



The Meeting at Taiping on August 12 or 13, 1945

From left to right: Professor Akamatsu, Dr. Hatta, Radjiman Wediodiningrat, Sukarno, Ibrahim Yaacob, and Professor Yoichi Itagaki. The person at the rear is believed to be Pacik Ahmad.

Source: Album of Professor Itagaki

THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF MALAYA, 1941-45:  
IBRAHIM YAACOB AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INDONESIA RAYA\*

Cheah Boon Kheng

*Introduction*

During the interwar period the terms "Melayu Raya" and "Indonesia Raya" (Greater Malaysia and Greater Indonesia) came to be used to signify an enlarged nation incorporating the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra, and the other Indonesian islands.<sup>1</sup> Some sort of political association between Malaya and Indonesia was advocated in the 1920s by a group of Malay and Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. But they had not "worked [it] out in any detail," nor proceeded beyond "sentiment and exhortation."<sup>2</sup> During these years, the nostalgic concept of an ethnic Malay unity or cultural continuity, based on a common historical past, a common race, and a common religion, was a recurring theme in the

---

\* This article, the first draft of which was written in 1977, deals mainly with Ibrahim Yaacob's prewar and wartime activities for which he is best remembered in West Malaysia. I am indebted to many people for their valuable assistance during my research in connection with Ibrahim's activities. In particular I would like to thank the following: Ishak Haji Muhammad, Ahmad Boestamam, A. Samad Ismail, Datuk (Dr.) Awang Hassan (Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia), Professor Yoichi Itagaki, Professor Shinichi Nagai, and General Fujiwara for granting me interviews; Akira Oki for translating the Japanese sources used in the text; Robert Reece for letting me use notes from his interview with Ibrahim Yaacob in Jakarta; and Anthony Reid and David Marr for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Responsibility for it as it now stands and for all translations from Malay including the Jawi text is, however, entirely mine. I wish also to acknowledge with thanks the permission granted me by the Department of History, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia to use the two papers prepared by Ibrahim Yaacob which were to have been presented to the department in August 1973 in a series of seminars on leadership in Malaysia, but which were not delivered, as the Malaysian Government refused him permission to speak. Note: In the footnotes the abbreviations CO and WO refer respectively to the British Colonial Office and War Office files in the Public Record Office, London.

1. "Melayu Raya" was the term more commonly used by Malays, and "Indonesia Raya" by Indonesians. One does, however, come across Indonesian-influenced Malays such as Ibrahim Yaacob who preferred the term "Indonesia Raya" or used both terms interchangeably. See Iskander Kamel Agastya (the adopted Indonesian name of Ibrahim Yaacob), *Sedjarah dan Perdjuangan di Malaya* [History and Struggle in Malaya] (Yogyakarta: Nusantara, 1951), p. 53, where he states, ". . . 'Indonesia Raya' itulah tudjuan 'Melayu Raya.'"

2. See W. R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), p. 89; see also W. R. Roff, "Indonesian and Malay Students in Cairo in the 1920's," *Indonesia*, 9 (April 1970), pp. 73-88.

columns of such newspapers from Cairo as *Seruan Azhar*, and of *Saudara*, the mouthpiece of the pan-Islamic modernist Kaum Muda (Young Group) in Penang, led by Shaykh Mohd. Tahir Jallaluddin. The greater numbers of newspapers and periodicals which came in from Sumatra and Java (such as *Persatuan Indonesia*, *Perwarta Deli*, *Pertja Selatan*, *Bintang Hindia*, *Bintang Timur*, *Pedoman Masjara-kat* and *Fikiran Rakjat*<sup>3</sup>) exposed Malay students to nationalist thinking in the Indonesian archipelago.

Shaykh Tahir and other Kaum Muda activists from Sumatra attempted to spread their teachings to the Malay States, but their activities were checked by both the traditional religious authorities and the Malay aristocracy, with administrative backing, whenever required, from the British. Consequently, these reformists found sanctuary only in the Straits Settlements, particularly in Penang, where direct British rule permitted the Muslim Advisory Board less authority than it enjoyed in the Malay States which were under the sultans.<sup>4</sup> Because the impact of the Kaum Muda movement in Malaya was mainly intellectual, it failed to develop a political nationalism capable of attracting mass support, and secular mass politics from Java exerted a greater pull on most young Malay students. In the wake of the 1926-27 uprisings in Indonesia they were first attracted towards communism,<sup>5</sup> but after Sukarno established the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) many were won over by the charismatic personality of the Indonesian leader.

During the 1930s, support for the idea of a political union between the two countries came from a few intellectuals in Malaya and Indonesia, but there is little evidence that the advocates had thought out what form such an association should take, or how the union of two territories under different colonial regimes was to be achieved.<sup>6</sup> Despite their close commercial and cultural ties, British Malaya and

3. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 63.

4. Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, pp. 81-82. The Kaum Muda leaders whom Ibrahim remembered as being outstanding in Malaya at that time were Shaykh Tahir and Kiyai Mohd. Fadhilillah Suhaemi. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 58.

5. Ibrahim claims that political awareness was aroused in him and his fellow students by the 1926-27 communist uprisings in West Java and West Sumatra. He said news of the uprisings was well received by the peninsular Malays. Many of the communists, including Djamaluddin Tamin, Tan Malaka, Budiman, Sutan Djainain, and Alimin, fled to Malaya and were given refuge by relatives. Ibrahim does not say whether he and the other young Malays had contacts with these communists. *Ibid.*, p. 58. See also Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka* [On Free Malaya] (Jakarta: Kesatuan Malaya Merdeka, 1957), pp. 20-21.

6. There is some debate as to what Indonesia Raya would really have meant to the Malays. One view is that it would have "relegated the Malays to the position of inhabitants of the periphery of the planned State." In other words, it would represent a "diminution" of the Malays' status. See Angus McIntyre, "The Greater Indonesia Idea of Nationalism in Malaya and Indonesia," *Modern Asian Studies*, 7, 1 (1973), pp. 75-83. This interpretation is based on the decision of the Japanese-sponsored Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPKI--Body to investigate measures for the preparation of Indonesian Independence) in May 1945 that the future Indonesian state would be unitary rather than federal and would embrace not only the former Netherlands East Indies but also former British Malaya, British Borneo and Portuguese Timor. For details of the BPKI's proceedings, see Muhammad Yamin, *Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* [Documents on the Preparation of the 1945 Constitution] (Jakarta: Jajasan Prapantja, 1959), 1, pp. 109-41. Rustam A. Sani, however,

the Netherlands East Indies seemed set to go their different political ways. Before 1941 only one Malay political association was formed which openly advocated a pan-Indonesian alliance. This was the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM--Young Malay Union), which was established in 1938 by Ibrahim Yaacob, together with several Malay college graduates. The KMM was registered in Kuala Lumpur in 1940, and thereafter it spread rapidly throughout the country.

*Ibrahim Yaacob and His Idea of Indonesia Raya*

Ibrahim Yaacob, the leader of the KMM, was born in 1911 at Temerloh in central Pahang. His great-great-grandfather was a Bugis who traveled from Sulawesi to Riau, and from there to Pahang. Ibrahim claimed to be of the same stock as Tun Abdul Razak, later Prime Minister of Malaysia. He graduated from the Sultan Idris Training College in 1931, and got a job as language teacher at the Kuala Lumpur Police Depot. He became interested in journalism and wrote articles for Malay newspapers critical of various aspects of British administration. On being informed by the Police Commissioner (J. D. Harrie?) that unless he stopped writing anti-British articles he would be transferred upcountry, he resigned his position and joined the daily newspaper *Majlis* in Kuala Lumpur, later moving to the *Utusan Melayu* in Singapore.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the other KMM leaders were college graduates of peasant background who, as students, had been exposed to the ideas and politics of the nationalist and Islamic modernist movements of the 1920s and 1930s in Turkey, the Middle East, and Indonesia. But probably most important in forming the pro-Indonesian orientation of these men was the fact that many of them had studied at the Malay-medium Sultan Idris Training College (SITC) in Tanjong Malim (Perak). The principal of the SITC, O. T. Dussek, although a British colonial official, was credited by one former student, the late historian Haji Buyong Adil, with awakening political consciousness among students at the college. Adil described him as "Malaya's Douwes Dekker."<sup>8</sup> Anxious to promote the welfare of the Malays, Dussek believed that

---

takes issue with McIntyre and argues that there is no evidence to suggest that the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM--Young Malay Union) nationalists accepted an unequal position within "Melayu Raya" (he uses this term). See his essay, "Melayu Raya as a Malay 'Nation of Intent,'" in *The Nascent Malaysian Society*, ed. H. M. Dahlan (Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Antropologi dan Sosiologi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1976), pp. 11-26. The KMM is believed to have made an abortive attempt in August 1945 to form an autonomous government in Malaya owing allegiance to Jakarta (apparently on the assumption that Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya would be a federal structure). The move will be discussed later in this article.

7. Most of these biographical details are drawn from the following sources: notes compiled by my former colleague at Australian National University, Robert Reece (hereafter referred to as Robert Reece's Notes), based on an interview with Ibrahim in Jakarta in February 1973; and the Fortnightly Intelligence Reports (henceforth FIR), Nos. 7, 10, 12 and 13 (covering the period May to September 1943) of the wartime Far Eastern Bureau, British Ministry of Information, New Delhi, in CO 273/669/50744/7. I shall make frequent reference to these sources, as they contain much of relevance to Ibrahim's activities in 1940 and 1941. Some biographical details are also found in Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, pp. 172-73.

8. My informant is Dahari Ali, journalist and retired politician. Interview, Kuala Lumpur, May 1973.

this could be done by improving Malay vernacular education. Although the function of the SITC was to train village teachers, Dussek "encouraged the growth of a more literary education based on Malay language and culture."<sup>9</sup> To overcome the shortage of textbooks in Malay, he purchased and used a considerable number of Indonesian books published by Balai Pustaka, and he set up a Malay Translation Bureau in the SITC, patterned on the Balai Pustaka, to translate, commission, and edit vernacular school and literary texts. Their imaginations fired by history textbooks from Indonesia, Buyong Adil and Abdul Hadi Hasan, a history teacher at the college, were encouraged to write a series of books entitled *Sejarah Alam Melayu* (History of the Malay World) for the SITC. They discussed and championed the concept of "Nusantara" (Malay-Indonesian archipelago) unity.<sup>10</sup> This training and the attraction exerted by Sukarno from Java helped ensure that the incipient nationalism of these young Malays soon assumed a secular form and lost much of its pan-Islamic flavor.<sup>11</sup>

In early 1938 the "first avowedly political, but still conservative" Persatuan-Persatuan Negeri (State Malay Associations) were formed,<sup>12</sup> and Ibrahim Yaacob and Ishak Haji Muhammad joined them. They soon left, however, disgusted with the royal patronage of the associations, their "feudalism" and preoccupation with "provincial matters, ceremonies, special rights of the aristocracy, rajas and with those Malays whom they considered *anak negeri* [subjects]."<sup>13</sup> Malays who were not anak negeri could not become members of these associations, and immigrants from Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and the other Indonesian islands, together with Malays of mixed descent were, therefore, excluded. Seeing this division within Malay society as an opportunity to form a political association representing all these excluded elements, Ibrahim and other radical college graduates gathered enough courage to form their own party, the KMM, which they hoped would undermine the mass basis of the Malay State Associations. Ibrahim's awareness of the divisions within Malay society and of how they could be exploited is most evident in his book *Melihat Tanah Air*, written in 1941. Addressing a Malay audience who

---

9. Roff, *Malay Nationalism*, p. 146.

10. In his preface to Volume I of *Sejarah Alam Melayu*, dated June 1925, Abdul Hadi Hasan said the sources he used included *Sejarah Tanah Jawa* and publications such as *Seri Pustaka* and *Volksalmanak Melayu* produced by the Balai Pustaka in Java. See Abdul Hadi Hasan, *Sejarah Alam Melayu* [History of the Malay World] (reprint ed.; Singapore: MPH Publications, 1968), 1, p. v. The revival of interest in Malay history was responsible for turning one of Abdul Hadi Hasan's students, Harun Aminurrashid, into a well-known writer of historical novels. A number of Harun's stories were based on the *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*.

11. According to Ibrahim, he and four other college friends, Hassan Manan, A. Karim Rashid, Yaakub Amin, and Mohammad Isa bin Mahmud, enrolled secretly as PNI members. At the same time, the students formed themselves into a "socialist-inclined" secret society called "Ikatan Pelajar SITC" (the SITC Students' League). Later, they enlarged the group and called it "Ikatan Semenanjung Malaya/Borneo" (the Malaya Peninsula/Borneo League) to include students from Borneo. The "inner circle" of the League discussed how to achieve closer relations with Indonesia and supported the idea of a union of all Malay islands and territories within Indonesia Raya. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 60-61; see also Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 24.

