamisation in the country. In a speech at the Dewan Masjid Melayu in Taiping in November 1979, Ustaz Baharuddin condemned what he saw as the Islamophobic tendency within UMNO and in the national media:

*Mengenai media massa yang membenci Islam dan harakah Islamiah tidak saja dapat dilihat dari cara dan liputan berita, komen dan ulusannya yang bersifat prejudis kepada cita-cita dan harakah Islamiah, pelaksanaan undang-undang Islam di negara ini tetapi lebih dari itu sanggup merelakan diri menjadi alat kepada kepentingan musuh-musuh Islam, kepada kepentingan Zionis, Kristian, Kapitalisme bahkan Komunis. ... Kita hampir-hampir tidak percaya, sikap anti-Islam media massa tersebut dapat muncul daripada sebuah akhbar yang ahli sahamnya, para pengurusnya dan pengasuhnya malahan para pembacanya hampir keseluruhannya orang-orang yang beragama Islam. [An oblique reference to the Utusan Melayu, Berita Harian and New Straits Times.] Apapun sikap prejudis musuh-musuh Islam kepada Islam dan harakah Islamiah, kita (PAS) akan tetap menyatakan sokongan tegas kepada perjuangan Islam sama ada di Iran atau dimanamana saja Ummat Islam yang sedang melakukan perjuangan menegakkan cita-cita, kebenaran, keadilan dan cara hidup Islam. Musuh kepada perjuangan Islam itu adalah musuh kita bersama.<sup>117</sup>*

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<sup>117</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, pp. 180–181. Translation: On the mainstream media which despises Islam and the Islamic struggle, this is not only evident in their coverage of news, the comments and the editorials which are prejudiced against Islam and the Islamic struggle or the goal of implementing Islamic laws in the country, but it is also seen in the way that they have allowed themselves to be the willing agents of the enemies of Islam, the agents of Zionism, Christians, *continued p. 293*

The hostility between PAS and UMNO was heightened all the more when Hussein Onn's government attempted to totally ban the use of Islamist symbols and slogans in politics. This led to furious protests from PAS leaders, who accused the UMNO leaders of pandering to foreign anti-Muslim interests (chief of which was the Zionist lobby) and local fears voiced by non-Muslim communities wary of the prospect of further Islamisation. Speaking on the issue, Ustaz Baharuddin Abdul Latif accused the UMNO leaders and the government of harbouring Islamophobic tendencies and being traitors to their own religion who only wanted to hold onto their political power:

*Nampaknya penyakit takutkan Islam sedang semakin parah menimpa tokoh-tokoh Barisan Nasional, UMNO khususnya, dan ketakutan itu sedang dengan cepatnya menjadi kebencian kepada Islam itu sendiri. Mengapakah orang-orang yang mendakwa sebagai pemimpin Islam boleh takut kepada Islam, sesungguhnya amatlah sukar untuk difahami. Yang dapat diagak, dan agakan ini mungkin tepat, punca ketakutan itu adalah dari salah anggapan bahawa harakah Islamiah seperti yang dimanifestasikan oleh perjuangan PAS akan menjadi saingan kuat yang dapat menggugat kuasa dan monopoli kekuasaan yang ada dalam tangan UMNO sekarang.<sup>118</sup>*

n. 117 continued

Capitalists as well as Communists. ... We can hardly believe that such anti-Islamic prejudice can come from a newspaper whose shareholders, editors and producers, and readers for that matter, are themselves Muslims. (An oblique reference to the *Utusan Melayu*, *Berita Harian* and *New Straits Times*.) Whatever may be the prejudice that is directed against Islam and the Islamic struggle, we (PAS) will always support any Islamic movement, be it in Iran or in another part of the world where Muslims are struggling to build their cherished hopes and dreams for truth, justice and an Islamic way of life. *The enemies of the Islamic struggle are our enemies as well.* (emphasis added)

<sup>118</sup> Baharuddin Abdul Latif, *Islam Memanggil*, p. 184. Translation: It seems that the disease of Islamophobia which has infected the leaders of the National Front, and UMNO in particular, is quickly turning itself into a hatred of Islam itself. How and why so-called Islamic leaders could be fearful of Islam is something which one cannot understand. The only explanation that one can offer, and this might be a correct explanation, is that the root of their fear of Islam and the Islamic struggle as manifested by PAS lies in their fear of having their monopoly of power challenged and taken away from them.

PAS's attacks on the UMNO-led government were not entirely unreasonable, for in the wake of the 1977-78 crisis in Kelantan and PAS's withdrawal from the BN coalition, the battle-lines between the two parties had once again been drawn in earnest. The UMNO-led government renewed its attacks on PAS and initiated an extensive media and propaganda campaign designed to besmirch the image of the Islamist party as an organisation made up of religious zealots and extremists. While UMNO returned to its Malay-centric agenda of promoting the economic and political concerns of the Malays,<sup>119</sup> PAS was accused of being a 'fundamentalist' party exploiting religion for the sake of furthering sectarian ends. Several attempts, some clandestine, were made to link PAS with other militant Islamist movements both at home and abroad. One such incident occurred in the wake of the Alor Star farmers' riots in 1980.

On 23 January 1980, up to 10,000 Malay farmers demonstrated in Alor Star, Kedah against the government's proposal to introduce a coupon system, which was basically a forced savings scheme: part of the rice farmers' income was to be retained and made redeemable six months later. This scheme proved universally unpopular with both pro-UMNO and pro-PAS farmers, who demonstrated against the government and demanded a RM10 increase in the price of rice. The Kedah state authorities responded by calling on the armed forces, the Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) and the *Polis Hutan* (Police Field Force) to disperse the demonstrators and arrest their leaders. By the end of the demonstrations 90 farmers had been arrested.

In the following days, the government launched a media-orchestrated attack against PAS, claiming that its leaders and activists had masterminded the demonstrations. Seven PAS

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<sup>119</sup> On 30 May-1 June 1980, UMNO organised the Bumiputera Economic Congress in Kuala Lumpur which was aimed at increasing the level of Malay participation in the private sector and increasing Malay equity ownership in the economy. Through such initiatives, UMNO was showing that it was the only party that could successfully defend and promote Malay-Muslim economic interests in the country. UMNO leaders then accused PAS of being too fatalistic and unworldly in its outlook and narrow in its approach to Islam.

leaders, including a PAS state assemblyman, were arrested. The government also claimed that the *Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabillullah*, another radical Islamist group, was behind the violent riots.<sup>120</sup> The UMNO-owned and state-run media then claimed that 'subversive Islamist elements' were planning to launch a campaign of violence and terror in the state. During the round-up of Islamist activists and leaders, PAS *ulama* Ustaz Othman Marzuki was arrested and accused of masterminding the *Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabillullah*.<sup>121</sup> Because this shadowy militant movement had the same initials as the Islamist party (i.e. PAS) both were being tarred with the same brush. PAS leaders argued that the whole story had been cooked up by the UMNO-controlled media in a blatant attempt to demonise the image of the Islamist party and Islamist movements in the country.

The mutual hostility between PAS and UMNO eventually took on a life of its own as more and more Islamist organisations and groups entered the arena. The mood in the country was perceptibly shifting and the process of Islamisation was cast in a more sinister light. Fear of Islamist militancy became all the more justifiable when a number of Muslim extremists took the law into their own hands in October 1980. During the incident, a group of 20 Muslim extremists dressed in white robes and armed with swords attacked a police station at Batu Pahat, Johor. In the attack,

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<sup>120</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Kuala Lumpur: Yale University Press and Universiti Malaya, 1985, p. 276. Little is known about *Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabillullah*, which was said to be a loosely organised militia numbering anything from a few dozen to a few hundred men. Most members were said to be ordinary village men who were also active PAS members or supporters. The organisation was said to have provided basic para-military training to its members, mostly in the form of martial arts and self-defence. Though a number of PAS leaders and members were arrested and questioned, no major discovery of arms or training camps was ever made. Due to the lack of concrete evidence or confessions from those interrogated, the public grew increasingly sceptical about the existence of the movement.

<sup>121</sup> C. N. al-Afghani, *Operasi Kenari: Suatu Hukuman Tanpa Bicara*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Pemuda Press, 1990, p. 125.

23 police staff were killed or injured. Writing in *The Star*, retired Tunku Abdul Rahman claimed that the group was inspired by 'Wahhabis' and had taken their cue from the Sunni militants who had attacked and occupied *Masjid'ul Haram* in Mecca in 1979.<sup>122</sup> Others claimed that the group was inspired by Shia revolutionaries following the Iranian revolution of 1979.

While the situation in Malaysia seemed to deteriorate, developments in other parts of the Muslim world were hardly any better. The war between the Islamists and their respective governments intensified in countries like Egypt, Turkey and Tunisia. Finally, on 6 October 1981, the Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat was killed by members of the Islamic militant group *Jama'at al-Jihad*. Khalid Islambuli, the assassin who fired the fatal burst, cried out: 'I have killed the Pharaoh and I do not fear death.' His movement called for the extermination of all Muslim leaders deemed *munafikin* (hypocrites). It was in the midst of this growing tension and insecurity in the Muslim world that Malaysia experienced its fourth transition of power.

On 17 July 1981, Prime Minister Hussein Onn announced that he would retire after a heart bypass operation in London. Shortly before he stepped down, Hussein Onn launched the *Amanah Saham Nasional* (ASN) share-ownership scheme (on 20 April 1981) that was promoted as yet another effort by UMNO to improve the economic lot of the Malays.<sup>123</sup> Hussein Onn was replaced as Prime

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<sup>122</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman, 'The Fanatics of Batu Pahat', *The Star*, 20 October 1980.

