

ISA

45 Years

Malaysia

45 Years Under the
Internal Security Act

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Preface I

By the "The Other Side of History" Editorial Committee

We have travelled on a dark, long and winding path, which was full of obstacles and difficulties. Yet, we have always maintained one hope, the hope that we would move towards where the light of dawn is shining and beckoning us, we are determined to strive on and never give up!

We have left behind many traces of history, made up of idealism, passion, joy and celebration but also of unspeakable anger, terrible setbacks and defeats. We have in fact, with our blood and tears, created historical episodes which can never be buried away by the power-that-be; neither can it be denied by the passing of time nor discarded by memory.

We have finally decided that we should bring to light, the traces left behind by the road we have travelled, of what we have done and achieved, our convictions and dreams. All these should no longer be covered up, forgotten or denied. We want our version of history; the ordinary people's history, to shed light and correct, also to enrich the "official history of our struggle for independence and nation-building", which has so far been wilfully manipulated and distorted by the power-that-be. This is "The Other Side of History"

In those years, people of all races, creeds and classes; from all corners of the society, came together and became a very powerful force. This force has ushered in the People's Democratic Liberation Movement. Every sector of the society; such as the student movement, the workers' and trade union movement, the farmers' movement, the movement of teachers and cultural workers, etc., they were all actively involved in various forms of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and socialist struggles. We had only one goal, which was to fight for our independence, our freedom and the right to build our own nation. More importantly, we wanted to build an equal, just and multi-racial, multi-cultural society.

The very nature of colonialism is based on greed and violence, exploitation and cruelty. The colonial administration was exploiting its colonies in wanton brutality, viciously repressing and suppressing the people, making slaves out of its colonial subjects. On top of that, it was exploiting the natural resources of its colonies and their cheap labour. If the people did not cooperate or they tried to resist, the colonialists would violently suppress and even kill the resistance. In those days, the sly and manipulative British colonial rulers were very sophisticated in their tactics.

They lied, and used the method of divide-and-rule against the people. They co-opted the people; they infiltrated and subverted communities as well as organizations. They did all these so as to maintain their grip over us.

Consequently, our people had to face not only continuous arrests, but also many years of imprisonment and deportation. Not only that; the British even murdered innocent villagers in the countryside and then blamed it on their political opponents. Millions of people were evacuated from their homes and put in massive "concentration camps" known as the "New Villages" at that time. Many associations and societies were banned, news was heavily censored and public dissent was severely suppressed. The colonial government even restricted the people's rights to retain and develop our education in our mother-tongue and instead, they imposed upon the people, a slavish education that propagated loyalty to the colonial "masters".

On the other hand, the colonial rulers also cultivated a group of traitors and their running-dogs to infiltrate societies and associations as well as institutions of education. Their purpose was to destroy and subvert these communities. The British colonial rulers boasted that their greatest achievement in Malaya was the construction of the "New Villages", which took the form of: herding all the villagers into one place, fenced them in with barbed wire, imposed curfew every night, restricted entrance and exit of the "village" to only one so as to monitor and control the villagers' movements easily, etc. They also deviously divided and ruled the different races by sowing distrust amongst them, so that they would not be united. Consequently, they were able to destroy the people's resistance. Yet despite all their effort to suppress the people, they never succeeded completely to stop the people from struggling, resisting and protesting.

On one hand, the British colonial rulers had to deal with the armed struggle waged by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and on the other hand, they had to respond to the continuous unrest and resistance waged by the people. The British suffered great financial losses as a result. Moreover, by the end of World War Two, the international situation had vastly changed. All over the world, colonies were rising up against their colonial masters; many places around the world were engulfed in waves of independence and liberation struggles. The colonialists saw that their time was up, they knew that they could no longer suppress the people's resistance, they realised that sooner or later they had to concede to their colonies' demands for independence.

Given the various difficulties and troubles, they had no choice but to change their tactics and finally relinquished their direct rule and control over Malaya.