12. Ross, *Malay Nationalism*, p. 230.

13. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 67-68.

already knew him as the KMM's president, Ibrahim there stated that the Malay people now wanted new and strong leaders who could unite them and improve their livelihood. Although the people no longer desired their *pimpinan cara lama* (traditional leadership), the princes and aristocrats still wished to lead the Malay race, and this hindered any new leadership from achieving prominence. Ibrahim urged the Malays to express their unanimous support for "a nationalist movement under the stewardship of a leader who could be relied upon to pursue with single-mindedness the cause of advancing their livelihood whenever the opportunity arose."<sup>14</sup>

The formation of the KMM in 1938 marks an important phase in the history of the peninsular Malays--the arrival of a self-consciously progressive and nationalist intelligentsia. The orientation of the organization was clearly emphasized by Ibrahim when he explained why he and his group called themselves *pemuda* and chose the word *Muda* in the name of the KMM: ". . . *Muda* does not mean Youth, but *young* in ideas, that is, progressive; thus emerged the Nationalist Progressive Malays who refused to agree with the narrow Nationalism espoused by the Malay feudalists."<sup>15</sup>

After establishing the KMM, Ibrahim and the other KMM *pemuda* attacked what they considered to be one of the major causes of Malay weakness and disunity: the "narrow nationalism" of the Malay aristocracies and their tendency to exacerbate the cultural and ethnic differences between the local-born Malays (*anak negeri*) and the recently arrived immigrant Malays (referred to as *anak dagang*--traders, i.e., aliens). The KMM leaders also condemned the Malays' habit of classifying themselves provincially as *orang Kelantan*, *orang Perak*, or ethnically as *orang Bugis*, *orang Minangkabau* and *orang Jawa*. They called on Malays to think of themselves only as *orang Melayu*. In 1939, writing in *Majlis*, of which he was then editor, Ibrahim Yaacob appealed to the Malays to sink their ethnic differences in the interests of achieving overall Malay unity: "Our Malay race has no less than 65 million people. We are, indeed, a large race but because we are weak in national spirit, experience and in other requirements and because our people like to think in terms of their ethnic groups [*puak-puak*] and not in terms of their race, the Malays have become weak and disintegrated. . . ."<sup>16</sup>

---

14. See Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air* [Observations on the Motherland] (Kota Bharu: Al-smaliah Press, 1941), 1 [in Jawi], pp. 10-11. All references to *Melihat Tanah Air* hereafter will be to this edition. After his two return visits to Malaysia in 1973, Ibrahim brought out a revised edition of *Melihat Tanah Air* (Kuantan: Percetakan Timur, 1975), in Rumi. This gave him an opportunity to rectify some earlier errors, but he also rewrote several parts of the text in an attempt to elucidate certain matters with the help of hindsight. There are many discrepancies in fact and meaning between the two editions, and students of history should treat the 1975 edition with care as, unlike the earlier Jawi edition, it is unlikely to reflect Ibrahim's political thinking in 1941.

15. The Malay text in Agastya's *Sedjarah*, p. 72, reads: ". . . yang dimaksudkan *Muda* itu bukannya Youth, tetapi *young* di-dalam idea artinya progressive maka itulah timbul Nationalist Progressive Melayu yang tidak dapat persesuaian dengan Nationalism sempit yang dipimpin oleh kaum-kaum feodalist (Pertuanan) Melayu itu."

16. See the extract from *Majlis*, November 16, 1939 in Mohd. Taib Osman, *Bahasa Renchana Pengarang Akbar-Akbar Melayu Hingga ka-Tahun 1941* [The Language of the Editorials in Malay Vernacular Newspapers up to 1941] (Kuala Lumpur:

The ideal of Ibrahim and the other KMM pemuda was a United Malay Nation in which all the Malays recognized themselves as being One Race, speaking One Language and having One Nation, very similar to the ideals of the Indonesian Youth Pledge of 1928 which had, in fact, inspired them.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the KMM wanted to create new and wider loyalties above the level of the puak and the negeri (principality or kingdom). In *Melihat Tanah Air* Ibrahim declared that a *perasaan baharu* (new consciousness) among the 65 million Malays in British Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies was reflected in their distinct desire to work together in a joint nationalist movement towards Melayu Raya or Indonesia Raya. However, a large majority of the Malay aristocracy and royalty held steadfastly to *perasaan lamanya* (their traditional views) and strongly opposed the *perasaan baharu* aimed at uniting the Malay people.<sup>18</sup> Evidently one reason for Ibrahim's criticism of the Malay aristocracy was their reluctance to come together in a larger political entity, and their preoccupation with the question of State autonomy.<sup>19</sup>

Concurrent with their efforts towards achieving Malay unity the KMM pemuda were also carrying on anti-British agitation. Between 1938 and 1941 they pursued a policy of "noncooperation" with the colonial administration--a policy pursued earlier by Sukarno's PNI (1928-31). In books and newspapers Ibrahim and his colleagues began a propaganda attack on the British administration and the "cooperators"--the English-educated Malay bureaucrats and aristocratic groups. By 1941, the KMM's anti-British activities reached the point where Ibrahim established con-

---

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1964), p. 74. Note Ibrahim's tendency to think in terms of the whole Malay-Indonesian archipelago.

17. In his paper "Sejarah Perintis Kemerdekaan Malaysia" [The history of pioneers of Malaysian independence], part 1, prepared for delivery in August 1973 to the History Department, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, under its oral history project, Ibrahim claimed that he and the other SITC students were very influenced by the ideals of the Indonesian Youth Pledge of 1928 after reading about it in the Indonesian newspaper *Persatuan Indonesia*. It was, in fact, the secular youth movement in Java which created and first popularized the Indonesian "national symbols"--the name of the country and the people ("Indonesia" and "Bangsa Indonesia"), the Indonesian language, the Red-White flag and *Indonesia Raya*, a song composed by W. R. Soepratman which was to become the national anthem.

18. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air*, pp. 12-13. In his revised edition of the book (1975, p. 20), he explains that by "Melayu Raya" he also meant "Melayu Merdeka" (Independent Malaysia).

19. Ibid. An exception was the Federated Malay States (FMS) formed in 1896, which brought a limited form of association among the States of Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negri Sembilan. This was not a voluntary union, but one forced on them by the colonial power (these states had been the first to accept British Residents). British attempts to persuade the other Malay States, known collectively as the Un-Federated Malay States (UFMS), to join the federation were unsuccessful and were continually rebuffed until the Japanese occupation. The debate over "decentralisation" in the FMS in the 1920s centered on what powers were to be surrendered to each of the Federated Malay States by the British-dominated federal government, following strong criticisms by the Malay rulers that their states' autonomies were being eroded. In finally agreeing to decentralization, the British hoped to draw the UFMS into the federation. For an excellent discussion of the FMS in the 1920s, see Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (1937; reprint University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1964).

tacts with Japanese agents in the hope of obtaining Japanese support for KMM objectives in return for aiding Japanese plans to overrun Malaya. He hoped, too, that union with Indonesia could be achieved with Japanese support.

*Ibrahim Yaacob--the "Double Agent"*

The story of KMM cooperation with the Japanese really begins with Ibrahim's own desire to play the role of "double agent" (for the Japanese and the British) in order to advance not only his own personal interests but also the interests of the KMM and Malay Independence.

Ibrahim was as much the undisputed leader and moving spirit of the KMM as Sukarno was of the PNI. He had great charisma, but was self-centered and autocratic, taking almost all decisions himself, often without consulting other members of the party, with the occasional exception of Onan Haji Siraj, his brother-in-law.<sup>20</sup> By 1940, at the age of only 29, Ibrahim had developed into an ardent and radical nationalist with a particular admiration for Sukarno, his ideas and political style--especially his oratory.

Ibrahim adopted an ambivalent attitude towards both the Japanese and British.<sup>21</sup> It is doubtful whether he ever really believed in the Japanese slogan, "Asia for the Asians," or in any of their promises of self-government and independence for colonial territories in Southeast Asia. It was not Japanese propaganda but conditions in 1940 and 1941 which encouraged him to take advantage of the situation for himself and for the cause of the KMM. In Ibrahim's view, the policy the United States, Britain and other European colonial powers were pursuing in the region was contradictory. On the one hand, they seemed to be appeasing Japan by giving in to some of her political and economic demands, thus emboldening and encouraging her, but on the other they were rearming themselves to resist the Japanese threat.<sup>22</sup> With the outbreak of war in Europe, the British authorities had become more alert to the growing Japanese interest in Malaya, and

---

20. Onan Haji Siraj was born in about 1912 in Kampung Jawa in the Kinta Valley of Perak. Son of a Javanese engine-driver, Onan studied at the English-medium Technical School in Kuala Lumpur. He was a co-founder of the KMM with Ibrahim Yaacob, who later married his sister Mariatun.

21. In putting forward this view, I have taken into account the opinions of Ibrahim's colleagues, such as Mustapha Hussein and Ishak Haji Muhammad, that he was not only extremely self-centered but also a clever opportunist. Ishak, in fact, calls him "a brilliant opportunist." Interview with Ishak Haji Muhammad, Kuala Lumpur, January 1977. Both Ishak and Mustapha also disagree with Ibrahim's accounts of some KMM activities prior to the Japanese occupation. Neither, however, challenges his recollections of his contacts with the Japanese, as in these Ibrahim acted alone. None of his KMM colleagues had any knowledge of the meetings, or of what he said or did with the Japanese. Ibrahim's accounts of those episodes, then, have to be relied on until contrary evidence proves them erroneous. It should be noted that Ibrahim's "confession" that he was a "double agent" was only made in 1973. He stated this in August 1973 in his paper for the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, "Sejarah Perintis," and had "revealed" it privately to Robert Reece a few months earlier.

22. Ibrahim gives his views of the international situation involving Japan and the "ABCD bloc" (American, British, Chinese, and Dutch) in Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 88-91.

they increased their surveillance of Japanese activities and their own defense preparations.<sup>23</sup>

To Ibrahim and to other politically conscious Malays, the most disturbing trend was that in the years between 1935 and 1940 Siam had become friendly with, and increasingly dependent on Japan, raising the possibility that it might play a supportive role in Japanese expansionist plans for Southeast Asia.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, they feared that the Siamese would ally themselves with the Japanese in exchange for the promise that the four northern states of British Malaya--Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu--would be returned to Siam after Japan had occupied the country.<sup>25</sup>

In June 1940, after a quarrel with the newspaper board over policies Ibrahim lost his job on *Majlis*. He then began a tour of Malaya to contact KMM branches and survey for himself the defense situation. On the coasts of Trengganu and Kelantan he observed that *batang pisang* (banana tree trunks) had been dressed up as shore batteries. According to his account, this convinced him that British defense measures could not stop the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> When he visited the Japanese-owned iron mines at Dungun, Trengganu, some people there suggested to him that he should meet Ishikawa, a Japanese mining engineer whose office was in High Street, Singapore. Later in his tour he met Sultan Zainal Abidin of Trengganu and his *Mentri Besar* (Chief Minister), Tengku Setia Raja Omar who, like Ibrahim, had Riau connections. According to Ibrahim, both the Sultan and Tengku Omar raised doubts about the adequacy of British defense measures and voiced fears about Siamese intentions.<sup>27</sup> Sultan Abu Bakar of Pahang expressed similar misgivings when Ibrahim met him later.

Probably as a result of his meeting with the Japanese miners at Dungun, Ibrahim conceived a plan of action (which he intended to carry out himself) to help the Malay people achieve what he called "a bargaining position." He took the opportunity to discuss this with the rulers, both in his capacity as KMM president and as a journalist. As he later related: "In this situation, the KMM leadership took courage and did not fear death, but endeavored to sacrifice their lives, by joining the world of intrigues and espionage in order to secure concessions which would give the Malays 'a bargaining position' to safeguard their rights and open a path which would lead to the achievement of Malay independence. . . ." <sup>28</sup> He decided to en-

23. Ian Morrison, *Malayan Postscript* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), pp. 11-22, gives a good description of British defense measures in Singapore and on the mainland.

24. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 86-87. For a detailed discussion of the international situation at the time, see F. C. Jones, *Japan's New Order in East Asia: Its Rise and Fall, 1937-45* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 231-34.

25. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 86-87. By the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty, Siam had ceded the four states to Britain.

26. Robert Reece's Notes. See also Volume 1 of Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air*, for general impressions of his tour. The book is critical of British administration policies in the Malay States and gives an account of Malay history and culture, but refrains from discussing military matters. The manuscript of Volume 2 was seized by the police when they arrested him in December 1941.

27. Robert Reece's Notes.

28. From Ibrahim's paper, "Sejarah Perintis," Part 2, typescript 7.

gage in espionage, and he claims the sultans gave him their blessing.<sup>29</sup> Ibrahim rationalized that, while other groups were working with the Japanese to advance their own communities' interests, such as the Indian Independence League (IIL), the pro-Wang Ching-wei groups, and even the Acehnese independence groups (some openly in Bangkok and others underground in Malaya), the Malays themselves had done nothing to safeguard their interests.<sup>30</sup> The Malay rulers, although aware of Japanese propaganda and of the dangerous trend in Japanese relations with Siam, were resigned to relying on British military protection. Ibrahim therefore hoped that by becoming a Japanese agent he could gain valuable information about Japanese activities and thus enable the Malays and the KMM to prepare themselves and protect their lives and future.

At the same time, however, Ibrahim was apparently also attempting to establish himself as an agent of the British. Before approaching the Japanese, he was involved in a project to restore the Riau Sultanate and declare it independent of Dutch rule. Earlier in his Malayan tour he had interested the Mentri Besar of Trengganu, Tengku Setia Raja Omar, in reviving his "legitimate" claims to the Riau Sultanate. Ibrahim stated that he possessed a 100-year-old historical document tracing the genealogy of the Riau Sultanate, and he aimed to end Dutch rule over the Riau islands by having Tengku Omar installed on the throne with British support.<sup>31</sup> Apparently Tengku Omar encouraged these efforts, for soon after touring Malaya Ibrahim went to Riau, where he tried to interest everyone he met in the project, including Raja Haji Yunus who had a claim to being the Raja Muda of Riau. Ibrahim apparently planned to make Riau a "buffer state" between Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies should the Dutch colonial administration capitulate to the Japanese as the French had done in Indochina in September 1940. According to Ibrahim, he wanted to make Riau the symbol of Malay-Indonesian unity and resistance, allied to Britain and America against Japan.<sup>32</sup>

It is unclear exactly what Ibrahim himself hoped to gain from the materialization of this plan, but the urge to play an important role in "big power" politics and be the first man to propose such a plan certainly weighed heavily with him. He related how, after his return to Singapore, when he had a further meeting with Tengku Omar and Raja Haji Yunus, they decided that, as British assistance was absolutely vital, Tengku Omar should discuss the matter with the Director of the Special Branch, L. M. Wynne. Ibrahim, who accompanied Tengku Omar to this meeting as his aide,<sup>33</sup> reported that the British were interested in the plan, for they were quite unsure what the Netherlands East Indies' reaction would be to Japanese pressure. Ibrahim later recounted that these meetings led to a friendship between him and Wynne, who sent him to Riau in September 1941 to collect information on whether the Japanese would really establish themselves there. Some time late in 1941 the British High Commissioner, Sir Shenton Thomas,<sup>34</sup> apparently granted an interview to Ibrahim and Tengku Omar, but their plan was killed

---

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.; Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 81-83; Robert Reece's Notes. The government of Wang Ching-wei had been established in northern China with Japanese support and it had local adherents in Malaya.