<sup>123</sup> The ASN scheme was an attempt to increase the Malay share of the local Malaysian economy by offering Malays the exclusive opportunity to buy shares in government-sponsored and directed projects. Jomo notes that the ASN scheme had one of the highest levels of participation of any share-ownership scheme in the world, as a result of extensive promotion by the government. By 1987, more than 40% of the Malays in the country had invested in it, but the level of investment was uneven. More than 85% of investors had invested no more than RM500, while a tiny minority (1.3% of those eligible) owned about 75% of the shares. (Jomo Kwame Sundaram, *Growth and Structural Change in the Malaysian Economy*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990, p. 160.)

Minister of Malaysia and President of UMNO by the one-time 'ultra' of UMNO, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.<sup>124</sup>

Dr. Mahathir came to power in the same year as Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. By then the mood of the country had clearly changed and Malay-Muslim society had experienced a visible shift towards the Islamist register. Even the MCP was forced to alter its tactics and on 1 July 1981 it replaced its Voice of Malayan Revolution (VOMR) with the *Suara Demokrasi Malaya* (SDM) station whose broadcasts tended to emphasise the themes of patriotism, nationalism and religion.<sup>125</sup>

Many observers felt that the position of UMNO Deputy President should go to Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, the Kelantanese UMNO

<sup>124</sup> Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was born in Seberang Perak, Kedah in 1925. In his youth he was drawn to the Malay nationalist struggle and he wrote extensively on Malay-related issues and concerns in the local press using the pseudonym 'Che Det'. He was then deeply worried about the state of the Malays in the British colony and their economic and political future should the country be granted independence. He later studied medicine at the King Edward VII College of Medicine at University of Malaya, then in Singapore. After graduating he practised medicine at his MAHA Clinic in Kedah before becoming an active participant in Malay politics. In the 1960s, he was widely regarded as an outspoken radical who condemned both the ineffectiveness of the Malay élite as well as Chinese domination of the Malaysian economy. His conservative approach to politics, staunch defence of Malay rights and privileges and his sustained critique of the traditional ruling élite made him a popular figure among UMNO radicals by the 1970s and early 1980s.

<sup>125</sup> The broadcasts of SDM, based in southern Thailand, were more careful of the sensibilities of its target audience, the Malays of the north. Many of those running the station were Malay communist intellectuals and functionaries who had joined the MCP's 10<sup>th</sup> Malay regiment in the mid-1970s, and they were keen to project a different face of the communist struggle more in keeping with the traditional religious outlook of the Malays themselves. The station was finally closed down after the cease-fire between the government and communist forces in 1989 (Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior*, p. 161).

leader and aristocrat.<sup>126</sup> However, Dr. Mahathir left the matter open during the UMNO general assembly and the delegates voted instead for another UMNO 'ultra', Dato' Musa Hitam,<sup>127</sup> who was subsequently made Deputy Prime Minister.

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<sup>126</sup> Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was born on 13 April 1935 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan. A son of a feudal Kelantanese aristocrat, Tengku Razaleigh enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Kelantan royal family from his early childhood. His family was also one of the richest in the state and it was said that nearly half of the land in Kota Bharu originally belonged to them. He was sent to MCKK, but could not adapt to the strict code of discipline. He was then sent to Andrew School in Singapore before he left in 1957 for Queens University in Belfast, where he studied economics. As soon as he finished he was asked to return home to manage his family's vast estate. While in London, Tengku Razaleigh became a close associate of Tunku Abdul Rahman and Tun Abdul Razak, who both persuaded him to join UMNO and take part in Malayan politics. His father, Tengku Mohamad Hamzah, opened the way for him to enter Kelantanese politics. He took part in the 1962 election campaign, under the tutelage of Tan Sri Hussein Ahmad, but he was not allowed to run for a seat due to his youth and inexperience. In 1963, he was elected to the UMNO executive committee and then to the UMNO supreme council when he was only 28 years old. In 1978, he ran for the post of UMNO vice-president at the party's general assembly and secured more votes than both Ghafar Baba and Musa Hitam. His greatest achievement for UMNO was to win back control of Kelantan in 1978, bringing to an end PAS's long period of rule there (since 1959). In 1981, he was widely regarded as a potential successor to Hussein Onn. However, he was sidelined by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad who allowed Musa Hitam to contest the post of UMNO deputy president. Musa Hitam won, and Tengku Razaleigh missed his chance to get at the first and second posts within the party. Later, he was put in charge of PERNAS, Bank Bumiputra and the Malaysian petroleum company, Petronas. After a major clash of personalities with Dr. Mahathir in 1988, Tengku Razaleigh left UMNO and formed his own political party, Semangat '46 (S46), which fought against UMNO in the 1990 and 1995 elections, but was disbanded by Tengku Razaleigh in 1996. Tengku Razaleigh then re-joined UMNO, but failed to regain the support and confidence of the party members.

<sup>127</sup> Mohammad Sayuti Omar, *Sumpah dan Airmata Reformis Bangsa*, Kuala Lumpur: Tinta Merah, 1998., pp. 94-95.

Dr. Mahathir came to power with the support of a large section of the Malay-Muslim community, in particular the Bumiputera statist-capitalist class.<sup>128</sup> These were the urban-based Malay-Muslims who had benefited from the NEP era and whose economic lot had greatly improved since the early 1970s. As a result of the policies introduced by Tun Razak and Hussein Onn, the Bumiputeras' share of the Malaysian economy had risen from a measly 1.5% in 1969 to 12.5%. (Though it should be noted that the government did not manage to reach the NEP's stated target of increasing the Malay share of the economy to 30%.) For the first time in Malaysian history, an UMNO leader had assumed control of the country with the backing of UMNO Youth and also Malay-Muslim student unions all over the country.<sup>129</sup> As soon as he came to power, Mahathir released all the politicians and student leaders who were detained under the orders of the previous administration.<sup>130</sup>

However, those who hoped that the rise of Dr. Mahathir would lead to a radical change within the neo-feudal political culture of UMNO soon realised that continuity and consistency would be emphasised. After serving as the loyal deputy to Hussein Onn, Dr. Mahathir had come to expect the same degree of loyalty and commitment from his own subordinates and followers. Those who refused were dubbed 'ungrateful traitors' who were disobedient

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<sup>128</sup> Jomo has identified these Malay statist-capitalists as mainly 'Malay politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen' who had benefited greatly from the NEP era (Jomo K. S., *A Question of Class*, pp. 268-269).

<sup>129</sup> Kamarazaman Yacob notes that Dr. Mahathir and Musa Hitam, who were regarded as the 'ultras' of UMNO, received the sympathy and support of many local university student unions and student leaders when they were expelled from UMNO in 1970 (Kamarazaman, *Bersama Anwar ke Penjara*, p. 108).

<sup>130</sup> Chandra Muzaffar (*Freedom in Fetters*, p. 331) notes that during the first few years of Dr. Mahathir's administration, the number of political detainees in the country dropped from 1,200 in 1980 to fewer than 100 in 1985. By September 1987, the number of detainees had dropped to 27, the lowest in the country's history since the ISA was introduced in 1960.

and disrespectful towards UMNO, the protector of Malay interests.<sup>131</sup>

With Dr. Mahathir at the helm of the country, PAS found itself facing the one man who seemed to represent the aspirations and

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<sup>131</sup> Even before he took over as the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir had already shown that he was very much a product of the neo-feudal mindset dominant among the UMNO élite. In his controversial book *The Malay Dilemma*, Dr. Mahathir had argued that feudal values were not necessarily evil or wrong in themselves, provided that within such a feudal system the right sort of leadership could come to power: 'In itself the feudalist inclination of the Malays is not damaging. It makes for an orderly and law-abiding society. People who could follow and observe an unwritten code of behaviour are easily made to observe the written laws of a country. People who accept that a society must have people of varying degrees of authority and rights easily make a stable society and nation. A revolution in such a society is unusual unless led from above. A feudal society is therefore not necessarily a dormant or retrogressive society. It can be a dynamic society if there is dynamism at the top. But when the top fails, or is preoccupied with its own well-being, the masses become devoid of incentive for progress.' (pp. 170–171), and: 'Even feudalism can be beneficial if it facilitates changes. ... The political Rajas of today can therefore institute change if they themselves are willing to change. Such a change would spread rapidly. If the indications are that there should be change in the value system and ethical code, then the leaders can lead the way with the certainty that they will be followed by the masses. In a feudal society, if the leaders fail, there is little hope for the masses.' (p. 173). Although Dr. Mahathir was the only UMNO leader who did not come from a royal or aristocratic family, Chandra Muzaffar (*Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*) has noted that he displayed the same feudal tendencies towards authoritarian leadership even when serving as Deputy Prime Minister to Dato' Hussein Onn. In 1979, the newspapers reported that as Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir had 'reproached some FELDA settlers who were not grateful to UMNO for its struggle which had enabled them to enjoy their comforts'. Dr. Mahathir had then attacked the FELDA settlers for daring to support the opposition parties instead of the ruling UMNO-led coalition (*Ibid.*, p. 97). During the strike of Malaysian Airlines (MAS) workers in February–March 1979, Dr. Mahathir accused the MAS workers of ingratitude and disrespect for  
*continued p. 301*

longings of an entire generation of urban-based, middle-class Malay-Muslims. While Asri Muda had spent his life championing the cause of Malay culture, language and identity, Dr. Mahathir had risked his own career by condemning the traditional feudal culture of the Malays as antiquated, decadent and corrupt. In his book *The Malay Dilemma* he had set out his vision to radically reinvent the Malay race and to bring into being a new generation of Malay-Muslim élite who were economically dynamic, competitive, outward-looking, cognisant of the demands and needs of modernity and the material world, knowledgeable in Islam and yet also beholden to the state.

