Memperingati 70 tahun Respons Melayu
Terhadap Malayan Union dan
Tanah Jajahan Mahkota
MALAYSIA
dari segi SEJARAH
(MALAYSIA IN HISTORY)

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KANDUNGAN

MALAYAN UNION DAN JAHAHAN MAHKOTA 1946: MENJEJAKI 1
TINDAK BALAS MELAYU DI MALAYSIA 70 TAHUN DAHULU
Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali

PENGLIBATAN WANITA MELAYU UMNO SEBAGAI WAKIL RAKYAT 50
PARLIMEN, 1999-2008
Fatimi Hanafi
Zulkarnain Abdul Rahman
Arba'iyah Mohd Noor

THE MALAYAN INDIAN CONGRESS, THE MALAYAN UNION AND 63
EARLY CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN MALAYA, 1946-1950
Shanthiah Rajagopal
Joseph M. Fernando

USNO: SEJARAH SERTA PERLEMBAGAAN 77
Hamdan Aziz

KESEDARAN DAN GERAKAN AWAL NASIONALISME DI 98
BORNEO UTARA (SABAH), MALAYSIA: PARTI KEBANGSAAN
MELAYU (PKM) DAN BARISAN PEMUDA (BARIP)
Eko Prayitno Joko
Ramli Dollah

ROSLOI DHOBY: MERDEKA DENGAN DARAH: 123
REVISI KOREKTIF TERHADAP KARYA JENIRI AMIR
Nordi Achrie

PERISTIWA PERGADUHAN KAUM DI KAMPUNG BEKOR, 138
MUKIM SENGGANG, KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK, 6 MAC 1946
Ahmad Zaki Mohd Johari
Ho Hui Ling

TRAGEDI BERDARAH BALAI POLIS BATU PAHAT 153
16 OKTOBER 1980: SATU ANALISIS
Osman Abu Hassan
Zulkarnain Abdul Rahman
THE MALAYAN INDIAN CONGRESS, THE MALAYAN UNION AND EARLY CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS IN MALAYA, 1946-1950

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Abstract

The Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was formed in 1946 to represent the Indian community in Malaya which faced numerous social, economic and political problems. The young fledgling political organization faced numerous problems in the early stages of its inception, apart from other competing Indian organizations for the support of the community. This article examines the early changes faced by the MIC and in particular its response to two major constitutional reforms that were introduced by the British colonial administration. The first part of the article examines the MIC’s response to the introduction of the Malayan Union scheme in 1946 while the second part analyses the rationale for the MIC’s boycott of the 1948 Federation of Malaya Agreement before the final section draws some conclusions on the party’s attitude towards the constitutional reforms. The article reveals from an examination of primary and secondary sources that the MIC was fairly consistent in its anti-imperial stance and was at the same time a pragmatic party which was committed to working with other political organizations in Malaya to represent the interests of the Indian community.

Keywords: Malayan Indian Congress, Malaya, Malayan Union, nationalism, Malaya Federation

Introduction

The Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was formed in August 1946 as a response to various political developments in Malaya in the immediate post-war period which had a significant impact on the domiciled Indian community. It was the result of a collective effort by some leaders to rally the Indians behind a national organization that could safeguard the rights and interests of the community, a minority in a land that was dominated by the larger Malay and Chinese communities. The Second World War had disrupted considerably life in Malaya; there were food shortages, severe disruption to the economy, the administrative system had broken down and basic health and social services had yet to be restored fully.1

1 Dr Shanthiah Rajagopal obtained her Ph.D from the Department of History, University of Malaya. Dr Joseph M. Fernando is an Associate Professor at the Department of History, University of Malaya. See British Malaya Administration Monthly Report No. 6, February 1946, CO537/1572.
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• ROSLI DHOBY: MERDEKA DENGAN DARAH: REVISI KOREKTIF TERHADAP KARYA JENIRI AMIR

• PERISTIWA PERGADUHAN KAUM DI KAMPUNG BEKOR, MUKIM SENGGANG, KUALA KANGSAR, PERAK, 6 MAC 1946

• TRAGEDI BERDARAH BALAI POLIS BATU PAHAT 16 OKTOBER 1980: SATU ANALISIS

• MENYELUSURI TOKOH MELAYU SEBAGAI PEGAWAI PTD B. DI NEGERI-NEGERI MELAYU BERSEKUTU, 1895-1941

• PEMBUNUHAN SULTAN ABDUL JALIL SYAH IV DI KUALA PAHANG 1722: PERSAINGAN RAJA KECHIL DENGAN KELUARGA BENDAHARA DI JOHOR

• KALENDAR "PIAMA" DAN ADAT MULA BERSAWAH KEDAH SILAM

• IKAN TALANG, BUAH DURIAN & BURUNG LAYANG-LAYANG; LEGASI ZHENG HE DI ALAM MELAYU