31. The Riau episode is described in detail in Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 81-83.

32. Ibid., p. 82. However, there is no corroboration of this story in British sources.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. There is, however, no information on this interview in the available

when the Netherlands East Indies finally showed that it was positively resisting Japanese pressure.

At about the same time Ibrahim also approached the Japanese mining engineer Ishikawa to indicate his willingness to become a Japanese agent,<sup>35</sup> and met with Michio Hirakawa who was "the centre of a certain Japanese intelligence organ" in Malaya.<sup>36</sup> In their discussions Ibrahim suggested that his best cover would be to have a newspaper of his own. Further negotiations involved the Japanese Consul-General in Singapore, Ken Tsurumi, who, in April 1941, after obtaining Tokyo's approval, handed over a sum of M\$18,000 to Ibrahim to purchase the *Warta Malaya*, a Malay newspaper in Singapore owned by an Arab, Syed Hussein bin Ali Alsagoff. With additional money from Tsurumi, Ibrahim also bought himself a car.<sup>37</sup> After the KMM had purchased the *Warta Malaya* and Ibrahim had become its head, he assigned able members of the KMM to branches of the newspaper all over Malaya. In September 1943 the Dōmei newsagency disclosed that by this means "all kinds of intelligence about the disposition of defence works of British troops, such as landing spots in Kota Bharu, fortifications on the Perak River and the stronghold in Klang were collected."<sup>38</sup>

In November 1941, Ibrahim's involvement with the Japanese escalated. At the time Major Fujiwara Iwaichi, who was attached to the 8th section (propaganda), Second Bureau, of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters,<sup>39</sup> was in Bangkok on a mission to help the Japanese military attache there develop his Malayan contacts. Fujiwara was to work with anti-British Malay and Indian movements to ensure that, if war broke out, the peoples of Malaya would cooperate with the Japanese Army.<sup>40</sup> In late November Consul-General Tsurumi flew to Bangkok from

---

CO correspondence between Shenton Thomas and the British Colonial Office up to February 15, 1942 (the fall of Singapore).

35. Ibrahim gives conflicting accounts about which side made the first contact. In the interview with Robert Reece, he claims it was he, but in Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 87, and in his paper for the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, he states that the initiative was taken by Japanese agents. Given the earlier contact between Ibrahim and Japanese mining engineers in Dungun, it would appear the next move was up to Ibrahim.

36. This information on Hirakawa appeared in the wartime Dōmei newsagency's report mentioning Ibrahim's contacts with him. The report said that Hirakawa obtained "strong Japanese backing" for the KMM, which was "converted into an active secret society." When the Japanese attacked Malaya, Ibrahim was in a Singapore prison and Hirakawa interned in India. Hirakawa returned to Japan by exchange ship from India. See FIR No. 13, for the period which ended on September 11, 1943, in CO 273/669/50744/7. For Japanese accounts confirming these contacts, see Nagai Shinichi, "The Malay Nationalist Movement During the Pacific War: From the Perspective of the Leftist Nationalist Leadership--Part I" [in Japanese], in *Azia Keizai* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, October 15, 1975), pp. 40-50; and Fujiwara Iwaichi, *F Kikan* [F Agency] (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1966), pp. 168-69.

37. Interview with Fujiwara, Tokyo, September 1976. See also Nagai, "Malay Nationalist Movement," pp. 40-50; Robert Reece's Notes.

38. See FIR No. 13, September 11, 1943, in CO 273/669/50744/7.

39. Fujiwara, interview.

40. Ibid. Fujiwara says that he was not instructed to organize the local Chinese

Singapore to meet with Fujiwara and inform him that he needed more funds for espionage work and that he had given Ibrahim additional money. Fujiwara instructed Tsurumi to establish a fifth column organization code-named KAME (tortoise), an espionage network that would include certain Japanese residents and such organizations as the Indian Independence League and the KMM. He also asked Tsurumi to arrange for KMM members in the northern Malay States to act as guides and interpreters for the invading Japanese Army, and for them to identify themselves by armbands carrying the word KAME. While in Bangkok, Fujiwara also held discussions with a few KMM members who later accompanied him to southern Thailand in readiness for the Japanese assault.<sup>41</sup> According to a Malay account, the KMM's Kelantan state chairman, Abdul Kadir Adabi, signed an agreement with the Japanese in Bangkok concerning independence for Malaya. Reportedly, this agreement was to be used to help the Japanese obtain Malay support against the British during their military campaign. The source however does not state either the date of the agreement or whether Ibrahim had instructed Kadir Adabi to sign it.<sup>42</sup>

Ibrahim has acknowledged that by late November he had already been recruited into KAME by Ken Tsurumi and other Japanese agents, but has denied that he instructed KMM members to act as guides and interpreters for the Japanese.<sup>43</sup> His version of the actual agreements with Japanese agents differs in important respects from Japanese accounts. Tsurumi, Ishikawa and Fujiwara all claim that their aim was merely to get assistance from Ibrahim and the KMM for the attack on Malaya, and that they gave the KMM no promises of Japanese support for the KMM's objective of Malay independence within the Indonesia Raya.<sup>44</sup> Ibrahim, on the other

---

as this was the role of secret agent Yūwata, a Japanese who had lived in Southeast Asia for twenty years and who was based in Bangkok. Yūwata's job was to try and work up pro-Wang Ching-wei feelings among Chinese in Southeast Asia. For more information on Fujiwara's work in Bangkok, see Joyce Lebra, *Jungle Alliance* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971), pp. 3-4; Louis Allen, *The End of the War in Asia* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976), p. 134.

41. Fujiwara, interview.

42. See A. Talib bin Hj. Ahmad, *Riwayat Kinta* [The Story of Kinta] (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Rusna, 1959), pp. 95-96. The writer quotes Onan Haji Siraj as the source of the Bangkok agreement.

43. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 92, 97; Ibrahim, "Sejarah Perintis"; Robert Reece's Notes. There is a suggestion from Pacik Ahmad, a former KMM executive committee member, that during one of his frequent trips around the peninsula, Ibrahim visited remote aboriginal settlements and recruited several aborigines as guides for the Japanese. See Abdul Malek Haji Md. Hanafiah, "Sejarah Perjuangan Kesatuan Melayu Muda, 1937-1945" [History of the Struggle of the KMM, 1937-1945] (B.A. Honors thesis, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1975), p. 205. This thesis was done at the undergraduate level, but it is an impressive work based on interviews with former KMM leaders, such as Mustafa Hussein, whom I have been unable to interview. Although there are gaps in Malek's narrative, it is the only source for certain episodes in the KMM's history. I am grateful to John Funston, formerly lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, now at the ANU, for letting me look at Malek's work, which he supervised. For a further reference to the aborigines, see Ibrahim Yaacob, *Melihat Tanah Air*, pp. 88-89, which also has a picture of him and Sakai (aboriginal tribesmen) riding an elephant. Ibrahim calls the aborigines *orang saya* (my people).

44. Fujiwara said: "I wanted to make such a promise because I felt that Japan

hand, states that, in exchange for assurances that the Malays would not oppose Japanese troops when they entered Malaya, he received both money and promises that Malay independence would be considered in the future, that Malay sovereignty, religion, and customs would be upheld, and that Malay women and property would be respected. The KMM also requested Japanese support for a "Union of Malay States" merged within Indonesia Raya.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from this, Ibrahim argues that the newspaper *Warta Malaya* did not openly side with the Japanese, but pursued a cautious editorial line, although it was rather critical of British policies.<sup>46</sup> While using the newspaper's correspondents to collect information on defense matters, Ibrahim maintains he was still distrustful of the Japanese and continued to keep in touch with Wynne on the one hand, and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) through Sutan Djenain, an Indonesian communist,<sup>47</sup> on the other, with regard to forming an underground anti-Japanese movement. Even as he was working for KAME, Ibrahim claims, he was already reporting to Wynne once a week. But it is not clear what these reports concerned.<sup>48</sup>

If Ibrahim's statements regarding his role as "double agent" for the British are accepted, his arrest, together with about 110 of his KMM supporters, on December 7, 1941, the day of the Japanese air and naval attack on Pearl Harbor, needs to be explained. By then, police interrogations had already revealed evidence of KAME's fifth column work,<sup>49</sup> and probably the attack on Pearl Harbor precipitated the British swoop. A contributory factor, according to a Malay source, may have been a Japanese broadcast, either at the same time or a few days earlier, urging Malays to rise up and support a Japanese-sponsored secret organization called KAME. The broadcast said KAME would "struggle to liberate Malays from British colonialism." KMM members thought that the British suspected that the KMM was the secret organization referred to in this broadcast.<sup>50</sup> There is no corroboration regarding the broadcast in British sources. However, there is

---

should genuinely play the role of liberator of Asia, but my army superiors overruled me." Interview. Tsurumi and Ishikawa also made similar statements denying any political promises to Ibrahim. See Nagai, "Malay Nationalist Movement," pp. 40-50.

45. The Malay term which Ibrahim uses to describe the "Union of Malay States" is "Kesatuan Tanah Melayu." Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 87-88.

46. Robert Reece's Notes. One British report, although it does not claim that *Warta Malaya* was used to spread Japanese propaganda, does allege that it was used for "violently nationalist propaganda and to encourage recruitment for KMM." It goes on: "The KMM, through its leaders, spread propaganda based on anti-British, Malay Republic and Pan Asiatic appeal." See "Singapore: Report for Security Intelligence for Planning Section: general information from 1940 and during Japanese Occupation," April 1945, WO 220/561. It is difficult to verify Ibrahim's statements or British claims, as no copies of *Warta Malaya* are extant.

47. Sutan Djenain, a member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), fled to Malaya for refuge after the PKI's abortive uprisings in 1926-27. He was said to be a member of the KMM. See Ibrahim Yaakob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, pp. 24-26.

48. Robert Reece's Notes. There exist no known accounts by Wynne of these encounters. Wynne died in Sumatra during the war.

49. Monson's Notes to Keating in CO 273/671/50790.

50. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," p. 209.

evidence showing that by December 7 police interrogations had established that the Japanese consulate in Singapore had been behind the transformation of the *Warta Malaya* into a Japanese-controlled organ, and that the consulate was also organizing a secret society called KAME for fifth column work. In a confidential report the director of the Criminal Investigation Branch of the Federated Malay States police (possibly J. D. Dalley) also noted the coincidence of strong centers of the KMM with centers of Malay secret society activity, speculating that the KMM might have been grafted on to these indigenous secret societies.<sup>51</sup> There is no indication in this report that the police had linked KAME to the KMM but, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the radio broadcast, they could have reached the conclusion that the two organizations were one and the same.

When Ibrahim was arrested on December 7 he admitted having received M\$18,000 from the Japanese consulate to buy the newspaper *Warta Malaya* for "New Order" propaganda and that "he had received other sums for collecting defense instruction."<sup>52</sup> Ishak Haji Muhammad,<sup>53</sup> editor of *Warta Malaya*, was arrested at the same time, and a search of his premises revealed the existence of KMM agents in all states and settlements of the peninsula. On the basis of this information, 110 KMM supporters were arrested in the Federated Malay States (Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan), Malacca, Johor, and Singapore, but the Japanese advance prevented action being taken in Perlis and Kedah.<sup>54</sup> The men arrested were said to include subordinate officials and schoolmasters. Evidence was also found

---

51. Monson's Notes to Keating in CO 273/671/50790.

52. Ibid.

53. Ishak was born in September 1909. His father was an Acehnese who had studied religion for eight years, but ended up as a peasant farmer in Temerloh, Pahang. The third of sixteen children, Ishak went to the local Malay school, where he shone in his studies, and was transferred to the Government English School at Kuala Lipis. After finishing his secondary education in 1930, he won one of three coveted scholarships offered to children of commoners to the "Malay Eton"--the Malay College at Kuala Kangsar (better known as MCKK) which trained young Malays, mainly from aristocratic families, for the elite Malay Administrative Service (MAS). After graduation, Ishak was designated a Probationary Malay Officer and held various posts, including Deputy Assistant District Officer (DADO), Magistrate Third Class, and Collector of Land Revenue. It was as DADO that Ishak first met Ibrahim Yaacob. In 1935 he gave up his government job because he found it restrictive and boring, and during the next four years he worked as a Malay language teacher and a journalist. In 1939 he wrote a satirical novel on British rule, *Putera Gunung Tahan* [The Prince of Gunung Tahan] which became a minor classic. In 1938 his friendship with Ibrahim had led him to become a co-founder of the KMM and a member of its executive committee. See Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, *Ishak Haji Muhammad: Penulis dan Ahli Politik sehingga 1948* [Ishak Haji Muhammad: Writer and Politician to 1948] (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1977), pp. 1-27.