Dr. Mahathir's vision and understanding of Islam were also radically opposed to those of the traditional *ulama* and radical Islamists. A believer in his own brand of modernist-developmental Islam, Dr. Mahathir had shown that he was unable to tolerate both revolutionary Islamist politics and traditional obscurantist Islam. In 1979, while serving as Deputy Prime Minister under Hussein Onn, he had already warned the Islamist groupings in the country of the danger of emulating the style of the Iranian revolutionaries.<sup>132</sup> This was a clear warning to Islamist groupings like ABIM who were openly sympathetic to the Iranian revolution. Dr. Mahathir also had other reasons to be concerned about the growth of Islamic militancy in Malaysia: in neighbouring Indonesia the conflict over natural resources like oil and gas had turned into a religio-political conflict with the emergence of the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement, GAM) led by Hasan Tiro and the

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the government and UMNO in particular. In some of his outbursts against the MAS union members, he argued that the Malaysian Airlines corporation itself was a result of UMNO's initiatives and that it was because of UMNO that the number of Malay workers in MAS had increased. The decision of the Malay-dominated MAS union to go on strike was therefore seen as a direct defiance of UMNO (Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector?*, pp. 102-103).

<sup>132</sup> This was reported in the *New Straits Times*, 7 July 1979 and *The Star*, 19 July 1979.

religious leader Daud Beureueh.<sup>133</sup> Later, on 28 March 1981, an Indonesian Garuda Airlines DC-9 was hijacked by a group of Islamic militants claiming to belong to a shadowy movement

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<sup>133</sup> The *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement, GAM) was formed in May 1977 by disgruntled Acehnese leaders who felt that the resources of Aceh were being plundered by the central government in Jakarta and who were angered by the Indonesian government's 'demotion' of the status of Aceh as a mere district in the province of North Sumatra. Aceh had played an important role in the region since the coming of Islam and it was one of the first places in *Nusantara* where Islam had taken root. Falling back on the glorious past of kingdoms such as Pasai-Samudera and Aceh, the post-independence leaders of Aceh felt that their region should have been accorded a more prominent status in independent Indonesia. During the revolts of the 1950s and 1960s, the Acehnese leaders were openly sympathetic to the leaders of the *Darul Islam*, PRRI and PERMESTA movements. One of the most prominent religious leaders of Aceh was Daud Beureueh, who had declared himself to be the governor of Aceh (in the 1950s). By the 1970s he was openly condemning the central government in Jakarta for marginalising his province and exploiting its resources. In 1976 the Indonesian government angered the Acehnese even more when it authorised the construction of gas and oil pipelines near Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, after signing a deal with various Western and East Asian oil and gas companies. What began as a conflict over resources soon took on the appearance of a religio-ethnic conflict as religious leaders like Daud Beureueh stepped into the fray. Complicating matters was the anti-government propaganda being issued by Hasan Tiro, another Acehnese leader who claimed to be Aceh's ambassador abroad, based in the United States. In May 1977, Hasan Tiro (after reading a cryptic line in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that he bought in a New York second-hand bookstore, according to his own testimony later) decided to return to Aceh and form the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh Movement, GAM). Daud Beureueh was made GAM's senior *Mufti*, in order to lend the movement some Islamic credentials. GAM at the time had only a few hundred members and a small stockpile of small arms, but the movement made the headlines when they attacked an oil pipeline centre and killed some foreign oil and gas workers. The Indonesian army responded by sending in units of the élite para-commando Kopassandha (later named KOPASSUS) to handle the uprising. Once in Aceh, Kopassandha began to infiltrate the countryside  
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called *Komando Jihad*.<sup>134</sup> The hijackers demanded the release of eighty political prisoners linked to the *Darul Islam* movement and safe passage abroad, but their hijacking attempt was foiled when their plane was stormed by Indonesian para-commandos from the

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and GAM and spread rumours that Hasan Tiro was himself a half-Chinese who had started the movement only to enrich himself. In order to neutralise the religious leadership of GAM, Kopassandha members then kidnapped Daud Beureueh (by injecting the aged cleric with morphine) and brought him back to Jakarta where he was put under house arrest. Once in Jakarta, Daud Beureueh changed his tune and attacked Hasan Tiro and the GAM movement. Hasan Tiro in turn fled Aceh by boat and ended up finally in Sweden, where he became GAM's leader in exile, directing GAM campaigns from abroad. As a result of the harsh handling of GAM and the Aceh question, the conflict in Aceh would remain a problem for the Indonesian government for the years to come. From the 1980s to the present the Aceh conflict remains unresolved and has taken the lives of tens of thousands of innocent civilians as well as GAM fighters and Indonesian soldiers. (See: Ken Conboy, *KOPASSUS: Inside Indonesia's Special Forces*. Jakarta: Equinox, 2003, pp. 261-265.)

<sup>134</sup> The shadowy *Komando Jihad* militia emerged in Indonesia in 1977 under the leadership of the young Indonesian cleric Imran bin Zein. An underground paramilitary movement, it was based mainly in Jakarta and Bandung, West Java, and its members were mainly young disaffected Muslims from the cities. From 1977 to 1978 they were responsible for minor attacks in some of the cities of Java, but their influence and their ability to project their power was limited by their own lack of resources. After the Iranian revolution of 1979, however, the leaders of the *Komando Jihad* claimed that they would embark on a revolutionary struggle against the Indonesian state. In March 1981, members of the *Komando Jihad* staged an attack on a police base outside Bandung and managed to steal a number of small arms. Analysts at the time suggested that the attack on the police base may have been an inside job, with rogue elements of the Indonesian army secretly working to ensure that the arms heist was successful. By then it was widely speculated that the *Komando Jihad* had actually been set up under the watchful eye of Indonesian army intelligence and General Ali Murtopo — a close associate of President Soeharto and the general who had been put in charge of the Indonesian oil company Pertamina — who wanted to use the *Komando* *continued p. 304*

Kopassandha unit (later KOPASSUS) as it sat on the runway at Bangkok's Don Muang airport.<sup>135</sup>

The Prime Minister's strong aversion to outdated traditional Islamic practices was also well known. Like the previous generation of *Kaum Muda* reformers, Dr. Mahathir regarded the 'folk Islam' and popular practices of the Malay-Muslims as fundamentally tainted by antiquated, deviationist and even un-Islamic elements. While the *ulama* laid stress on the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet and lamented that the younger Malays could no longer read and write in *Jawi*, Dr. Mahathir lamented that the Malays were poor in the fields of business, scientific research and heavy industries (see Table 3.7 for figures on corporate sector ownership and control, 1970–80). To prove that Islam was compatible with modernity and development, Dr. Mahathir spent his life trying to develop his own school of Islamic modernist thought.

In both his words and deeds, Mahathir seemed to be diametrically opposed to everything that Asri Muda and PAS stood for. With Mahathir's rise to power, the frontier between PAS and UMNO should have been drawn more clearly than ever before, were it not for one variable factor overlooked by all: Anwar Ibrahim.

In March 1982, Anwar Ibrahim shocked the members of his own ABIM movement by announcing that he was standing as an UMNO candidate in the upcoming election. On 29 March, during a press conference at the Prime Minister's office in Kuala Lumpur, he read out a declaration in which he stated: '*Saya memilih UMNO kerana ia memberi ruang untuk saya untuk meneruskan perjuangan saya,*

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*Jihad* to eliminate opponents of the government and residual elements of the banned Communist Party of Indonesia. Later, on 28 March 1981, members of the *Komando Jihad* staged the hijacking of a Garuda Airlines DC-9, which they directed to Malaysia and finally Bangkok. The hijacking was ultimately foiled by the Kopassandha (later KOPASSUS) unit of élite para-commandos. By then the Indonesian army commanders were distancing themselves from the *Komando Jihad*, and the group had grown beyond their control. Later in the 1980s the Indonesian army and intelligence would provoke the radical Islamists to gauge their strength, but this in turn radicalised them even further.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. pp. 280–287.

dan saya memberi sokongan penuh kepada Perdana Menteri dan parti yang beliau pimpin.<sup>136</sup>

For the members of ABIM, PAS and the other Islamist movements in the country, Anwar's decision was scandalous: ABIM was then widely regarded as one of the most vocal critics of the government and Anwar Ibrahim himself had openly attacked the government's 'Look East' policy on the grounds that countries like Japan and South Korea were secular capitalist states that should not serve as models for a Muslim country like Malaysia.<sup>137</sup> Up to 1982, ABIM was thought to be firmly allied with the Islamist opposition. As we have seen earlier, ABIM even came to the rescue of PAS during the 1978 election campaign, and it was ABIM that lent itself to Asri Muda's PAS in an effort to give the party more Islamic credentials and credibility during its time of crisis. Not only was Anwar regarded as one of the brightest Islamist activists in the country (in 1979 he was praised by Ayatollah Khomeini and awarded the Maulana Iqbal Centenary award by none other than General Zia 'ul Haq of Pakistan), he was also thought to be a potential candidate for the leadership of PAS.<sup>138</sup> Ahmad Lutfi

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<sup>136</sup> Translation: I have chosen to join UMNO because it affords me the opportunity to continue with my struggle, and I hereby pledge my total support for the Prime Minister and the party that he leads.' (Quoted in C. N. al-Afghani, *Rakyat Makin Matang*, p. 19.)

<sup>137</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, p. 22. The 'Look East' policy introduced by Dr. Mahathir's government was intended to promote the efficiency of the Malaysian economy by encouraging Malaysians (the Malay-Muslims in particular) to imitate the work ethic of the Japanese. It was during this time that Dr. Mahathir first began to develop and articulate his own essentialist understanding of 'Asian values' along with Singapore leader Lee Kuan Yew.

<sup>138</sup> In his book *Anwar Dizalimi?*, Mohammad Sayuti Omar claims that Asri Muda had even brought up the matter of Anwar Ibrahim being invited to take over the leadership of PAS with the other leaders of the party. Ever since the election campaign of 1978 when Anwar helped the Islamic party in its confrontation with UMNO, many PAS leaders had warmed to the idea of Anwar being invited to take over the leadership of the party after Asri Muda stepped down. (Mohammad Sayuti Omar, *Anwar Dizalimi: Siapa TPM Baru?*, Kuala Lumpur: Tinta Merah, 1998, pp. 49-50.)

Othman claims that Anwar was even involved in the planning of PAS's election campaigns right up to the time he announced his decision to join UMNO.<sup>139</sup>

However, many observers had forgotten that Anwar had a 'special relationship' with Dr. Mahathir. It was Anwar, after all, who had distributed excerpts of Dr. Mahathir's banned book *The Malay Dilemma* during the meeting of the Malaysian Union of Muslim Students in 1970.<sup>140</sup> Anwar's entry into UMNO was facilitated by a number of UMNO veterans including the Kelantanese UMNO leader Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.<sup>141</sup> Anwar also had a more intimate relationship with the political establishment than he and his followers cared to admit: his parents were both members of UMNO and his father-in-law, Dr. Wan Ismail, was once the director of the government's *Unit Perang Urat Saraf* (Psychological Warfare Unit) and was in charge of co-ordinating the take-over of the universities after the student radicals had been arrested and detained in 1974.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ahmad Lutfi Othman, *Memo untuk Bakal PM*, Batu Caves: Penerbitan Pemuda, 1993.

<sup>140</sup> The excerpt, taken from the chapter 'The Mood of the Malays', was distributed as part of the souvenir programme for the conference. This took place one year before the book was officially banned.

<sup>141</sup> Mohammad Sayuti Omar notes that prior to his entry into UMNO Anwar was invited to the home of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, where the latter first made the proposal to him. It was Tengku Razaleigh who then brought Anwar to meet Dr. Mahathir personally at the Prime Minister's residence, Sri Perdana (Mohammad Sayuti, *Anwar Dizalimi*, p. 68).

<sup>142</sup> Anwar's father, Datuk Ibrahim, was a long-term member of UMNO and his family had benefited from its close links to the party. Anwar's enemies were quick to point out that it was through these close links to UMNO that his father had received shares in Malaysian Oxygen and become a millionaire overnight. Shortly after he joined UMNO, Anwar's mother claimed that her son had been a member of the party for the past ten years — she had been paying his membership fees to the party without his knowledge. However, this revelation did not save Anwar from the attacks of his enemies. (Yahya Ismail, *Anwar Ibrahim: Antara Nawaitu dan Pesta Boria*, Kuala Lumpur: Dinamika Kreatif, 1993.)

Though Anwar claimed that his decision to join UMNO was made only after extensive consultation with others, it was clear that the move was made without consulting the rank and file of the movement that he had led for so long. Like Ibrahim Ali,<sup>143</sup> the other student activist who suddenly defected to UMNO, Anwar had kept most of the ordinary members of ABIM in the dark over the matter. Anwar's critics accused him of treason, and claimed that he had come under the influence of the American-based Islamist thinker Ismail Raji Faruqi, who was impressed by Dr. Mahathir's commitment towards the cause of Islamisation in the country.<sup>144</sup> Anwar's close friends and confidants like prominent *ulama* Ustaz Ahmad Awang warned him that he was more likely to end up sharing the fate of other Islamists who had been swallowed up by UMNO, such as Osman Abdullah and Sanusi Junid. Ustaz Ahmad's warning to Anwar came in the form of a letter listing ten 'dangers' that he had to avoid at all cost. These included not working too closely with the *kafir* of the non-Muslim BN parties, not indulging in the immoral and decadent lifestyle of

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<sup>143</sup> Ibrahim Ali defected from BERJASA to UMNO in 1981, one year before Anwar. In his biography of Ibrahim Ali, Zainal Epi claims that Ibrahim's move from BERJASA to UMNO was facilitated by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (Zainal Epi, *Crossing the Waves*, p. 85).

<sup>144</sup> In an interview with the Islamist magazine *Tamadun* in November 1998, Ustaz Ahmad Awang (then head of the Malaysian Association of Ulama (PUM)) noted that the America-based Islamist thinker Ismail Raji Faruqi was a popular figure among the ABIM leaders. Faruqi was invited to Malaysia to attend ABIM conferences and workshops. While in Malaysia, Faruqi also met Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed and became convinced that he was sincere in his Islamisation programme. Ustaz Ahmad claimed that it was Faruqi who influenced Anwar to become an UMNO member. When he finally joined UMNO in 1982, Anwar claimed that he had been a member of the party since his youth. But according to Ustaz Ahmad, Anwar's decision was never openly discussed. He had joined UMNO without the consent of the Islamist movement: '*Anwar masuk politik (UMNO) dengan tidak direstui oleh gerakan Islam, maka dia terumbang ambing.*' (Anwar joined (UMNO) politics without the consent of the Islamic movement, and so he was always wavering.) (*Tamadun*, November 1998, pp. 9-11.)

the 'secular' UMNO élite and avoiding contact with women as much as possible.<sup>145</sup>

Anwar's sudden resignation from the post of ABIM president caused a major split within the Islamist movement. Siddiq Fadhil became ABIM's next president, but even he could not halt the further haemorrhaging from within the movement as more and more members left to enter politics. Under Siddiq Fadhil's leadership ABIM began to steer itself towards a middle path and during the UMNO-PAS conflicts of the 1980s the soft-spoken and moderate Siddiq was instrumental in developing ABIM to become a peace-maker and negotiator between the two sides.

Some of the other ABIM leaders followed Anwar and joined UMNO, promising to further the cause of Islamisation from within the ranks of the conservative-nationalist party. Other ABIM leaders, including Ustaz Fadzil Noor, Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang, Ustaz Nakhaie Ahmad, Mohamad Sabu and Syed Ibrahim Syed Abdul Rahman, chose to leave the movement and become more active in PAS. Mohamad Sabu went one step further and denounced Anwar in public by calling him a *munafik* (hypocrite) and a traitor to Islam and the Islamist cause — something that Anwar himself had accused Sanusi Junid of in the mid-1970s. Abdul Hadi Awang was then seen as PAS's answer to Anwar and in the same year he was elected as the *pesuruhjaya* PAS in Terengganu.

With the promotion of these ABIM activists within PAS's leadership structure, the character of the Islamist party changed accord-

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<sup>145</sup> In his interview with *Tamadun* magazine, Ustaz Ahmad Awang described the contents of the letter he gave to Anwar before the latter joined UMNO. In the letter, the *ustaz* warned Anwar never to be too close to the *kafir* of the other non-Malay and non-Muslim parties. He advised him to work with them, but forever keep his distance (p. 8). He also warned Anwar never to get involved with women, or to take on the ostentatious and lavish lifestyle of the UMNO élite. Ustaz Ahmad noted that two years after the letter was given, he was asked by one of his followers whether Anwar had kept to the ten warnings given to him. Ustaz Ahmad replied that Anwar had only kept to one of them (p. 8). Ustaz Ahmad noted that after Anwar had joined UMNO they were no longer close. Anwar's lifestyle began to change as he adjusted to the new political environment of UMNO: he began to dress in Western style and enjoyed modern comforts (*Tamadun*, November 1998).

ingly. The 'ABIMisation' of PAS and the rise of the *ulama* faction in the party led to the radicalisation and internationalisation of its concerns. Almost overnight, Asri Muda's party was transformed from an organisation fighting for Malay-Muslim interests into a more dynamic and vocal political movement prepared to challenge the state.

UMNO was saved from the renewed challenge from PAS by Anwar Ibrahim's presence; it gave the conservative-nationalist party the Islamist credentials that it badly needed. Anwar's entry into UMNO enabled the government to more effectively take on the Islamist challenge offered by PAS. During the 1982 election campaign, it was Anwar Ibrahim who served as UMNO's 'hammer against PAS'. Caught off guard at a time when it was experiencing a major leadership crisis, PAS was hardly in a position to fight off the challenge from UMNO and the BN. PAS performed badly once again in the 1982 election.

After a campaigning period of 15 days — the shortest in Malaysian history then — the sixth federal election was held on 22 April 1982, with a voter turnout of 74.4%. For the third time in a row, the BN coalition had a new leader. (In 1974, the BN was led by Tun Razak; in 1978 by Hussein Onn.) The change of leadership and the expectations invested in the new president of UMNO meant that the BN alliance enjoyed advantages over their opponents. After the votes were cast it was clear that the UMNO-led BN coalition had increased its share of the vote to 60.5% (from 57.2% in 1978). BN gained a total of 132 seats in Parliament (85.7% of seats) (see Table 3.8). Among the BN component parties, UMNO did even better than it expected because of the entry of Anwar Ibrahim and the Islamists of ABIM. Anwar won the constituency of Permatang Pauh in Penang and was soon promoted to the rank of junior minister in the Prime Minister's Department. He was later promoted to the post of Culture, Youth and Sports Minister. The entry of BERJASA and Gerakan into the BN coalition also meant that BN had little to fear in Kelantan and Penang.