54. Monson's Notes to Keating on CO 273/671/50790. Monson also states that no arrests took place in Trengganu and Kelantan, but this is probably not correct. Malek's list of twenty KMM branch officials arrested in the police sweep throughout Malaya includes members in Kelantan and Trengganu. See Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 210-11. This list is based on information given in interviews with three former KMM officials, including executive committee member Ahmad Boestamam, who was among those arrested.

of connections with "Japanophile bodies" in the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>55</sup>

Ibrahim argues that he should not have been arrested, for he had never been serious in Japanese fifth column work; he had been opposed to "Japanese fascism" until his arrest; and he left no instructions for the KMM to assist the invading Japanese forces but rather had urged members to make underground preparations to fight them. In fact, he contends that by arresting him and other KMM members the British made a serious miscalculation, because their action both convinced the Japanese that the Malay population was on their side and at the same time influenced many Malays to support the Japanese.<sup>56</sup>

#### *KMM Pemuda as Japanese Army Guides*

Soon after the arrests the British administration made last-minute efforts to persuade four Malay rulers to urge their subjects to remain loyal to Britain.<sup>57</sup> This alarmed KMM members attached to units of the invading Japanese Army as guides and interpreters, who had been instructed by Ibrahim to safeguard the rulers as symbols of Malay unity. The KMM members feared that, after overrunning the country, the Japanese might take punitive action against the rulers, and they therefore attempted to convince their Japanese officers that the rulers had been forced to act under duress.<sup>58</sup> Some of the rulers and princes were indeed potentially sympathetic to Japan, and between 1934 and 1937 many had been encouraged to visit there.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the arrests of Ibrahim and some of his colleagues, a remarkably efficient KMM anti-British underground movement seems to have survived. KMM supporters, such as its Kelantan state chairman, Abdul Kadir Adabi, in Kota Bharu and others in Perlis and Kedah--the front-line states where communications were severed immediately after the first Japanese attacks--reportedly came forward voluntarily to offer their services to the Japanese. Major Fujiwara quickly provided them with KAME armbands, which gave them protection and standing among Japanese troops and enabled them to save friends, relatives, and countless other Malays in trouble with the invading forces.<sup>60</sup>

---

55. Monson's Notes to Keating.

56. Robert Reece's Notes; see also Ibrahim Yaacob, "Sejarah Perintis." Ibrahim also states that plans to send him to India for internment were dropped because of the rapidity of the Japanese advance.

57. The rulers were those of the FMS states Selangor, Negri Sembilan, Perak, and Pahang. For a report of their joint statement, see *The Malay Mail* (Kuala Lumpur), December 10, 1941.

58. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 212-13.

59. These included Sultan Ibrahim of Johor, who went to Tokyo in 1934 and was the subject of very special attention and compliments. He developed cordial relations with Marquis Tokugawa and his son, both of whom later offered him protection and arranged for Johor students, among them Ungku Abdul Aziz and Wan Abdul Hamid, to study in Japan. Raja Uda of the Malay Civil Service and Raja Nong of Selangor also visited Japan in 1935, and Tengku Abdul Rahman in 1937. An attempt in 1935 to persuade the Raja Muda of Selangor to visit Japan failed, however, as he only wanted a loan. See Monson's Notes to Keating, 14.6.43, in CO 273/671/50790.

60. This is confirmed in interviews with several KMM members in Perak and

Onan Haji Siraj was apparently the only KMM official to have received last-minute instructions from Ibrahim after the Japanese attack. Ibrahim had secured his brother-in-law's release by falsely informing the police that Onan was his chauffeur.<sup>61</sup> After being freed in Singapore, Onan quickly moved up to Taiping to look for Mustapha Hussein,<sup>62</sup> the KMM's vice-president, who had so far eluded arrest by the British. Both men established close liaison with Major Fujiwara. Mustapha supervised the KMM members and showed himself to be not only an able organizer but clear-sighted about the KMM's aims and the opportunities which the invasion presented the party. Complying with Japanese requests, he quickly organized KMM groups into the Barisan Pemuda (Youth Corps), whose members acted as guides and interpreters<sup>63</sup> and played an extremely important role in the military and social upheaval following the Japanese invasion. Pemuda groups were secretly assigned to seek out and save Malays in the police, in the Malay regiment, and army volunteers, who were likely to be massacred by the Japanese as "British supporters." Some pemuda were instructed to look for sultans who had gone into hiding and bring them back to their palaces, while others sought the support of Indian Independence League groups to guard against the possibility that Japanese-sponsored pro-Wang Ching-wei elements (consisting of Chinese, Formosans, and Koreans) might attack Malays, a prospect feared by Mustapha.<sup>64</sup> As the Japanese troops swept through villages and towns in their advance down the peninsula, young Malays joined them, although by the time the Japanese army entered Singapore only between 300 and 500 pemuda had reportedly been recruited.

In addition to demanding that the Japanese commanders not harm the Malay people and their rulers, but should rescue the detained KMM leaders as quickly as possible, and respect the customs, religion, property, and women of the Malays, Mustapha also requested that any Malay (civilian or uniformed) who was captured by the Japanese troops be referred to the Barisan Pemuda. Reportedly the Japanese officers, especially Major Fujiwara, generally complied with these requests, as they realized the importance of the pemuda as guides.<sup>65</sup>

Yet a conflict of aims soon emerged between the KMM under Mustapha and the Japanese. According to later accounts, in January 1942, after the Japanese forces had entered Kuala Lumpur, Mustapha asked Major Fujiwara and other officers for Japanese backing for a proclamation of Malay independence, citing Japan's promise to liberate Malaya from British rule. When the Japanese commander challenged the

---

Perlis; see Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 225-30; see also Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 97.

61. Ishak Haji Muhammad gives an account of Onan's release in his article "Kenangan Hidup Pak Sako No. 27" [Memories of Pak Sako], in the weekly *Mingguan Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur), July 4, 1977. "Sako," Ishak Haji Muhammad's pen-name, originated during the Japanese occupation.

62. Born in Matang, Perak, Mustapha was educated at the College of Agriculture, Serdang (Selangor). He served as an agricultural officer in Cemor, Perak, before being transferred to the College of Agriculture as an assistant lecturer. Mustapha was a member of the British "Left Book Club," and was very much attracted to revolutionary ideas.

63. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 92-96.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 76. Mustapha found the Indians quite sympathetic and reached an understanding with the IIL.

65. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 223-48.

KMM to come up with a Malay national anthem and flag,<sup>66</sup> the KMM group was only able, a few days later, to produce the Red-White flag of Indonesia and a hastily-composed anthem set to a martial air. The Japanese commanders refused to accept the legitimacy of these emblems, especially the flag, and told Mustapha and his colleagues that their request for a republic for the Malays was out of the question as they still had their sultans, and it was Japanese policy to back the sultans.<sup>67</sup> Mustapha's disillusionment with the Japanese began from this time, and he was to distrust everything they did or said to him thereafter.

Ibrahim and the other detained KMM members were released by their British prison wardens three days before Singapore fell on February 15, 1942. At about the same time, two advance parties of Mustapha's pemuda, one led by Onan Haji Siraj, infiltrated the British lines on the west coast of Singapore and reestablished contacts with Ibrahim and his group at the offices of the *Warta Malaya* in Cecil Street.<sup>68</sup> Some of them joined in the looting of hastily abandoned Chinese and Indian shophouses in order to obtain rice, sugar, and other foodstuffs, while others carried on with their work of rescuing Malay soldiers, policemen, and civilians who had gone into hiding once news of the British defeat became known.<sup>69</sup>

At a meeting of the KMM executive committee which he convened on the night of February 17, at a house in Bukit Timah, Ibrahim heard reports of pemuda actions and the attitudes of the Japanese officers. Ibrahim states that when he heard Mustapha's account of the Japanese rejection of his demand to set up a Malayan republic, he criticized Mustapha for his stand, and told the meeting: "Comrades, Japan's present victory is not our victory. Our struggle has still a long way to go and we do not know the attitude of Japan. Who knows, Japan might also become colonialistic. . . ." <sup>70</sup> He turned to Mustapha and told him that he had made a great blunder. "You won't get a Republic. They will behead you," he said.<sup>71</sup> Mustapha argued that his meeting with the Japanese officers had been a test-case and an "eye-opener." They could not be trusted, because they merely wanted to use Malays for their own ends. When Mustapha called on the meeting to adopt a policy of withdrawal and "noncooperation,"<sup>72</sup> Ibrahim urged caution, stating that

---

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., pp. 235-37. The Japanese administration's policy on the status of the sultans was to take away any political authority they enjoyed as heads of state but to pay them stipends and allow them to retain their position as spiritual leaders of Islam. See Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Military Administration in Malaya--Its Formation and Evolution in Reference to Sultans, the Islamic Religion, and the Moslem Malays, 1941-45" in *Asian Studies*, 7, 1 (April 1969), pp. 94-100.

68. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 95-96. See also Ishak Haji Muhammad, "Kenangan Hidup Pak Sako No. 29" in *Mingguan Malaysia*, July 18, 1977. Ishak is bitterly critical of the arrogant behavior of Onan Haji Siraj when he arrived at the newspaper office. Onan is said to have thrown his weight about, often raising his voice, and chiding everyone for lack of discipline.

69. Ibid. gives a very frank account of looting by KMM members and Chinese groups in Singapore just before the island fell to the Japanese.

70. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 96.

71. Interview with Robert Reece, Jakarta, February 1974.

72. Mustapha's version is in Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 248-51, which gives a detailed account of the proceedings, based on interviews with Mustapha and other participants.

Mustapha had put pressure too early on the Japanese. In his opinion the KMM should "wait and see," for the situation might change and force the Japanese to give in to their demands. There was no point in acting hastily. Ibrahim's arguments won the day. Mustapha agreed to go along with the majority temporarily, but the differences which had arisen were soon to divide the KMM leadership and lead to Mustapha's group withdrawing from the KMM.<sup>73</sup> The tone of the meeting clearly suggests that the KMM leadership in general had become distrustful of Japanese intentions rather early. Ibrahim's own disillusionment with the Japanese was soon to begin, and he was already very suspicious of Major Fujiwara.<sup>74</sup>

The next day, February 18, Ibrahim began probing Japanese intentions. He led a KMM "diplomatic" delegation to call on Fujiwara at the Japanese military headquarters in Tanglin Road to "extend congratulations on Japan's splendid victory" over the British forces and to offer the KMM's services. He asked the major to accept the KMM's gesture as proof of the support of the Malay population as a whole for Japan, and to disregard the belated anti-Japanese proclamations of the four Malay rulers, which had been a result of "British pressure." He also requested the Japanese to treat humanely the 2,000 Malay "prisoners of war" who were detained at a camp in Farrer Park. Fujiwara promised to do whatever he could to meet the KMM requests. He said that he hoped that in the operations against the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies the KMM would continue to give the Japanese forces the same valuable services they had rendered in the Malayan campaign against the British.<sup>75</sup> Accompanied by Fujiwara, the KMM delegation then met General Watanabe, the Japanese military administrator of Malaya-Singapore, and Ibrahim presented him with two requests: (a) that in view of the services it had rendered to the Japanese the KMM be allowed to continue its activities as before; and (b) that the KMM be allowed to resume publication of its prewar newspaper, *Warta Malaya*. Watanabe agreed, but it was several months before the newspaper was permitted to reopen and, much to the annoyance of Ibrahim and his group, the management then came under a Japanese officer.<sup>76</sup>

---

73. Ibid., pp. 132-48, 266-69.

74. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 97-99. Ibrahim's suspicions had first been aroused by stories of a Japanese guerrilla "Harimau O," who was unknown to Ibrahim but whom Fujiwara publicly linked with the KMM. "Harimau O" (from the Malay *harimau* meaning tiger) was in fact Tani Yutaka, born in Malaya in 1910 of Japanese parents, who had taken up a career of vengeance following the death of his eight-year-old sister by rampaging Chinese mobs during the anti-Japanese campaign in Malaya in 1932. Tani had organized a bandit group of Thais and Malays on the Malay-Thai border and by November 1941 his exploits had come to the attention of Major Fujiwara's intelligence agency, F Kikan, which used him first as an espionage agent and later in sabotage work behind British lines. Without Ibrahim's knowledge, Tani had apparently been in contact with local KMM members and was said to have been quite successful in some of his assignments with KMM members, especially in blowing up communications centers. He accompanied the Japanese 25th Army to Johor Bharu where he was struck with fever, dying in Johor General Hospital two days after the fall of Singapore. Fujiwara describes Harimau O's activities in *F Kikan*, pp. 25-27. See also Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, pp. 8-10. A Dōmei newsagency report of July 15, 1943 disclosed that a film "Harimau Melayu" (Malay Tiger) depicting "the exploits of the Japanese leader of an anti-British secret society" would be sent to the "Southern Regions" (i.e., Southeast Asia) by the Board of Information. See FIR, up to July 17, 1943, in CO 273/669/50744/7.

75. Robert Reece's Notes; see also Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 98-99.

76. Ibid.

Ibrahim was infuriated with the Japanese delay in rewarding him and his colleagues in Singapore for their help. He began to spend a lot of time on reorganizing the KMM and building up its strength, and also reportedly made plans for an underground KMM movement, in anticipation of future trouble with the Japanese. He instructed Sutan Djenain, who had been freed from prison together with him, to return to Selangor and reestablish contacts with the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). All KMM branch leaders had gone back to their states to reorganize their previous organizations at two levels--open and underground. Ibrahim and a few leaders remained behind in their Singapore base, but they toured the peninsula frequently and kept in constant touch with the branches.<sup>77</sup>

The Dutch administration in the Netherlands East Indies capitulated so quickly in March 1942 that the Japanese needed no assistance from the KMM pemuda.<sup>78</sup> On about the 15th of that month the Japanese sent the KMM's Barisan Pemuda to Tanjong Katong, a district of Singapore, for use as *rōmusha* (forced laborers) on construction projects. Ibrahim quarrelled with the Japanese over this and the role of the KMM in general. He argued so heatedly that one of the Japanese officers slapped him, an incident that was kept secret but which Ibrahim recalled as being his "moment of truth."<sup>79</sup>

In April Ibrahim and other KMM leaders, such as Ishak Haji Muhammad, were recruited into the Sendenbu (Propaganda Department), and soon afterwards were appointed journalists on the *Berita Malai*, a new Malay-language newspaper.<sup>80</sup> But because he resented being subordinate to a Japanese and not being given a free hand as editor, Ibrahim began to drop off from work. Apparently as a demonstration of his pique over the Japanese treatment of the KMM he boycotted a public ceremony held in Singapore on April 29 to mark Emperor Hirohito's birthday. At this ceremony he and other Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian public figures were to be awarded certificates of honor for services rendered to the Japanese.<sup>81</sup> After May, he no longer went to the newspaper office.<sup>82</sup>

Instead, he began to concentrate on his duties as president of the KMM, frequently traveling upcountry to give rousing speeches about the KMM's struggle. On May 11, Ibrahim addressed a KMM meeting at Muar (Johor), which was graced by the local Japanese commander and the Malay District Officer, Datuk Othman bin Buang. Both were also present at a dinner the KMM branch gave that night in Ibrahim's honor, which was attended by 200 people.<sup>83</sup>

It was when Ibrahim returned from another Malayan tour in June 1942 that the Japanese administration informed him of their decision to ban the KMM, instructing

---

77. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 271-74.