The fortunes of PAS, on the other hand, were mixed. The party won only 14.5% of the vote, a decline from 15.5% in the previous election. The party won five parliamentary seats (3.2% of seats) as it had in the 1978 election, but its performance in the state assembly election registered a resurgence of sorts. In Kelantan, PAS won four parliamentary seats and 10 state assembly seats — a marked

improvement from the rout it suffered in 1978. In Terengganu, PAS won five of the 28 seats in the state assembly (compared to none in 1978) but in Kedah, the party won only one parliamentary seat (Bukit Raya) and two state assembly seats (*see* Table 3.9). Despite its gains in the north, PAS's share of the vote dropped on the west coast and in the south. The party did particularly badly in Johor. It only fielded six candidates for parliament and 10 for the state assembly and its share of the vote dropped to 18,234 (for parliamentary seats) and 11,232 (for state assembly seats).

The DAP and Socialist Front won 19.6% of the votes and the DAP won nine parliamentary seats (5.8% of seats), a drop from 16 at the 1978 election. Five of the seats won by DAP were in the peninsula; the other four were in East Malaysia. (At the time, PAS's activities were still confined mainly to the peninsula.) Although the Malay-dominated PRM failed to win a single parliamentary seat, it must be noted that once again the parties of the left earned more votes and seats than PAS.

PAS's modest resurgence in the north was partly due to the lopsided development policies introduced in Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah by the BN government after its victory in 1978 in an attempt to develop the local economies and to further consolidate their hold. Some projects inevitably led to the forced acquisition of land or the resettlement of villagers without adequate compensation. The sudden injection of large sums of capital investment and the negative effects of uneven development soon led to new class groupings and political cliques within the states. As the government continued to favour local leaders and communities known to be sympathetic to UMNO and the BN, local rivalries were ignited. Competition between UMNO and BERJASA factions, as well as intra-party conflict among UMNO groupings in Kelantan only worsened the situation for the BN.<sup>146</sup> PAS leaders exploited these local divisions and were able to mobilise support from those who felt that they had been mistreated and marginalised under BN rule.

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<sup>146</sup> By 1982, the gains made by BERJASA in Kelantan were all but lost. Chandra Muzaffar (*Freedom in Fetters*, p. 192) notes that by then 'some continued p. 310

The other important factor that contributed to PAS's gains in the north was the internal leadership struggle within the party that led to the rise of the '*ulama* faction' within the party. It is important to note that in the 1982 election many PAS candidates who won (or retained) their seats were aligned to the *ulama*. While the PAS candidates identified with Asri Muda were defeated, a significant number of those who won were of *ulama* background. This was clearly the case in Terengganu, where all five PAS state assemblymen were prominent *ulama* who enjoyed a considerable following in the state. Leading the pack was Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang, who became a party vice-president in 1989.<sup>147</sup> In Kedah, PAS's old guard led by men like Datuk Abu Bakar Umar and Datuk Sudin Wahab was also defeated by new guard *ulama* such as Ustaz Fadzil Noor and Ustaz Nakhaie Ahmad.

In the wake of the 1982 election, the PAS leadership was forced to address the fundamental problems and weaknesses within the organisation. The election results had shown in no uncertain terms that the party had reached a critical point in its development and that a radical overhaul was necessary. The problem was that the biggest obstacle to change within the party was Asri Muda himself, the man who had fed and nurtured PAS from the day it was born.

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*n. 146 continued*

of the BERJASA assemblymen had neglected their constituencies. There was a great deal of bickering and BERJASA's leadership was not capable of developing the party.' UMNO, on the other hand, was divided against itself in Kelantan. Kelantanese UMNO leader Tengku Razaleigh was at odds with another local UMNO faction that supported UMNO deputy president Musa Hitam. The pro-Musa faction in Kelantan was then led by the state's Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Hussein Ahmad. As a result of this intra-party squabble, UMNO could not effectively mobilise its party-political machinery in Kelantan (*Ibid.*). In the end, BERJASA won only four state assembly seats while UMNO won 22.

<sup>147</sup> The other four PAS state assemblymen were Ustaz Harun Taib, Ustaz Abu Bakar Chik, Haji Wan Abdul Mutalib Embong and Haji Mustafa Ali. Abdul Hadi Awang described the five as the 'five fingers' which formed the 'fist' of PAS that would break down the hegemonic hold of UMNO in Terengganu (Zulkifli Sulong, *Operasi Tawan Trengganu*, p. 36).

*The Curtain Closes: Mohammad Asri Muda and  
the 'Lost Years' of PAS*

*Sehebat mana pun individu itu, apabila telah terkeluar meninggalkan perjuangan, lebih-lebih lagi menyertai kumpulan yang menjadi seteru kepada perjuangan Islamnya, dia akan ditinggalkan. Pemergiannya bukan sahaja tidak ditangani malah dialu-alukan justeru itu mungkin lebih baik bagi seorang pemimpin yang tidak dapat menghayati dasar perjuangan parti yang sebenarnya. Bak kata peratah: yang patah akan tumbuh, yang hilang akan berganti.<sup>148</sup>*

Badlihisam Mohamad Nasir,  
*Isu Personaliti Dalam Gerakan Islam Tanah Air*

The achievements of PAS during the period of Mohammad Asri Muda's presidency were, at best, mixed. The man was neither an Islamist intellectual nor an *ulama*, and his standing within the party seemed, for a while at least, to be based purely on his skills as a charismatic orator who was gifted with a *suara emas* (a 'golden voice'). As Sayuti Omar says:

*Justeru itu sesetengah orang menganggap modal atau kelebihan Asri memimpin PAS adalah dengan suara, bukan akal; dan dia telah menudukkan penyokongnya bukan dengan harta dan pangkat tetapi dengan kepetahanannya berpidato dengan menarik. Namun kehebatan itu berakhir juga.<sup>149</sup>*

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<sup>148</sup> Translation: No matter how great an individual leader might be, as soon as he departs from the path of struggle, or joins with those who are opposed to the struggle of Islam, he will be abandoned. His passing will not be regretted; in fact it will be applauded so that there might be other leaders who can live up to the struggle in the real sense. As the saying goes: what was broken can grow again, what was lost can always be replaced (Badlihisam Mohamad Nasir, 'Isu Personaliti dalam Gerakan Islam Tanah Air', *Tamadun*, August 1999, p. 37).

<sup>149</sup> Translation: Thus many came to the conclusion that the strength of Asri's leadership within PAS was based more on what he said than what he thought; and that he was able to maintain such a high level of support not through riches or status, but through his formidable oratory skills. But in the end even Asri could not maintain his hold forever (Mohammad Sayuti, *Salam Tok Guru*, p. 142).

Through the brief period of 'cohabitation' with UMNO and the BN alliance, PAS under Asri Muda had managed to break into the charmed circle of mainstream national politics, but at a terrible cost to its reputation, credibility and its membership. As a result of this brief flirtation with power, PAS lost some of its leaders to UMNO and the government. Others became thoroughly disillusioned and disappointed with the direction that the party leaders had taken, and consequently left the party to form alternative movements and parties of their own.<sup>150</sup>

Asri Muda's presidency was also the period when PAS projected itself as the party of Malay rights and Malay interests. In this regard, Asri Muda was perhaps the party's strongest advocate and defender of the Malay position, even more than the previous leaders. His strong stand on Malay issues and concerns stemmed from his own past as a Malay radical nationalist, and Asri's profile as a Malay leader has been summed up by Chandra Muzaffar thus:

In fact, of all the leaders that PAS has had in its long and chequered history, it is perhaps Asri who was the most ardent advocate of the Malay position, or Malay 'nationalism' in the political parlance of the day.<sup>151</sup>

Along with other prominent PAS figures like Ustaz Haji Yusof Rawa and Ustaz Khaidir Khatib, Asri travelled widely in Malaysia and the rest of the Malay archipelago, visiting other Malay-Muslim organisations and movements in his effort to strengthen the ties of language, religion and culture that bound the Malay peoples together.<sup>152</sup> In Indonesia, he gained considerable support and

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<sup>150</sup> James Scott has noted the effects of Asri's policies on the local perceptions of ordinary PAS supporters in the rural areas. Scott notes that 'for many local PAS members, the decision of Datuk Asri and the other leaders of PAS to enter the ruling coalition was an act of betrayal. Their sense of having been sold out was so strong that when he later turned to the opposition they were sceptical. It did not change their own membership of PAS, which was firmly rooted in local realities. But it did shake their confidence in the party leadership. As many farmers (in Kedah) put it: "He (Asri) took government wages."' (James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 224 n. 53).

<sup>151</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia*, p. 56.

<sup>152</sup> Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 4.

respect among both the Indonesian Islamists and the nationalists in the same way his predecessor Dr. Burhanuddin had done. His support for the cause of the Malay-Muslims of Patani in southern Thailand also made him exceedingly popular in the region, though it was an embarrassment for the UMNO-led government. It was clear that throughout his political career he was a defender of Malay rights and identity above all else. But unlike Dr. Burhanuddin before him, Asri could not reach out to a broader audience because of his own personal chauvinism that became the hallmark of his political legacy. In time, Asri Muda became known for the two fundamental biases that would taint him and his party for years to come: his defensiveness towards the non-Malay minorities and his abhorrence of socialism and communism.

### *Asri Muda and the Chinese Question*

Let us pause awhile, and look around in the midst of any *kampong* [hamlet], the domain of the Muslims; ... you will see that those who sell rice to the *kampong* folks are Chinese, ... those who carry water ... are Chinese, and those who cut and sew for the majority of the inhabitants are also Chinese! By the looks of it, one would imagine that our religion, Islam, prohibits working hard for an honest living! Verily this is a curse of the Almighty upon us!

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi,  
*Menuntut Ketinggian akan Anak-anak Negeri.*  
*al-Imam*, 1907<sup>153</sup>

During the time of Asri Muda, PAS developed a reputation for being a Malay-centric party that catered solely to the interests and concerns of the Malay-Muslim constituency. The narrow ethno-nationalism of Asri Muda was in many respects different, if not antithetical, to that of the party's previous leader Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy.

Dr. Burhanuddin had, as we have seen earlier, tried to develop an understanding of Malayan nationalism not confined solely to

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<sup>153</sup> Syed Sheikh al-Hadi, 'Menuntut Ketinggian akan Anak-anak Negeri', *al-Imam*, II(1) (12 July 1907): 25-31. Quoted in Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hadi*, p. 184.

the categories of race and ethnicity. The 'Malayan' nationalism of Dr. Burhanuddin was predicated on practical and strategic concerns such as a sense of loyalty and belonging to the country and a willingness to recognise Malaya (later Malaysia) as one's homeland. However, it must also be noted that Dr. Burhanuddin (like many Malay nationalists of his generation) was a second-generation descendant of migrants from other parts of the archipelago. The families of Dr. Burhanuddin, Ahmad Boestamam and others were originally from Sumatra or Java and so they invariably understood the concept of Malay identity in broader and more abstract terms.

The same could not be said for the *anak watan* (local) Asri Muda, who regarded himself as a *bumiputera* in the truest sense of the word. Born in Kelantan and educated in Malaya, Asri's worldview was distinctly narrower than that of his peers. Though his first forays into the arena of nationalist politics began with his entry into the radical PKMM, Asri's understanding of Malay nationalism was forever anchored on essentialist categories of blood and belonging. For Asri, who had spent much of his life in the predominantly Malay state of Kelantan, the multiracial and cosmopolitan environment of Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Ipoh, Singapore and Malacca was a world apart. Unlike previous PAS leaders such as Dr. Abbas Elias, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy and Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad, Asri did not have the advantage of being educated abroad: he had learned the rules of politics in the university of life on the streets and alleyways of the towns and *kampungs* he visited in his youth.

It must be remembered that Asri was first and foremost a Malay nationalist and activist whose natural constituency was the Malay people. Asri had always regarded the Chinese and other minority communities as 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' who never really belonged to *his* country. This was partly because he had entered the world of Malay politics at a time when the non-Malay minorities in the country were not yet fully-fledged citizens. Like many other Malay-centric ethno-nationalists of his generation, Asri found it difficult to adjust to new circumstances where the non-Malays had to be accepted as citizens with the same political, economic and cultural rights as the Malays.

Unlike the Tunku and other Alliance leaders, Asri had never been forced to the negotiating table to bargain with other communities

such as the Chinese and Indians. It was hardly surprising, then, that he chose to bring his Islamist party into the Alliance (and later BN) when the more Malay-centric UMNO leader Tun Razak came to power. Tun Razak's strong defence of Malay rights and privileges was articulated through a vocabulary that Asri himself understood and was familiar with. This was a language that spoke of the Malay-Muslims as the *bumiputera* and the dominant race in the country.

From this Malay-centric perspective, Asri could only view the non-Malay communities with a combination of apprehension and fear. In 1953, he was one of the PAS leaders who spoke out against the Alliance's proposal to extend citizenship rights to the non-Malays. PAS's failure to block this measure led to more than a million Chinese being given Malayan citizenship in 1957, the first year of Malaya's independence. From then on, Asri waged an incessant struggle to halt what he saw as the erosion of Malay rights and the marginalisation of the Malay community within their own country.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time when the sensitivities of both the Malays and non-Malays were being severely tested by different, at times conflicting, claims for cultural autonomy or assimilation. At the heart of the conflict was the crucial question of what Malaysian identity should be based on. At stake were the status of the Malay and non-Malay languages and cultural practices held dear by all the communities concerned. The stand-off between the Malay and non-Malay cultural groups continued all the way up to the late 1970s, and the 'national dress' controversy of 1978 showed that neither side was willing to come to any sort of workable compromise.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> The '*songkok*' or 'national dress' controversy of 1978 revolved around the question of what should constitute Malaysian national dress. Since independence in 1957, the Malaysian government had been trying to develop a mainstream national culture that could unite all the major ethnic and cultural groups in the country. Due to the sensitivity of the matter, the project of nation-building never really developed in tandem with the other major government programmes. In 1978, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) administration decided that all students graduating that year must wear national dress at the graduation ceremony. This included *songkok* (the black Malay felt or velvet cap), the traditional Malay shirt and the *samping* (waist-cloth) *continued p. 317*

During this period, Asri Muda was among the Malay-Muslim leaders who spoke out against the demands of the Chinese community, in particular the Chinese cultural and educational lobbies. He attacked the People's Action Party (PAP) in Singapore, denouncing them as Chinese communist sympathisers. He also attacked the MCA and the Chinese education lobby when they mounted their protest against the Talib Education Report in 1960. When the Chinese guilds and education lobby called for the creation of a Chinese higher education college (to be named Tunku Abdul Rahman (TAR) College) and a Chinese university (to be named Merdeka University) in 1968, Asri Muda was one of the most vocal critics of the plans. And when Chinese parties such as the MCA began to call for a multiracial national culture instead of a national culture based primarily on Malay-Muslim identity, it was Asri who led the attacks on the Chinese leadership as a whole.<sup>155</sup>

Asri succeeded in pushing his agenda and making his voice heard on all these issues when he and PAS were both in and out of

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under their robes. Non-Malay students immediately protested against the move, claiming that it would rob them of their own ethnic identity. The non-Malay opposition parties came to the support of the non-Malay students, claiming that the policy would lead to cultural assimilation by force. In the end, a compromise was reached: non-Malays were allowed to wear Western-style suits, but they still had to wear the *songkok*. This option was also rejected by the non-Malay students; 85% of them refused to participate in the graduation ceremony.

<sup>155</sup> In the early 1970s, the MCA leadership under Tan Siew Sin was forced to push its own Sino-centric agenda under pressure from the DAP and the Chinese education lobby. In 1972, the MCA education sub-committee organised a conference to defend and promote the continued existence of Chinese schools and the use of the Chinese language in Malaysia. This was followed in 1974 with a series of economic seminars where the MCA courted the support of the Chinese business community and local entrepreneurs to ensure that the Chinese share of the Malaysian economy would never drop below the 40% equity mark set by the NEP. Later in the same year, the MCA organised a Chinese Cultural Conference in Penang which concluded with the resolution that the national culture of the country should not be a monolithic one solely derived from Malay culture.

the BN. His attacks on the leadership of the Chinese community were directed at both the DAP and the MCA, which was also in the BN. Though the UMNO leaders were embarrassed by Asri's chauvinistic stance on many occasions, it must be remembered that Asri Muda was not alone in his struggle to defend Malay supremacy and dominance in the country. At this time he found that his own Malay-centric leanings were shared by some of the more Malay-centric leaders of UMNO such as Harun Idris, Jaafar Albar and Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

Asri's narrow Malay-centrism was thus typical of the time. His engagement with the discourse of Malay rights and cultural supremacy reflected the concern of the Malay political élite in the 1970s, but it did little to improve the general understanding of Islam as a universal religion with a message directed to humanity as a whole. As Chandra wrote:

(PAS) has all along demanded the 'restoration of Malay sovereignty' primarily because of the indigenous status of that community. What is important is that its demand had been presented in the name of Islam. Even a cursory analysis of PAS's philosophy (in the 1970s) will reveal that its insistence upon Malay political pre-eminence, Malay economic pre-eminence and Malay cultural pre-eminence have been articulated as a way of protecting the integrity of Islam. ... The willingness to live with Bumiputeraism, and worse still, to defend it at times, shows that the real spirit of Islam has not crystallised.<sup>156</sup>

It was hardly a surprise, then, that throughout Asri's period of leadership PAS had hardly managed to attract any non-Malay Muslims to the party's cause. In the 1970s, PAS may have been an Islamist party, but the frontiers of PAS's *ummah* were still demarcated by the concerns of race and ethnicity above all else.

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<sup>156</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *The Universalism of Islam*, Penang: Aliran, 1979. Quoted in Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 156–160. Chandra (p. 159) goes on to point out that 'This lack of interest in the position and status of the non-Muslims among the so-called 'champions of Islam' in the 1970s is no different from the lack of concern for non-Malays and non-Muslims exhibited by PAS in the past. It is because there isn't this concern that no Muslim group in the country has taken up cudgels on behalf of the non-Muslim poor.'

### *Asri Muda and the Communist Question*

One other area where Asri Muda differed with the previous leadership of the Islamist party was the question of the communist movement and its struggle both in Malaysia and abroad.

As seen earlier, the previous generation of PAS leaders was relatively open to the question of communism and the communist struggle in Malaya. Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy was widely regarded as an Islamist leader with strong leftist leanings — something he did not deny. However, Dr. Burhanuddin qualified his tacit support for the left on the grounds that he regarded socialism and communism as being the symptoms of the structural weakness and failure of the colonial-capitalist system. Communism, for Dr. Burhanuddin, emerged out of a popular revolt against injustice and exploitation; and though he did not agree with the secular and materialist philosophy upon which communism was erected, he never denied the right of people to engage in such an ideological struggle. Furthermore, Dr. Burhanuddin also recognised that the growth of communism during the 1960s was part and parcel of a wider global conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs. His own antipathy towards the pro-Western government of the Tunku necessarily led him to support in principle the struggle of the communists in the same way that he supported all anti-Western and anti-colonial movements.

This view of communism was not shared by the ethno-nationalist Asri Muda. It was well known to all that Asri Muda's loathing for communism as an ideology bordered on the pathological. Yet his abhorrence of communism as an ideology is difficult to fathom when we consider that his own early days in politics were spent in the company of the radical Malay left. Although he began his political career among the radicals of the PKMM, it could never be said of Asri Muda that he was a staunch believer of any leftist ideology. His own understanding of communism and socialism, as was made evident later when he took over PAS, was at best superficial and caricatural. This fundamental difference of belief and commitment became even more pronounced by the late 1960s when PAS under Asri parted from its own allies of PRM and the Malay left.