78. Robert Reece's Notes.

79. Ibid.

80. Fujiwara, interview, Tokyo, September 1976.

81. Robert Reece's Notes.

82. At Ibrahim's suggestion, the well-known Malay journalist Abdul Rahim Kajai was appointed editor of *Berita Malai*, either in May or June 1942. Interview, A. Samad Ismail, former *Berita Malai* journalist, Kuala Lumpur, 1973.

83. See extract from the weekly *Matahari Memanchar* (Muar), August 15, 1942, in Arena Wati, *Cherpen Zaman Jepun* [Short Stories of the Japanese Occupation Period] (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1968), pp. 69-71.

him to discontinue its activities and tell party branches to dissolve.<sup>84</sup> From this time the KMM's political influence declined, although Ibrahim's public position improved.

### *The KMM and Malay Society*

Between February and June 1942 the KMM's standing had been quite high at the village or district level of Malay society, largely because of Japanese reliance on local KMM members and officials in the rural areas for information and manpower. As a result, the organization became extremely influential, and during the first two months of the occupation its membership leapt spectacularly to about 10,000.

During this period KMM members emerged as the new privileged political elite, whose prestige superseded that of the Malay aristocracy and the British-trained Malay bureaucratic elite. With easy access to Japanese officers, political influence, information, special food rations, and allowances, they could extend protection and help to the Malay peasant masses and so became their new patrons.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the Malay aristocracy and the Malay bureaucrats resented the KMM elite, a feeling that was increased by the fact that in many areas the KMM members were responsible for the arrest and interrogation of "uncooperative" Malay aristocrats and civil servants. Some indication of the resentment against the KMM can be found in these recollections of a member of the Malay bureaucratic elite:

The KMM officials swaggered about in the villages and in the government offices, throwing their weight around as if they were the government. No doubt the Malay population appreciated what they had done during the transitional period of Japanese takeover. They saved Malay lives and helped to protect Malay women and property.

But they were ill-qualified to take over the administration. Most were clerks, primary school teachers, and those holding junior positions in government service. The senior civil servants initially had to take orders from them, because the Japanese Army officers relied on them for advice and they were also the eyes and ears [meaning spies and informers] of the Japanese. They were extremely arrogant; but later when the Japanese realized they could not rely on them to run the government they turned to the prewar British-trained civil servants.<sup>86</sup>

---

84. Robert Reece's Notes.

85. In addition to giving protection, they were able to fulfill most requests from the Malay people for licenses to move goods and buy or sell rice, and for letters of safe conduct. See Halimah Bamadhaj, "The Impact of the Japanese Occupation of Malaya on Malay Society and Politics 1941-1945" (M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1975), pp. 76-86.

86. Datuk (Dr.) Awang Hassan, Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia. Interview, Canberra, June 1978. During the Japanese occupation, Datuk Awang was a medical officer at Kluang (Johor). A similar attitude survives in Kampung Jawa, the home village of KMM leader Onan Haji Siraj. Onan is remembered there as an extremely influential and high-handed village administrator and "informer" during the Japanese occupation. One Malay account described him as "berjewa borjuis dan berfaham fascist pula" (a bourgeois and also a fascist). See Talib, *Riwayat Kinta*, pp. 95-96, 105-6. The writer was secretary of the conservative Persatuan Pemuda Melayu Perak (The Perak Malay Youth Association) which was loyal to the local aristocracy and a rival of the KMM.

Open conflict between these different elite strata, however, did not materialize, partly because, in the interest of achieving Malay unity under KMM leadership, Ibrahim encouraged the KMM to accommodate elements of the Malay aristocracy and bureaucratic elite within their ranks, and enough members of the traditional elites quickly adjusted themselves to the new situation. Many joined the KMM, including such members of the Malay aristocracy as "Raja Shariman in Perak, Datuk Hamzah bin Abdullah in Selangor, Tengku Mohammad bin Tengku Besar in Negri Sembilan, Tengku Mohammad bin Sultan Ahmad in Pahang, Datuk Onn bin Jaafar in Johor, and others."<sup>87</sup> Several were even allowed to assume leadership positions in KMM rural branches. The brevity of the KMM's "reign" also meant that real social divisions did not have a chance to develop in the competition for rewards and political influence in Malay society.

In fact, after the KMM's dissolution in June, the aristocratic groups quickly reasserted themselves and exacted revenge on the KMM. Ibrahim bitterly recalls the actions of these aristocrats as "betrayals":

Throughout the Japanese occupation none of the numerous prewar Malay associations [a reference to the aristocrat-led Malay State Associations known as the Persatuan-Persatuan Negeri] dared to rise to defend the rights of the Malays either openly or in secret. The leading *raja* and *datuk* [titled aristocrats] were only interested in safeguarding their own security. Initially they took refuge within the KMM and became members of the KMM leadership in the districts. But when the KMM was dissolved, some of them betrayed several KMM district members, causing the latter to be detained and tortured by the Japanese.<sup>88</sup>

The KMM was suppressed for most of the remainder of the Japanese occupation, until the closing months of the war in 1945. During its years of suppression Ibrahim was unable to keep the movement intact underground or to maintain close touch with party elements and branches, which slowly disintegrated. KMM members, lacking leadership or an organization to give them political cohesion, became preoccupied with their own survival.

Japanese accounts indicate that the KMM's dissolution in June 1942 was part of a Japanese military policy aimed at discouraging political activities by any local group.<sup>89</sup> It was feared that if the KMM was encouraged, then Chinese, Eurasians, and other groups might ask for similar privileges. Only the Indian Independence League (IIL) was backed because it was an India-oriented organization and was part of Japanese military designs for the invasion of India. There is little evidence to support the general assumption that the KMM's fortunes were affected by Major Fujiwara's posting to Burma in March 1942,<sup>90</sup> for he, in fact, had done little for the KMM. Fujiwara himself says, "I did not encourage the KMM, because of the

---

87. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 68.

88. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu* [The Malays and Their Islands] (Jakarta: Alma'arif, 1951), p. 61.

89. Interviews with Fujiwara and Professor Yoichi Itagaki, who was chief adviser on Malay affairs to the Japanese Military Administration in Malaya; both in Tokyo, September 1976. See also Document No. 1, "Principles governing the administration of Occupied Southern Areas," in *Japanese Military Administration in Indonesia: Selected Documents*, ed. Harry J. Benda et al. (New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1965), p. 2.

90. Bamadhaj, "Impact of the Japanese Occupation," pp. 93-94.

multi-ethnic nature of Malayan society. I did not want to upset the status quo. But I saw to it that Ibrahim and some KMM members got jobs as rewards for their cooperation."<sup>91</sup>

### *Ibrahim in Office*

Perhaps as a move to mollify Ibrahim for the abolition of the KMM, Captain Ogawa, secretary to General Watanabe, the Sōmubuchō Malai Gunsei Kanbu,<sup>92</sup> invited him, along with other community leaders, to accompany the Director-General on an upcountry tour from which they returned at the end of July.<sup>93</sup> About a week later, Ogawa invited Ibrahim and four other KMM members to dinner, where he expressed sympathy with Ibrahim's complaints about Japanese treatment of the KMM. He suggested that Ibrahim accept a government post as adviser on Malay affairs to the Singapore-Malaya administration in Singapore. An advisory board consisting of five to six Malays would be appointed which Ibrahim could select and head, although its secretary would be a Japanese (a Mr. Hosai, a civilian with the rank of Colonel). Ibrahim recalls that as a result of discussions within the KMM's "inner council," consisting of Ibrahim and a few of his trusted executive colleagues, it was finally agreed that he should accept the appointment.<sup>94</sup>

As adviser on Malay affairs to Director-General Watanabe, Ibrahim came very much into the limelight, making radio broadcasts and public speeches calling on Malays to cooperate with the Japanese administration and hinting that they would achieve their nationalist goals in the near future. He saw to it that such KMM officials as Ishak Haji Muhammad, Abdullah Kamel, Taharuddin Ahmad, and Muhammad Zallehudin were satisfactorily employed on the *Berita Malai* and other Malay publications issuing from the Propaganda Department.

Some KMM officials, however, such as Mustapha Hussein, Ahmad Boestamam, Idris Hakim, Abdul Kadir Adabi, and M. N. Othman did not participate, as they had already left Singapore before May 1942, dissatisfied with Ibrahim's leadership and the refusal of the Japanese to meet the KMM's demands on Malay independence. Ahmad Boestamam and Idris Hakim both returned to Ipoh where they worked in the local Propaganda Department, while M. N. Othman returned to his job with the Malayan railways in Kuala Lumpur.

Mustapha's withdrawal as vice-president of the KMM had been precipitated by an incident in which he was kicked and slapped by a Japanese soldier because he got in the latter's way when trying to fix his bicycle on the road.<sup>95</sup> Convinced by this that the Japanese were not only unreliable but barbaric, Mustapha wished to have nothing more to do with them. He had also found his KMM position untenable because of his differences with Ibrahim and his clique. The other three KMM executive committee members were similarly dissatisfied with what they described as Ibrahim's "autocratic" leadership, "arrogant" behavior, and formation of "cliques."<sup>96</sup>

91. Interview, Tokyo, September 1976.

92. "Director-General of the Japanese Military Administration (Malaya) in Singapore."

93. Robert Reece's Notes; see also Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 101.

94. Ibid. Ibrahim here claims he was forced to accept the appointment because the Japanese advice was "filled with threats."

95. Interview with Professor Yoichi Itagaki, Tokyo, September 1976.

96. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 132-48, 210-11, 266-69.

Besides an "inner circle" of KMM officials, Ibrahim was said to have his own group of trusted confidants, including his brother-in-law Onan Haji Siraj. His "inner circle" had included by turn Mustapha, Hassan Manan (KMM secretary-general), Abdul Karim Rashid, Ishak Haji Muhammad, Mohd. Isa Mahmud and M. N. Othman (all KMM executive committee members), and he was also known to have an "outer circle" and an "ordinary circle." KMM executive committee members Ahmad Boestamam and Idris Hakim belonged to the "outer circle" and were usually sealed off from policy making.<sup>97</sup> The public sinecures which Ibrahim finally secured in the latter part of 1942 and in 1943-44 went only to him and the "inner circle."

In June 1943, when Japanese Premier Tōjō, after a visit to Singapore and Thailand, announced in the Imperial Diet the coming independence of Burma and the Philippines, he also promised that the administration of the "Indonesian peoples" would move forward, and that political participation would be granted to the natives in Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Sulawesi.<sup>98</sup> This speech was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the Malay press. On July 28, Ibrahim led an eight-man delegation from Singapore and the Malay States on a three-month tour of Japan. All the delegation were members of his Malay Advisory Board, but they included aristocrats whom Ibrahim had recruited to gain their support.<sup>99</sup> The delegation was joined by another from Sumatra, and during the tour their activities were widely reported by Dōmei newsagency.<sup>100</sup>

#### *Ibrahim and the Giyū gun*

While Ibrahim's delegation was in Japan, Dōmei announced that the Japanese had adopted measures "to rouse Indonesians, including Malays, from the stupor into which they had fallen during the Dutch and British regimes." In Java they had initiated "the first steps in provincial autonomy" in line with Tōjō's statement. They hoped that this would "inspire the people in Malaya to work in even closer cooperation with the authorities in the hope that when the time is ripe they too will be accorded similar privileges." Dōmei also remarked that Japan had brought "a new gospel of coexistence and coprosperity" to the Malays and that the "right has been restored to Malaya to determine its own future."<sup>101</sup> These statements were made on August 10, 1943. On August 20, however, Japan signed away the four northern Malay States of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu to Thailand. The formal transfer of these states was made on October 18, and Ibrahim returned to Malaya in time to witness it.<sup>102</sup>

---

97. Ibid.

98. For the full text of Tōjō's speech, see "Document No. 9," in *Japanese Military Administration*, ed. Benda et al., p. 51.

99. These were Nik Ahmad Kamil (Kelantan), Raja Sulaiman Ahmad (Selangor), Datuk Bandar Seremban (Negri Sembilan) and Tengku Ibrahim (Trengganu). *Syōnan Shimbun*, July 30, 1943. See also FIR Nos. 7, 10, 12, and 13 (covering the period July to September 1943), which contain announcements and reports of Ibrahim's visit to Japan, in CO 273/669/50744/7.

100. Dōmei carried biographical details of Ibrahim and his contribution to Japanese intelligence during the campaign leading to the fall of Singapore. See FIR No. 13, September 11, 1943, *ibid.*

101. FIR No. 12, August 12, 1943.

102. Ibrahim Yaacob, "Sejarah Perintis."

Ibrahim's dismay over the transfer was apparently only alleviated when the Japanese told him that he had been chosen to help establish the *Giyū gun* (Volunteer Army) and *Giyū tai* (Volunteer Corps). The former was to be a fighting force used only for the defense of Malaya, while the latter was to be employed for defense of the coastline and the preservation of public order. These units would supplement the *Heihō* (Auxiliary Servicemen) created by the Japanese in June to assist their forces in labor services. Ibrahim was instructed to organize Malay pemuda into both the *Giyū gun* and the *Giyū tai*, and was himself to undergo six months' military training in order to take command of the *Giyū gun*.<sup>103</sup> Although the Japanese originally envisaged the *Giyū gun* as a multiracial army, it ended up mainly as a Malay force. Ibrahim, who had previously asked the Japanese to establish a Malay army, was quite willing to take up the appointment in the hope that he could convert the *Giyū gun* into a real military force.

The formation of the *Giyū gun* and *Giyū tai* in Malaya coincided with that of similar groups in Sumatra and Java. The Japanese aim was to persuade local populations to assume a role in defense against Allied attacks. They were now prepared to put more reliance on and trust in the local people, mainly because of Japan's uncertain position in the war and the greater deployment of Japanese troops on the battlefronts in Burma and the Pacific.

The KMM journalists on *Berita Malai* and other Malay publications mounted a big publicity campaign, including the staging of *sandiwara* (dramatic shows), for the *Giyū gun*, using Ibrahim's appointment as its commander to arouse the interest of young Malays. On Japanese urging, Ishak Haji Muhammad, who was now chief editor of *Berita Malai*,<sup>104</sup> made speeches and broadcasts exhorting Malay youths to join the *Giyū gun* and *Giyū tai*. The monthly magazine *Fajar Asia* (Dawn of Asia) also made strong appeals to Malay youths to enlist:

The *Giyū gun* is a genuine Army which will consist only of Malays. The recruits must be those who genuinely wish to defend their motherland. The second unit has already been formed and only awaits the arrival of more dedicated youths who are prepared to carry out their responsibilities to the motherland. Malay pemuda must seize this excellent opportunity to show the world that within their breasts flows the blood of Hang Tuah [the Malay warrior] who once reminded us: "The Malays shall not vanish in this world." Mr. Ibrahim Yaacob who has been appointed commander of the Malay *Giyū gun* says he wishes to see every male Malay enlist as a soldier and establish the Army.<sup>105</sup>

Other writers in the magazine made similar appeals to Malay youths to "rise to the defense of their motherland." Earlier, in arguing that the Malays should prevent the British from landing again on Malaya, the journal declared: "The Malay *keris* [dagger] demands blood, after centuries of being locked within its sheath by the oppression of Western colonialism."<sup>106</sup>

103. Occasionally Ibrahim refers to the *Giyū gun* as *Peta*, which stands for *Pembela Tanah Air* (Defenders of the Motherland) and was the name of the volunteer army on Java. See Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, pp. 32-34.

104. In early November 1943 Ishak visited Tokyo to attend the Dai Tōa (Greater East Asia) Journalists' Conference. During his absence the chief editor of *Berita Malai*, Rahim Kajai, died, and on his return Ishak took over the post. Interview with Ishak.

105. *Fajar Asia* (Singapore), December 1943.

106. See the article entitled "Bangunkanlah Tentera Sukarela!" [Raise the Volunteer Army!], *Fajar Asia* (Singapore), October 1943.

In their speeches Ishak and the KMM leaders portrayed the Giyū gun as serving the cause of Malay independence, but in fact not all Giyū gun recruits were selected by the KMM leaders. They were also recruited, instructed, and trained by Japanese officers, and Ibrahim has been blamed for an arrangement whereby KMM leaders were denied the right to "indoctrinate" the Giyū gun.<sup>107</sup>

While Ibrahim was busy with the Giyū gun, the Japanese administration announced formation of *sangi kai* [regional councils] for Singapore and the other states to allow local participation in political administration. Only in Singapore were KMM members included in these councils; in the other states Malays were represented by titled aristocrats and senior civil servants. In Singapore, on Ibrahim's nomination, Onan Haji Siraj and Daud bin Mohd. Shah of the KMM were appointed. An important shift in policy was that more seats were given to Malayan Chinese on the regional councils, reversing the Japanese administration's earlier repressive policy towards the Chinese. This followed the recall of the hard-liner Watanabe in March 1943<sup>108</sup> and the transfer of the four northern Malay States to Thailand, which resulted in the remainder of Malaya becoming overwhelmingly non-Malay in composition.<sup>109</sup> Clearly this increase in Chinese political representation had been achieved at the expense of Malay interests, and Ibrahim's response was to move to strengthen the Giyū gun.

Recruiting proper for the Giyū gun began on December 9, 1943, and in a 1944 New Year's Day message Ibrahim made a personal appeal to Malay youths to enlist in the army:

I am living in a camp somewhere in Syōnan [Singapore] undergoing rigorous training as a founding officer of the Giyū Gun. The Giyū gun and the Giyū tai will form the Giyū Hei or the Malai Protection

---

107. This criticism appears in A. Samad Ismail's semi-autobiographical novel, *Patah Sayap Terbang Jua*, where the character Hashim represents Ishak, and Shamsuddin, Ibrahim Yaacob. The author describes how during the establishment of the Giyū gun, an Indonesian revolutionary, Mas Parjo, arrived secretly in Singapore to assist the KMM. He criticizes Ibrahim's mishandling of the recruitment exercise:

"I said to him [Ibrahim], Bung [brother], get ready now. Without preparations how can you struggle? Bung, you must organize the idealist youths. You must educate them with our nationalism. With the aspirations of Indonesia Raya. With the anti-Japanese spirit. . . ." and again, "How do we fight the British and the Americans if our soldiers [i.e., the Giyū gun] are not educated as nationalists? This was what I told Bung. Don't let the Japanese pick the men for the Giyū gun. Bung, you must pick them yourself." A. Samad Ismail, *Patah Sayap Terbang Jua* [A Broken Wing Can Fly Too] (Kuala Lumpur: Setia Murni, 1968), pp. 148-49. During the Japanese occupation, the twenty-year-old Samad worked as a journalist on the *Berita Malai*. Later, he credited his political maturing in this period to Ishak. Interview, Kuala Lumpur, June 1973. Samad, now in detention for alleged communist activities, is one of Malaysia's leading writers.

108. See Yoji Akashi, "Japanese Policy Towards the Malayan Chinese, 1941-1945," in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 1, 2 (September 1970), pp. 66, 78.

109. The composition of the various *sangi kai* is discussed in Yoichi Itagaki, "Outlines of Japanese Policy in Indonesia and Malaya during the War with Special Reference to Nationalism of Respective Countries," in *The Annals of the Hitotsubashi Academy* [Tokyo], 11, 2 (April 1952), p. 188.

Army which, I believe, will symbolise the desire of every able-bodied Malai<sup>110</sup> youth to serve his country.

Never in my life and during my difficult career as a leader of the Malai people have I felt more gratified at the prospect of being able to serve more actively as a soldier to defend my beloved Malai, and to help complete the construction of New Malai.

My training here, though rigorous, is strengthening my spirit and my faith, and will help to qualify me better to serve my people. . . .<sup>111</sup>

Some time before June 1944 Ibrahim completed his training and was given the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. About 2,000 Malay youths were said to have been recruited into a single unit with a central training camp and barracks at Johor Bharu. In July the Giyū gun was sent out on an anti-guerrilla operation. Although an understanding was said to have been reached between Ibrahim and the MCP/MPAJA prior to the operation, this did not prevent their forces from clashing in the jungles of Kota Tinggi, with the result that twenty-five guerrillas were killed.<sup>112</sup> During another operation in Ipoh, however, Japanese suspicions of the Giyū gun were said to have been aroused, for not a single engagement occurred between the Giyū gun and the MPAJA. The Giyū gun unit was suddenly withdrawn to Singapore and its officers and men dispersed among different Japanese Army units, and from then on Japanese distrust and tight control rendered the Giyū gun impotent. Although Ibrahim was made an adviser and promoted to the rank of Colonel, he had little power.<sup>113</sup>

As a military officer, Ibrahim's movements were now restricted, but he still tried to keep in touch with the KMM officials in Singapore. By this time, as the result of a tiff with Onan Haji Siraj, Ishak Haji Muhammad had given up his job as editor of *Berita Malai*. He left for Bintan Island, south of Singapore, some time in 1944, ostensibly to help the "grow more food" campaign there. Ibrahim recalled him to Singapore,<sup>114</sup> but he soon went back to his kampung in Pahang, where he remained until the Japanese surrender. Ishak's disillusionment, which was aggravated by the KMM's failure to make any political headway, is nicely captured in Samad Ismail's novel. The character Hashim (i.e., Ishak) says:

People like us are no longer of any value. We are nationalists. So long as we remain so, we will be neglected. If we try to be active, we are obstructed. If we oppose, we lose our heads. Shamsuddin [i.e., Ibrahim] knows. He wanted an Army. The Japanese said, why not? But Shamsuddin has no authority. His Army is not a political Army. It's an Army instilled with the Bushido spirit to serve only the Japanese. Now he regrets. He tries to reorganize his front. I said, who

---

110. "Malai" in Japanese means either "Malay" or "Malaya."

111. *Syōnan Shimbun*, January 1, 1944.

112. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 297-302.

113. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 106. It should be noted that Ibrahim's rank of Colonel was one of the highest ever accorded to a non-Japanese officer.

114. Ishak disliked Onan for his arrogance and said that Ibrahim gave him "too much face." When Ishak was in Bintan, Ibrahim repeatedly called him to return, but to no avail until he sent a close friend, Pacik Ahmad. Interview, January 1977. For Pacik Ahmad's account, see Appendix D, Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 363-67.

will now believe you any more? Every plan of ours has failed. Every effort of ours is half completed. We don't have enough people. The old comrades are scattered. It's now easy to select new people. We can't choose people who are pro-British. We can't choose people who are full of sympathy for the Japanese, either. We must only choose people who are pro-us. . . .<sup>115</sup>

*The KRIS and Indonesian Independence*

As the Japanese war situation deteriorated the political advancement promised by Tōjō was taken a stage further by his successor, Koiso. On September 9, 1944, Koiso promised to prepare the territories of the former Netherlands East Indies for independence, with Java to be given priority.<sup>116</sup> In the early months of 1945, the KMM group, inspired by developments in Java where Sukarno and other nationalists were being given greater scope, revived their pan-Indonesian aspirations. In their Malay newspapers and magazines they began to give support to the idea of Indonesia Raya.<sup>117</sup>

When the Japanese accelerated their plans for Indonesian independence in May 1945, two Japanese civilian officers in the Malayan Military Administration sympathetic to the KMM decided to support the Indonesia Raya idea and informed the group of the Japanese plans for Indonesian independence. These officers were Yoichi Itagaki, of Hitotsubashi University, a specialist in Malay affairs, and his superior, Professor Akamatsu, head of the Malayan Military Administration's Research Bureau.<sup>118</sup> Itagaki was among the officers who attended the meeting of Japanese administrators from Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, and Malaya held in Singapore on May 2-3, 1945, to discuss preparations for Indonesian independence. According to Itagaki, while the meeting was under way he decided to act, and, with permission from the Chief of Staff in Singapore, he personally instructed Ibrahim to convene an urgent meeting of his group.<sup>119</sup>

The meeting at Ibrahim's house in Tanjong Katong, Singapore, on May 4 or 5, 1945, was attended by about seven or eight KMM members, including Onan Haji Siraj. Itagaki began:

What I have to say tonight is unofficial, but I think the independence of Malaya is coming. To be ready for this, you should all start making preparations. Today I have secured the permission of the Chief of Staff, so that Ibrahim can function as leader of the Malay nationalist movement. I hope you will all think seriously about the idea.<sup>120</sup>

Ibrahim replied:

---

115. Samad Ismail, *Patah Sayap Terbang Jua*, p. 201.

116. See Koiso's statement, and the draft statements of the Army Ministry (1944) in *Japanese Military Administration*, ed. Benda et al., p. 120.

117. See the issues of *Fajar Asia* from December 1944 to February 1945, which carried articles on Sukarno, such Indonesian historical heroes as Diponegoro, and the Indonesian national anthem "Indonesia Raya."

118. Professor Itagaki, interview, Tokyo, September 1976.

119. See the account in his memoirs, *Azia tōnō Taiwa* [Dialogue with Asia] (Tokyo: Shinkeigen Sha, 1968), pp. 158-61.

120. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-62.

Independence of Malaya has been our desire for a long time, but it has been totally suppressed by the Japanese administration. Of course, we believe the words of Professor. However, we cannot reply immediately. We cannot start anything without Mustapha Hussein, the vice-chairman of KMM. If there is no agreement from Mustapha, there is no hope of success. To mobilize 800 comrades, his support is indispensable. To make matters worse, he has been insisting that he would not cooperate with the Japanese since the incident in which he was kicked and slapped.<sup>121</sup>

Itagaki expressed regret for the incident and promised to accompany Ibrahim to Taiping, where Mustapha lived, to persuade him to rejoin the movement. The KMM group withdrew briefly for a private discussion. When they returned, Ibrahim announced that they had picked on the name KRIS or Kekuatan Rakyat Istimewa (literally Special Strength of the People) for their movement.<sup>122</sup> Ibrahim subsequently referred to KRIS as "Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung" (The Union of Peninsular Indonesians).<sup>123</sup> A third interpretation of KRIS is believed to be "Kerajaan Ra'ayat Indonesia Semenanjung" (The Government of Peninsular Indonesians).<sup>124</sup>

Some time after this meeting Itagaki and Ibrahim left for Taiping, where Ibrahim contacted Mustapha. The latter, however, refused to join KRIS, as he did not believe Itagaki's assurances that Japan would grant independence to Malaya. Both Itagaki and Professor Akamatsu met Mustapha to try to convince him, and they then arranged for the whole group to meet with General Umezu, the new Sōmubuchō Malai Gunsei Kanbu. At Itagaki's request, Umezu, who shared the two professors' sympathies for the nationalist movement, agreed to do what he could to persuade Mustapha.

At their meeting, Umezu made an immediate impact on Mustapha when he said: "I wish to speak honestly with you all today. Our policy towards the Malay nationalist movement all this while has been wrong. We realize this too late. We must change our policy. We should now do our best to respond to your nationalistic desires. Although the war is still on, we must do our best to implement this policy."<sup>125</sup> Itagaki, who was interpreting, recalls that he noticed a sudden transformation in Mustapha's demeanor. He was smiling. Later Mustapha told Itagaki he had been impressed by Umezu's sincerity, especially his admission of the Japanese mistake. This, he claimed, few Japanese would ever do. When the group returned to Itagaki's residence they became exuberant and began dancing and singing. Tears welled up in Mustapha's eyes.<sup>126</sup>

Between May and July Ibrahim tried to form KRIS branches throughout Malaya. He attempted to use former KMM branches as nuclei, but found that their officials were now scattered and disorganized, and he spent much time looking for them and

---

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 28. According to Professor Itagaki, this was not the name originally agreed to at the May 1945 meeting but had been invented by Ibrahim subsequently to fit in with his exile in Indonesia.