Asri's rejection of communism can be better understood when it is analysed in its proper historical context. For him, communism

was embodied by the Chinese-dominated MCP that was 'directed from Peking' and engaged in a war against the Malaysian state. The (largely Chinese) guerrillas of the MCP were known for their attacks on government security forces, most of whom were Malay. Their attacks on state officials and the traditional ruling élite, both regarded by the MCP as collaborators with the Japanese and, later, British colonial authorities, also heightened the level of racial tension between the Malays and the Chinese in the country. Inevitably, many Malays came to see the 'communist threat' in racial terms as the communists were identified mainly with the Chinese community. This effectively tarnished the appeal of communism as an alternative ideology for the Malays and reduced it to a communitarian concern.

Asri found it impossible to work with the communists, whom he regarded as outsiders and insurgents in his country. His brand of culturally exclusive Malay-centric nationalism rooted in the ethno-centric discourse of the time was less developed than Dr. Burhanuddin's. Unlike Dr. Burhanuddin, who saw both the need and utility of creating instrumental coalitions with other ideological streams, Asri preferred to work only with those Malay-Muslim movements close to him both personally and politically. During Asri's time PAS began to voice its concern about the spread of communism in the ASEAN region, and the tone taken against the communists of Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia was much harsher than that of Dr. Burhanuddin's. (It should also be noted that during the failed GESTAPU *putsch* against the government of Soekarno in neighbouring Indonesia in 1965, the blame for the revolt was put squarely on the shoulders of the PKI who were accused of working with and for the Communists of China. This merely reinforced the already strong and deep rooted anti-Chinese prejudice that had taken root in many parts of Southeast Asia.) Some major writers and party supporters, such as Bachtiar Djamily,<sup>157</sup> even went as far

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<sup>157</sup> Bachtiar Djamily @ Imbang Jaya was born on 10 November 1929 in West Sumatra, Indonesia. He attended Dutch schools in his youth but also studied Islam and Arabic on his own. He joined the nationalist movement in the 1940s and after the war became a member of the *continued p. 321*

as arguing that communism was the greater threat to PAS than UMNO.<sup>158</sup> For Asri Muda, the threat of communism in Malaya was often conflated with the threat of the Chinese taking over the country and marginalising the Malays: in the end, the 'communist threat' and the 'Chinese threat' merged as one. Needless to say, when Tun Razak led a government entourage to China and met

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Indonesian Nationalist Army in Sumatra. He took part in the Indonesian war of independence, 1945-47. In 1948, he came to Malaya and was forced to remain due to the declaration of national Emergency. In Malaya, he turned to journalism and worked on Malay newspapers such as *Utusan Melayu* and *Warta Negara*. He returned to Indonesia from 1955-59, and became Soekarno's favourite journalist. Later he fell out of favour with Soekarno because of his stand on Islam and his defence of Muslim concerns. He was also known for his anti-communist feelings, which angered the PKI. His writings were banned by Soekarno's government. After the failed *coup* of 1965 and the downfall of Soekarno, Djamily returned to the world of journalism but his own writings grew increasingly Islamist in outlook. He published his own newspapers, *Jihad* and *Jiwa Proklamasi*, but they were banned by the New Order regime of Soeharto which was increasingly hostile to Islamist concerns. In 1976, he returned to Malaysia and became a supporter of PAS. In the same year, he won the first prize for literature from the Selangor Religious Council for his book *Air Mata Tok Ngah Jusoh*, Petaling Jaya: Cerma Rafleswaty, 1976. His other writings include *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS* (1976) and *Bagaimana Melawan Subversif Komunis* (1977).

<sup>158</sup> In his work *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?* (1976), Bachtiar Djamily argued that Soekarno was a weak leader who in reality harboured communist sympathies. Djamily argued that the real power in Indonesia in the 1960s was held by the communists of the PKI and that Malaysia was right to engage in its confrontation against Indonesia. Condemning the Indonesian government as a puppet and tool of Moscow and Beijing, he argued that communism was a threat to world peace and the stability of small countries like Malaysia. He also argued that the break-up of Pakistan was due to the efforts of the communists, who were supporting the Awami League of Bengali leader Sheikh Mujib'ur Rahman. Djamily's anti-communist sentiments moved him to write another book on the subject, *Bagaimana Melawan Komunis Subversif* in the same year. (See Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?* and *Bagaimana Melawan Komunis Subversif*.)

with Mao Zhe Tung in May 1974, Asri Muda was not a member of the delegation.

Asri's brand of anti-communism was also reflected in the policies of the party that he led. During the Asri era PAS distanced itself from leftist and communist-inspired political movements in the country as well as the rest of the world. So strong was this anti-communist attitude that when the newly independent state of East Timor was overrun by Indonesia's armed forces in December 1975, not a word of protest was uttered by the PAS leaders, who shared the view that the newly independent state was about to fall into the hands of a leftist government and become the next Cuba in Southeast Asia.

With a leader like Asri at its head, PAS could no longer maintain its links with the leftist parties and movement in the country. When Ahmad Boestamam (the founder-president of PRM) was replaced by the leftist intellectual and activist Kassim Ahmad, the gulf between PAS and its old Socialist Front allies grew even wider. PRM had by then changed its name to the *Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia* (Socialist People's Party of Malaysia, PSRM). While Kassim Ahmad injected PRM's political struggle with the ideology of scientific socialism, Asri injected PAS's struggle with ethnocentric concerns such as the preservation of Malay political dominance and cultural superiority. The leftists rejected such communitarian concerns as detrimental to their class struggle. As a result of Asri Muda's exclusivist outlook, PAS was even more isolated in the 1970s than before.

It was this growing sense of powerlessness and isolation that drove Asri Muda to bring his party into the BN coalition from 1973-77. But Asri Muda's commitment to Malay concerns and interests was so strong that he was prepared to defend them even after he had brought his party into the fold of the multiracial BN coalition, much to the consternation of the BN leaders who were preoccupied with the task of keeping the inter-racial consensus together.

During the five years that PAS was within the BN coalition, Asri Muda made many demands for the protection and promotion of Malay interests in areas such as language and education policy. On other occasions, his defence of Pan-Malay unity threatened to embarrass the Malaysian government, which was trying to improve its relations with its neighbours. For instance, on 13 June 1974 Asri actually committed his party to supporting the Patani

liberation movement's armed struggle in southern Thailand.<sup>159</sup> While Prime Minister Tun Razak (and, later, Hussein Onn) was left to deal with the political fall-out from Asri's statements, Asri was prepared to commit himself, his party and his coalition partners to policies and ideological stands that would jeopardise both the fragile inter-ethnic balancing act within BN as well as Malaysia's relations with its non-Malay neighbours like Thailand.<sup>160</sup>

Asri's main hope was to revive PAS's image by presenting it as the sole party that would stand up for the Malays on the question of their rights and privileges. However, his mistake lay in his own parochial outlook that remained impervious to developments in the Muslim world in general. By the 1970s, the mood had changed and the concerns of Malay nationalism had given way to other, broader concerns related to the ideology of pan-Islamism. Asri's insistence on pushing the Malay cause did not win him new supporters, but instead cost the party in terms of loss of support to other movements more universal and pan-Islamist in their outlook.

PAS's entry into the ruling coalition also exposed its leaders to a new unanticipated danger: the lure of power itself. In time, PAS's leaders grew accustomed to the perks and privileges of power, and Asri and his network of cronies and confidants found themselves

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<sup>159</sup> The reaction to Asri Muda's speech in support of the Patani Malays was immediate: Thai newspapers like *Prachaitipatai* and *Daw Siam* accused the Malaysian government of aiding the Patani insurgents whom they regarded as traitors to the Thai state and government (W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, 1990, p. 159).

<sup>160</sup> Alias Mohamed notes that: 'For Asri's PAS, support for the Patani secessionist movement, it was hoped, would prove beneficial in the long run because, should the movement succeed in its separation demand, it would greatly augment the political strength of the party and also help to off-set non-Malay threats to the position of the Malays in the peninsula.' (Alias Mohamad, 'The Pan Malaysian Islamic Party', p. 168). But the UMNO-led federal government was not prepared to let Asri's antics get in the way of improving political relations with Thailand, with which Malaysia shared a 500-km border. The Malaysian government was more interested in securing the support of the Thai government and armed forces to conduct joint military operations to wipe out the communist guerrilla networks still operating across the Malaysia-Thai frontier (W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism*, p. 160).

cut off from their own traditional followers and supporters. After several years in power, PAS leaders were seen as distant and aloof. Their connection with the ordinary Malays whom they claimed to represent had weakened and their standing in traditional Malay society had declined accordingly. Bachtiar Djamily wrote about the decline of the image of PAS's leaders thus:

*Kesukaran PAS untuk mendapat pemimpin (dan) kemerosotan beberapa pemimpin PAS di mata orang ramai juga terjadi kerana pandangan seperti di atas tadi juga. Ada beberapa pemimpin PAS yang dulunya disanjung dan dipuja oleh rakyat, kerana ia tekun beribadat, teguh dengan adat resam Melayu, tidak hanyut di landas arus moden, tidak teperdaya dengan pujuk rayu hidup bertentangan Islam. Tetapi setelah pindah ke bandar, setelah jadi orang yang penting, perhatiannya kepada amal ibadat sudah berkurang. Lawatannya kekampung tidak seperti dulu lagi, bahkan pakaiannya juga sudah moden dan melampau mengikut pandangan orang kampung.<sup>161</sup>*

The drop in PAS's credibility thus opened the way for new actors to arrive on the political scene. Due to the shifting fortunes of PAS and its apparent lack of focus and commitment to political Islamism, a number of new Islamist movements and organisations tried to break into the political mainstream of the country. These included ABIM as well as many other Islamic fundamentalist groupings and pietist movements such as *Darul Arqam* of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad.