124. Arena Wati, *Cherpen Zaman Jepun*, p. 26n.

125. Itagaki, *Azia tōnō Taiwa*, pp. 162-63.

126. Ibid.

recruiting new members. However, he did succeed in setting up several branches of about ten members each. In July, in order to make sure that Malaya was included in the Indonesian program for independence, Ibrahim sent three representatives to meet with Sukarno. They conveyed a message from Ibrahim and the Malay pemuda requesting that Malaya be included within the coming Indonesian nation.<sup>127</sup>

In Jakarta the 62-member Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia had been inaugurated on May 28, 1945 with Japanese approval. In mid-July it discussed the boundaries of the future Indonesian state and whether these should include: (1) just the former Netherlands East Indies; (2) the former Netherlands East Indies plus Malaya, New Guinea, North Borneo, and Portuguese Timor; or (3) the former Indies minus New Guinea. Muhammad Yamin advocated Indonesia Raya, the second alternative. In supporting him Sukarno revealed that three young pemuda from Singapore had arrived in Jakarta with a request for Malaya's inclusion within Indonesia. Sukarno also reported that a well-known Malay leader, "Lt. Colonel Abdullah Ibrahim" (i.e., Ibrahim Yaacob), had made a similar request.<sup>128</sup> Although he recognized the political risks involved in including Malaya within Indonesia, Sukarno said that the interests of Indonesia's defense and sovereignty required territories on both sides of the Straits of Malacca to be in Indonesian hands. Put to a vote, the second alternative was approved by 39 votes, with 19 going to the first proposal and 6 to the third. Mohammad Hatta, who was in favor of the first proposal, said he did not object to Malaya's inclusion if it was so inclined.<sup>129</sup>

On July 29, a second meeting of Japanese regional administrators in Singapore discussed the necessity of accelerating the program of Indonesian independence. Itagaki recounts that after this meeting he was convinced that no more time should be lost by the KRIS organizers, as Indonesian independence was imminent. He suggested to Ibrahim that an All-Malaya Pemuda Conference be held on August 17 and 18 at the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur to inaugurate KRIS. The meeting would declare KRIS support for Indonesian independence, express the Malay people's wish for union with the Indonesian people, and would approve a delegation to attend the official independence ceremony.<sup>130</sup>

Ibrahim made intense preparations for the Pemuda Conference throughout the first two weeks of August, dispatching agents to every state to invite KRIS branches and interested Malay bodies to send delegates to the conference. At the same time, it is claimed, he was planning to set up an interim government in Malaya to coincide with the declaration of Indonesian independence. Included in its cabinet were to be the sultans of Perak, Pahang, and Johor as well as the aristocrats Datuk Onn bin Jaafar, Datuk Abdul Rahman (Johor), Datuk Hussein Mohd. Taib (Pahang), and Raja Kamarulzaman Raja Mansor (Perak).<sup>131</sup> It was also decided

---

127. See Yamin, *Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*, 1, pp. 205-6. See also G. S. Kanahela, "The Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Prelude to Independence" (Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1967), pp. 210-11, 319.

128. Yamin, *Naskah Persiapan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*, 1, p. 206.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

130. Itagaki, *Azia tōnō Taiwa*, pp. 167-69.

131. For the names in the cabinet, see Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 302-7, who is the only source for this information. It is believed that the sultans agreed to the formation of KRIS, but when the question of forming a government

that an eight-man delegation would be sent to attend the Indonesian independence ceremony, consisting of four sultans and four KRIS officials (Ibrahim, Dr. Burhanuddin, Onan Haji Siraj, and Hassan Manan). Ibrahim consulted Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak, who agreed to be a member.<sup>132</sup>

In the midst of these preparations Ibrahim and Itagaki went to Taiping to discuss their plans with officers of the 29th Army, including General Umezu, the Sōmubuchō, who reportedly gave his full approval to the KRIS program. A key Malay source claims that the idea of forming an interim government was casually raised with Umezu, while more detailed plans on cabinet members were kept secret.<sup>133</sup> (Neither Ibrahim nor Itagaki mentions the proposed formation of a cabinet or an interim government in their writings.)

On August 8, an Indonesian delegation headed by Sukarno and Hatta stopped over briefly in Singapore on their way to Saigon for talks on Indonesian independence with Field Marshal Terauchi, the Supreme Commander of Japanese forces in Southeast Asia. Hearing of the visit, KMM supporters raised the Red-White flag of Indonesia atop the Cathay cinema building in Singapore, and KMM officials, including Onan Haji Siraj, Hassan Manan, and Pacik Ahmad, went to the airport to meet the Indonesian leaders. Ibrahim was then in Taiping, and after the departure of the Indonesian delegation Hassan Manan and Pacik Ahmad went there to report to him, leaving Onan Haji Siraj in Singapore.

Returning after their talks with Terauchi, the Indonesian delegation on August 12 or 13 stopped in Taiping<sup>134</sup>--apparently to meet Ibrahim. Ibrahim, Itagaki, and the KMM officials who had arrived from Singapore went with General Umezu to welcome the party. Sukarno's delegation and Ibrahim lunched with Umezu at his residence and then returned to the airport where the Indonesians held discussions with Ibrahim and the KMM pemuda from which Itagaki was excluded.<sup>135</sup> According to Ibrahim's account, he reported to Sukarno and Hatta that the Malays desired to achieve independence for Malaya (excluding Singapore) within Indonesia Raya. He proposed, too, that "Malayan independence" be proclaimed at the end of August (either at the same time as or after the Indonesian proclamation), and that an eight-man delegation including himself and Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak

---

to be called "Kerajaan Ra'ayat Indonesia Semenanjung" (The Government of Peninsular Indonesians) was broached, the sultans balked. See Arena Wati, *Cherpen Zaman Jepun*, p. 26n.

132. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 30.

133. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 302-7.

134. This itinerary of Sukarno's delegation is based on Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 29, and Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 136-37. General A. H. Nasution, the Indonesian Army historian, however, claims in his *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia* [Concerning the War of Indonesian Independence] (Bandung: Angkasa, 1977), 1, p. 273, that on August 13, 1945 Sukarno's delegation stopped in Taiping on their way to Saigon, and on their way back to Jakarta stopped in Singapore where they met Ibrahim again. This seems unlikely as the delegation was back in Jakarta on the 14th. Strangely, Mohammad Hatta omits any mention of the Taiping meeting in his *Sekitar Proklamasi 17 Agustus 1945* [Concerning the Proclamation of 17 August 1945] (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1970), pp. 24-25. The two key sources for the Taiping meeting are Ibrahim and Itagaki, who provided a group photograph which includes Sukarno and Ibrahim as evidence (see p. 84).

135. Itagaki, *Azia tōnō Taiwa*, pp. 203-5.

attend the independence ceremony in Jakarta. Sukarno, with Hatta next to him, was apparently overcome by Ibrahim's enthusiasm. He shook Ibrahim's hand and said: "Let us create one motherland for those of Indonesian ethnic stock." Ibrahim replied: "We Malays will faithfully create the motherland by uniting Malaya with an independent Indonesia. We Malays are determined to be Indonesians." The aircraft carrying the Indonesians then made a brief stop at Singapore for the second time, and at a further meeting with Onan Haji Siraj both sides repeated their hopes and expectations regarding Indonesia.<sup>136</sup>

There are conflicting versions of Hatta's reaction to Ibrahim's proposal to include Malaya within the Indonesian state. According to Itagaki, "Ibrahim later told me Sukarno showed an appreciation of his proposal, but it was Hatta who welcomed it wholeheartedly. This was an idea which Hatta had always advocated."<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, another source claims that two representatives of the Sultan of Johor, Major Datuk Haji Muhammad Said and Musa bin Yusof (Pak Lomak), who were also present at the Taiping meeting, recalled that Hatta and another member of the Indonesian delegation (not identified, possibly Dr. Radjiman Wediodiningrat) rejected the Indonesia Raya union idea.<sup>138</sup> The latter account seems more probable, as it conforms with Hatta's vote at the BPKI meeting in mid-July. In contrast to his glowing admiration for Sukarno, Ibrahim has nowhere shown any affection for Hatta. (Probably reflecting the lack of importance Hatta attached to the KRIS union idea, he has not referred to the proposal in his own memoirs of the period.)

Meanwhile, the Station Hotel in Kuala Lumpur had become a hive of activity with pemuda representatives arriving from various parts of the country. Apparently in anticipation that plans for Malayan independence within Indonesia Raya might include their territories as well, delegates also arrived from Patani (southern Thailand) and the Riau Islands, south of Singapore. Datuk Onn Jaafar from Johor was among the delegates, as were the lawyer Sardon Haji Jubir and A. Samad Ismail, both from Singapore. Sardon recalls that most of the pemuda had difficulty in getting through to Kuala Lumpur because of MPAJA roadblocks. Sardon himself, who was traveling with Tengku Hussein, president of the Singapore Malay Welfare Association, and two Japanese, was stopped outside Kuala Lumpur by the MPAJA, but managed to get through. A. Samad Ismail claims that his train was derailed by MPAJA guerrillas so that he only arrived for the conference on August 17.<sup>139</sup>

On August 15, news of the Japanese surrender became known, and Itagaki informed Ibrahim of it when they were traveling by car to Kuala Lumpur. As Itagaki recalls,

He [Ibrahim] was not surprised, because he had some hint of it from his KMM colleagues. I told him, "Japan can no longer help your movement or you or your people's aspirations. What do you intend to do now?" He said, "Please ask the Sōmubuchō in Singapore to provide me with a

---

136. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 29, and Agastya, *Sedjarah*, pp. 136-37.

137. Interview, Tokyo, September 1976.

138. Arena Wati, *Cherpen Zaman Jepun*, p. 26n.

139. Information from Sardon Haji Zubir is given in Bamadhaj, "Impact of the Japanese Occupation," p. 120. Information from Samad Ismail, interview, Kuala Lumpur, June 1973.

plane. I want to escape to Java." I told Ibrahim, "If you want to be the future leader of Malaya, you should never run away from the motherland. You must hide yourself in some place in the country.

"Some social disturbances will occur. Try and conceal yourself meanwhile. Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi were arrested by the British, but they were never killed. The British do not kill political prisoners." He uttered no sound, but merely looked out the window. Finally he said, "When we reach Kuala Lumpur, I will discuss with my friends and I will then inform you of my final plans."<sup>140</sup>

On reaching Kuala Lumpur, Ibrahim convened an emergency meeting of the KRIS committee on either August 15 or 16 instead of on the scheduled August 17.<sup>141</sup> At that meeting the delegates focused on three major issues: the first was whether to push through Malayan independence within Indonesia Raya; second, how to prevent Chinese MPAJA domination of the country and safeguard Malay rights within the administration; and third, how to resolve the stigma of collaboration which hung over the KRIS delegates. Dr. Burhanuddin called on the Malay pemuda to resist the British landings,<sup>142</sup> which, though then expected on August 20, did not actually begin until September 2. Rumors that the landings were imminent added a note of special urgency to the discussions. Apparently at Ibrahim's suggestion, the meeting decided that he and two other KRIS officials should leave immediately for Singapore where the Malay Giyū gun was based, to arrange for units to move to the mainland and start the armed struggle against the British. Ibrahim and his colleagues would then leave for Jakarta to attend the Indonesian independence ceremony, and Dr. Burhanuddin would take over as KRIS chairman in Ibrahim's absence.<sup>143</sup> The most important of the twelve resolutions reportedly adopted at the meeting was that the establishment of the government of Malaya Demokratik Rakyat (Democratic People's Malaya) should be proclaimed over the radio stations at Penang and Kuala Lumpur. The new cabinet would be led by Sultan Abu Bakar of Pahang, who would also be the Head of State, and it would include Sultan Abdul Aziz of Perak, Sultan Musa Uddin of Selangor, Datuk Onn bin Jaafar of Johor, Ibrahim Yaacob, Mustapha Hussein, Hassan Manan, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, A. Karim Rashid, and Ishak Haji Muhammad.<sup>144</sup> Many names were included without their owners' prior agreement and the meeting appointed two delegates to approach the nominees for their consent. Once this had been obtained Ibrahim was to be informed in Singapore. The meeting finally decided to instruct KMM pemuda throughout the country to destroy quickly all oil installations, airfields, bridges and telecommunications lines to prevent these from falling into British hands, and

---

140. Itagaki, *Azia tōnō Taiwa*, pp. 169-74.

141. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 313 and 316, claims that the KRIS meeting was held on August 15, 1945, while Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 33, says that it was on August 16.

142. Hassan Manan, KMM secretary-general, in an interview on April 30, 1970 with journalist Zubaidah binte Abdul Rahman of the daily *Berita Harian* (Kuala Lumpur). Hassan Manan, who is now resident in Yogyakarta, was on a short visit to Kuala Lumpur when he was interviewed by Zubaidah. I am grateful to Zubaidah for showing me her notes which contain details of the KRIS meeting not found in her published reports on Hassan Manan.

143. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 313-24, gives the most detailed account of the KRIS meeting, based on interviews with several of the participants.

144. *Ibid.*

some pemuda groups were also ordered to raid Japanese arms depots to seize weapons for the impending armed struggle against the British. When the meeting closed Ibrahim left for Singapore.<sup>145</sup>

On the night of August 17 KRIS supporters held a reception at a house in Kampung Bharu, a Malay district of Kuala Lumpur, attended by about twenty people, including Itagaki and his colleagues, Yamada Hideo and Professor Ono Seizaburo. Itagaki told the gathering that it had been intended that the birth of the KRIS movement would be a prelude to Malayan independence within Indonesia Raya, "But I am sorry that that scheme has been totally disrupted by the Japanese surrender. . . . Malayan independence is now your problem. You are on your own."<sup>146</sup> Dr. Burhanuddin, the acting KRIS chairman, made an impassioned speech, which was well received, declaring that KRIS would carry on the struggle to achieve Malayan independence through Indonesia Raya. Datuk Onn bin Jaafar, however, struck a note of discord when he urged the Malays to think carefully before talking of Malay independence. "We must improve our economic standards first," he said. "We must make use of Malay lands, build up agriculture and establish cooperatives. We must endeavor to achieve economic independence first."<sup>147</sup>

When news arrived that the Indonesians had already proclaimed their independence without previously informing KRIS, the initial reaction of the KMM pemuda was surprise. Uncertainty also set in and inhibited initiative. The KMM had drawn up elaborate plans to take over Japanese military installations and public buildings, but now only small groups of pemuda moved independently to carry them out. Most of the young Malays were too shocked and confused to act, and efforts to oppose the British without Japanese or other support soon began to collapse. Some pemuda representatives returning by train to Singapore came under attack from the MPAJA guerrillas, with one of the coaches of their train being derailed. When they eventually completed their journey most of the KRIS delegates dispersed to their home towns to await the return of the British, when many, such as A. Samad Ismail, were arrested.