Within PAS itself there were also radical changes and upheavals directly brought about by Asri's style of leadership and approach. His undue emphasis on Malay nationalism and Malay-related con-

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<sup>161</sup> Translation: The difficulty that PAS faced when trying to attract new leaders (and) the decline of the image and standing of PAS leaders in the eyes of the public were also due to these reasons. In the past, PAS's leaders were respected by the people because they were men of faith, men who stood by the customs of the Malays, were not carried away by the current of modernisation, were not taken in by the appeal of a lifestyle contrary to Islam. But after they moved to the capital and they became men of standing, their adherence to the rites and rituals of their faith began to wane. They no longer visited the villages as often as they did before; the clothes they wore were modern and it was too much for the village folk (Bachtiar Djamily, *Kenapa PAS Boleh Jadi PAS?*, p. 17).

cerns not only created a backlash among the more Islamist-inclined members of the party, but also opened the way for the emergence of the 'ulama faction' that supported a less communal approach to politics. Asri tried to defend his own brand of Malay-centric politics, but was accused of not doing enough to push the Islamist agenda. His opponents were quick to point out that he had not built a single mosque in Kelantan despite PAS having been in power there for so long.<sup>162</sup> By the time he was forced to leave the party, Asri had unwittingly laid the foundations for a more radically Islamist party different in terms of its outlook, orientation, objectives and discourse.

With the hand of all turned against him, Asri realised that his days as party president were numbered. He could no longer count on the support of his own local constituency, and his credibility in his home state of Kelantan was lost forever. Successive scandals and accusations of corruption, nepotism and abuse of power levelled against the party leadership meant that PAS was no longer able to occupy the moral high ground in its confrontation with the UMNO-led government.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Alias Mohamad, *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition*, p. 19.

<sup>163</sup> In an interview with the author in 1999, the fifth president of PAS, Haji Yusof Rawa, noted that: 'Asri was a mixed personality and he had his good points as well as his bad ones. Asri's own religious credentials were not so impressive. His religious education stopped in Malaysia. He only went to local Malay *madrasah*. Like Burhanuddin, Asri's commitment to Islam was coloured and shaped by his nationalism. At the time, it seemed that what he did was for the good of the party. But there are also many people who think that his record was more 50-50. During that time, when PAS was with UMNO in the Barisan, there were many PAS members who benefited as well. Some of us were made deputy ministers, ambassadors, etc. But many others disagreed with Asri's policy of negotiation and co-operation with UMNO. They did not believe that it could work and felt that it was immoral. In the end, it was clear that PAS was being manipulated and used by the UMNO government. We had to leave the alliance and we learnt a lot from that experience. It was a bitter lesson for us. But we learnt to be self-reliant and we learnt to be careful when making alliances with other parties in the future.' (Interview with Haji Yusof Rawa, 18 August 1999.)

By 1982, the stage was set for Asri's final appearance. By then the middle-ranking leadership of PAS belonged to a more radical faction that wished to place the *ulama* at the helm of the party, following the example set by the Iranian revolution. This grouping, known as the '*ulama* faction' of PAS, was led by prominent PAS *ulama* such as Ustaz Yusof Rawa (who became deputy president of PAS in 1981) and Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat as well as ex-ABIM leaders including Ustaz Fadzil Noor, Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang, Ustaz Nakhaie Ahmad and Syed Ibrahim Syed Abdul Rahman. The *ulama* faction began to call for a more radical and politically confrontational approach to PAS politics, which upset many of the older party leaders like Asri. In a last-ditch attempt to halt the tide of change, Asri Muda opposed the *ulama* faction in the party's 28th general assembly in 1982, but he was ultimately defeated.

Battered and humiliated, Mohammad Asri Muda was finally forced to resign from his post as president of PAS. This he did at the close of the party's 28th general assembly, held at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur on 23 October 1982. When he announced his resignation to the assembly, the audience clapped and cheered. Asri took with him a number of prominent PAS leaders, including Datuk Abu Bakar Umar, Haji Hassan Mohamad, Haji Wan Ismail Wan Ibrahim, Haji Wahab Yunus, Haji Ahmad Shukri, Harun Jusuh, Haji Ramli Abdullah and Haji Ahmad Long. Others close to Asri but who refused to leave the party (like Datuk Haji Nik Man Nik Mat) were expelled.<sup>164</sup> A handful of other Asri supporters (including Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman, Wan Abdul Rahim Abdullah and Abdul Fatah Haji Harun) managed to escape the purge and remained in the party.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Alias Mohamad, *Malaysia's Islamic Opposition*, p. 80.

<sup>165</sup> The 'Three Abduls' (Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman, Wan Abdul Rahim Abdullah and Abdul Fatah Haji Harun) remained in PAS till 2000, when they were implicated in a plot to oust the Chief Minister of Kelantan and *Murshid'ul Am* of the party, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. The 'Three Abdul' crisis is related in Mohammad Sayuti Omar, *Hikayat Tok Guru dan Tiga Abdul*, Selangor: Tinta Merah, 2000.

A few days after his resignation, Asri openly attacked the new party leaders in the press, which was a cause of embarrassment for the party. Because of his mistakes — '*kesalahan yang terlalu berat*' — Asri's membership was suspended by the party's disciplinary committee on 30 January 1983.<sup>166</sup> On 24 February, he was expelled from the party. Due to the heightened tension and antagonism within the party, PAS members were not prepared to forgive their own president, despite his singularly important role in developing PAS's foothold in Kelantan and Terengganu, launching the party's first newspaper and even writing the party's first official anthem. The new leaders were less charitable with Asri Muda, and Ustaz Haji Yusof Rawa, who took over as the fifth president of PAS on 1 May 1983, spoke of him thus: '*Orang yang cuba menjadikan parti Islam ini sebagai topeng pasti akan dihancurkan oleh ahli-ahli PAS yang telah membuktikan kesetiaan mereka kepada perjuangan Islam.*'<sup>167</sup>

Soon after he left PAS Asri tried to revive his political fortunes by forming another party of his own, *Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia* (HAMIM), named after the country's first Islamic party established in 1948 (of which he had been a member). Asri and HAMIM joined the BN coalition and contested against PAS in Kelantan, but by the 1986 election the small party was effectively wiped out. HAMIM never managed to gain strong support in the state and during the party's general assembly in 1988 Asri Muda suggested dissolving the party and joining UMNO *en masse*. Once again he was defeated by his own followers who would no longer blindly follow his commands. Asri Muda eventually left HAMIM, and ended up joining UMNO by himself.

In UMNO, Asri Muda was seen as a feudal warlord whose energy was spent and who no longer had an army to lead. He was given few opportunities to speak out on issues of importance and was left to fend for himself. As al-Afghani writes: '*Datuk Asri dibiarkan mencari*

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<sup>166</sup> Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 284.

<sup>167</sup> Translation: Those who try to use the Islamic party as a front or mask for other purposes will surely be destroyed in the end by the members of PAS who have proven their dedication to the true struggle of Islam. (Quoted in Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 292.)

*nasi sendiri dalam dapur UMNO.*<sup>168</sup> He spent the final years of his political career in relative obscurity and never managed to regain his popularity. In 1991, he was awarded the *Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah* (Man of the Year) award by the Agong for his services to Islam and Malay-Muslim concerns in the country. In 1992, he was awarded the honorific title 'Tan Sri'. On 28 August 1992, he passed away after watching a news report about the killing of Muslims in Bosnia.

Even after his death, PAS leaders were unable to forgive and forget Asri Muda's misdeeds while he led their party and when he later turned against them. Years later, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, as the *Murshid'ul Am* of PAS, spoke of Asri thus: '*Ya Allah! Ampunilah dosa pemimpin PAS yang memerintah Kelantan dulu.*'<sup>169</sup>

The departure of Mohammad Asri Muda marked the end of the era when PAS tried to walk the tightrope between its commitment to political Islam and its Malay-centric nationalist leanings. The party's ties with the tradition of radical Malay leftist nationalism were also permanently severed thanks to Asri. Henceforth, the way was open for the rise of the *ulama* faction within the party, led by men such as Ustaz Haji Yusof Rawa and Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. For those who had put their faith in the *ulama*, it seemed as if PAS's wasted years in the political wilderness were finally over:

*Kabus tebal yang menutupi cahaya kebangkitan Islam sudah mulai berlalu dan beredar. Pemulihan kepemimpinan Ulama dalam PAS sudah mula digilap. Kini terpancarlah cahaya yang kian lama terpendam: cahaya era kebangkitan PAS peringkat ketiga.*<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Translation: Datuk Asri was left to serve himself in the kitchen of UMNO (C. N. al-Afghani, *Rakyat Makin Matang*, p. 43).

<sup>169</sup> Translation: Ya Allah! Please forgive the leader of PAS who ruled Kelantan in the past for his sins. (Speech given by Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat recorded in Tarmizi Mohd Jam (ed.), *Kelantan: Agenda Baru untuk Umat Islam*, p. 46.)

<sup>170</sup> Translation: The thick fog that clouded the resurgence of Islam had begun to clear at last. The revival and renewal of *ulama* leadership within the party had begun. From then on there shone the light that had hitherto been buried deep within: the light of a new era when PAS would rise again for the third time (Ibnu Hasyim, *PAS Kuasai Malaysia?*, p. 289).

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