On his arrival in Singapore, Ibrahim was instructed by Japanese army headquarters to disband the Malay Giyū gun. Realizing that Japanese support for his

---

145. Ibid., p. 315. Itagaki said that with great difficulty he had secured a seat for Ibrahim on the night train to Singapore. Itagaki, interview. Hassan Manan, however, claims that Ibrahim left by car for Singapore on August 16, after attending the emergency KRIS meeting. Hassan Manan to Zubaidah, April 30, 1970. The second version seems unlikely due to MPAJA roadblocks throughout the country.

146. Itagaki, *Azia tōnō Taiwa*, p. 169.

147. Ibid. Datuk Onn, a scion of the royal house of Johor, was born in Johor in 1895 and educated at Aldebury Lodge School, Suffolk (UK) and at the MCKK. He was subsequently appointed District Officer of Batu Pahat (Johor) by the Japanese in 1945. He was a well-known journalist and politician before the war, who had frequent public quarrels with Sultan Ibrahim of Johor. He had known Ibrahim Yaacob well when the latter owned the *Warta Malaya* in 1941, and was one of the first Malay aristocrats to join the KMM during its short "reign" in 1942. During the Japanese occupation, his son Hussein Onn (now Datuk Hussein Onn, the Malaysian Prime Minister) was a captain in the British Army in India. Apparently, the shrewd Datuk Onn calculated that with the Japanese surrender chances for the success of the KRIS plan were slim. Shortly after the British return, he emerged into public prominence as the founder-president of the United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO), now the major component in the ruling coalition in Malaysia.

Indonesia Raya idea had now collapsed, he reportedly made contact with Chinese in the MCP, proposing that the Giyū gun join with the communist MPAJA to fight both the Japanese and the British. Ibrahim claims that both the MCP and the KMM had earlier agreed to this in principle.<sup>148</sup> According to his account, on August 19, without waiting to hear from the MCP, he sent a 280-man regiment of the Malay Giyū gun under Major A. Manaf, Captain Zakaria, and Lieutenant Mohd. Said to Kuala Lumpur to place themselves under MPAJA headquarters. However, the Malay troops were stopped at Muar (Johor) by the MPAJA, and on August 22 the officers were forced to disband their forces because the MCP had rejected Ibrahim's offer and adopted a policy of cooperation towards the British. The MPAJA had decided not to resist the returning British because the Allied radio in New Delhi had broadcast a statement of the British government's intention to establish a democratic government in Malaya on their reoccupation of the territory.<sup>149</sup> In other words, of its own accord the MCP had decided to set aside revolution in Malaya. This decision did not mean that the MCP had rejected cooperation with the KMM. In fact, under its broad united front strategy, it apparently gave support to the KMM in its struggle for Indonesia Raya after the British return, though the KMM's aims were clearly in opposition to the MCP's own goal of a communist republic in Malaya. Ibrahim later paid tribute to the MCP and MPAJA for shielding many KMM and Giyū gun members from arrest by the British Army.<sup>150</sup>

The disbanded 280-man Giyū gun regiment joined other Malays in the inter-racial clashes with the Chinese which erupted in the Muar and Batu Pahat (Johor) areas, and some Giyū gun soldiers were able to acquire more arms from their Japanese superiors, who apparently were only too happy to see the Malays fighting the Chinese-dominated MPAJA in these clashes.<sup>151</sup>

Ibrahim was unaware of these developments, for on August 19 he left for Jakarta aboard a Japanese aircraft, accompanied by his wife, his brother-in-law, Onan Haji Siraj, and Hassan Manan. His departure compounded the confusion of the pemuda and meant that he abandoned leadership of the Malay independence movement at a time when he was critically needed. His hasty exit is still the subject of heated controversy among his KMM colleagues, with some even accusing Ibrahim of cowardice, while others argue, as did Ibrahim, that by going to Indonesia he was continuing the struggle for Indonesia Raya.<sup>152</sup> When he arrived in Jakarta, Sukarno told him: "The union idea including Malaya is not convenient, as we would have to fight both the British and Dutch at the same time," but advised that he and his colleagues join in the struggle in Java to achieve the aspirations of Indonesia Raya.<sup>153</sup>

---

148. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, pp. 33-34. However, there is no corroboration of this story in available MCP documents.

149. *Ibid.*

150. For a discussion of why the MCP did not launch an uprising in Malaya, see Cheah Boon Kheng, "Some Aspects of the Interregnum in Malaya (14 August - 3 September 1945)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 8, 1 (March 1977), pp. 48-74. See also Ibrahim Yaacob, *Sekitar Malaya Merdeka*, p. 36, for the secret help given by the MPAJA to KMM/KRIS and Giyū gun members after the British return.

151. Malek, "Kesatuan Melayu Muda," pp. 323-24.

152. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

153. Nagai, "Malay Nationalist Movement," pp. 40-50. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia*, p. 275, reveals that Ibrahim Yaacob was left in the care

Dr. Burhanuddin, whom Ibrahim had appointed his second-in-command in Malaya, lacked Ibrahim's charisma in the eyes of the pemuda. Nor had Ibrahim left him clear and specific instructions. As a result, although the KMM pemuda, like their Indonesian counterparts, were poised for militant action, their uncertainty and confusion led to chaos. At least six groups were hastily organized in different parts of the country, such as Ipoh, Taiping, Kota Tinggi, and Singapore. They attacked Japanese arms depots, seizing weapons for the resistance struggle they had been told to expect against the British. With the collapse of the KMM plan for armed struggle, however, they smuggled the arms to the Indonesian islands of Karimun and Batam. The Giyū gun leader Major Manaf escaped to East Sumatra to join the Indonesian armed struggle, dying in battle against the Dutch at Tanjung Batu, Pulau Karimun.<sup>154</sup>

Malay disillusionment with the KMM was a setback to the movement's hopes to head the independence struggle. With the exception of the troubled areas of Muar and Batu Pahat, where the Malay population welcomed elements of the disbanded Giyū gun, Giyū tai, and Heihō units in the fight against the MPAJA and the Chinese, most of the Malay pemuda were stoned and abused as they returned to their villages. They in turn focused their anger on their sponsors, who were well known as "anak-anak Fujiwara" (Fujiwara's children)--Ibrahim, Onan Haji Siraj, and other KMM leaders. They began to curse their sponsors as *penjual rōmusha* (sellers of rōmusha), and tried to hunt them down.<sup>155</sup> The taint of collaboration with the Japanese, however, involved all strata of Malay society, including the rulers, and could not be erased. In addition, the political threat posed by the Chinese and the MPAJA guerrillas soon impelled the Malays to close ranks.

### Conclusion

Probably the best summary of the reasons for the failure of Ibrahim Yaacob's struggle for Indonesia Raya comes from Ibrahim himself:

. . . all the efforts eventually failed, because the Malay nationalist movement was not mature and strong enough to master the situation in Malaya, which had become a cosmopolitan territory. The writer, who held the post of leader, himself quickly escaped to Java, intending to continue a more effective struggle there, but was overcome with numerous difficulties. Consequently, all the events that occurred took the course they did. In fact, every possible step was taken to defend the national rights of the Malays. But the struggle continues.<sup>156</sup>

---

of Winoto Danuasmoro, Sukarno's close friend, in Sukabumi. Nagai states that Ibrahim became active in the Indonesian independence struggle and later joined Tan Malaka's Persatuan Perjuangan.

154. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 139. Ibrahim Yaacob dedicates his book *Nusa dan Bangsa* to Giyū gun leader Major Manaf and also to Capt. Abdul Karim Rashid, Capt. Ramli bin Hj. Tahir, and others who were arrested by the British and subsequently released. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan*, p. 275, also pays tribute to Manaf's sacrifice. KMM supporters who were arrested also included Abdullah Thani alias Ahmad Boestamam on charges of collaboration.

155. *Ibid.*, p. 276. Nasution comments ironically that in Indonesia, by contrast, the sponsors of the *rōmusha* on Java became national leaders and "heroes" of the independence struggle.

156. Ibrahim Yaacob, *Nusa dan Bangsa*, pp. 62-63.

In fact, this is a rather honest assessment of Ibrahim's own role. To be fair to him, he was not always in control of the situation.

Ibrahim's dream of Malay independence through Indonesia Raya had led him and his KMM supporters in 1941 and early 1942 to assist the Japanese military against the British, but after their victory the Japanese banned the KMM, fearing a premature flare-up of Malay nationalism. The goal of Indonesia Raya was delayed, as it was not yet a desirable objective of Japanese policy. This factor checked the KMM's initial growth as a mass movement, and later the movement collapsed totally.

Lacking either a legal political organization or an efficient underground movement, and unable to utilize the Malay *Giyū* gun under his command for his own goals, Ibrahim was forced increasingly to rely on Japanese support to realize his political aims.

Japan's deteriorating war situation and evolving Japanese plans to grant Indonesian independence gave Ibrahim the opportunity for which he had been waiting. Itagaki's last-minute initiative to revive Ibrahim's Indonesia Raya movement enabled Ibrahim and his KMM group to reactivate themselves under a new name, KRIS. Only at the end of July 1945, however, after both Itagaki and Ibrahim had obtained approval from Japanese military commanders, could preparations to launch KRIS begin. This did not allow sufficient time for the KMM pemuda to organize themselves for action--either to establish an interim government following the expected declaration of Indonesian independence, or subsequently to wage armed resistance against the British. News of the Japanese surrender, then, caught them in mid-stream, with KRIS still unborn.

Withdrawal of Japanese support for the Indonesia Raya project undermined Ibrahim's confidence. His flight to Jakarta meant that he abdicated his leadership and abandoned his supporters. It ushered in depression and stagnation among their ranks and led to the collapse of the Indonesia Raya movement.

In his years of exile Ibrahim found the memory of defeat bitter, and he blamed the Japanese for his flight to Jakarta. He began to cast himself as a tragic hero. Concealing himself under a new name, Agastya, he reminded people that he was his country's lost leader:

Where is IBHY [his well-known pen-name in Malaya before the war]? Where has he gone? These are questions which are generally asked, but people can only guess. He was with the leaders of India, Burma, and Malaya who were in the custody of the Japanese when the latter surrendered. He was forcibly taken away from Malaya for their own designs. If Ibrahim Yaacob and his friends, especially the *Giyū* gun, had remained in Singapore, the nature of the struggle in Malaya today would certainly be different. But Ibrahim was missing, the *Giyū* gun was in disarray, and the leadership disintegrated. Japan, which was responsible for law and order to the Allied Powers, was aware of the dangers if IBHY, the *Giyū* gun commander and regarded as the Malay Progressive leader, was left in Malaya. Thus it should be no surprise why he was taken away from Malaya. But where is he? His home-coming is still awaited by the Malays.<sup>157</sup>

---

157. Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 138. It should be noted that in his other accounts about his flight to Jakarta, written under the name of Ibrahim Yaacob, he does not blame the Japanese for his exile. As Itagaki's and Malek's accounts show, it was Ibrahim's own decision to go to Jakarta to attend the Indonesian independence

## POSTSCRIPT

Ibrahim's flight to Jakarta in August 1945 began what was to be a long exile. He did not step on Malaysian soil again until July 20, 1973. Any earlier return had been impossible because the authorities in peninsular West Malaysia (formerly Malaya)--both the colonial regime and its successor, the government of independent Malaya under Tengku Abdul Rahman--had regarded him as a dangerous political activist. Soon after the British Army reoccupied Malaya in September 1945, Ibrahim was put on the "wanted" list of its Field Security Service.

In November 1955--about two years before Malaya achieved independence--Ibrahim had an informal meeting in Jakarta with Tengku Abdul Rahman, who was then Chief Minister. The Tengku was on an official visit to Indonesia at President Sukarno's invitation. The meeting revealed their irreconcilable positions. The Tengku intended to achieve independence for Malaya as a sovereign state within the British Commonwealth, while Ibrahim wanted Malaya's independence through merger with Indonesia within Indonesia Raya. During his early years of exile in Jakarta, Ibrahim's political stance was much to the left. Later, under Sukarno's patronage, he was appointed a member of the Indonesian Parliament, where he was known as Iskander Kamel. When Sukarno fell from power after the Gestapu affair, Ibrahim gave up politics and started the Bank Pertiwi, of which he was president-director at the time of his death.

In 1973 Ibrahim applied for permission, and was allowed by the late Tun Abdul Razak, to return to Malaysia for a short visit. In December of that same year he returned to Malaysia again--it was to be his last trip.

Ibrahim Yaacob died in Jakarta on March 8, 1979. News of his death was received in Kuala Lumpur by a relative, Datuk Hamzah bin Abu Samah, Malaysia's Attorney-General. There was no official reaction to the announcement, but the following day Malay newspapers carried obituaries. The *Utusan Malaysia* of March 18, 1979, reported that Ibrahim was buried in the Heroes' Cemetery at Kalibata, indicating that Indonesia has honored him as a patriot.

---

ceremony. In Agastya, *Sedjarah*, p. 137, he reiterates that he left for Jakarta on just this mission, but adds that it was in fulfillment of "the Japanese program." Apparently, blaming the Japanese was a convenient ex post facto excuse for his exile.