ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this honours thesis attempts to examine the student movements in Pre-Independence Singapore through two different sources, namely “Official History” and “Collective Memory”. The objective of this dissertation is to offer readers a better insight into the views held by both the government and the people involved in the student movements, as well as to enable readers to have a deeper understanding of the issue.

Firstly, Chapter One deals with the aims and scope of the study. Following this is a detailed description of three prominent student movements in the 50s and 60s, where attention will be drawn particularly from the government’s point of view. Next, in Chapter Three, the theory of “collective memory” which arose in the last twenty years, will be introduced as background knowledge. Chapter Four will then examine the same movements discussed in Chapter Two, from the perspective of collective memory of the interviewees. Finally, the concluding chapter gives the findings of this thesis, which is done through a comparative analysis of the views held by both sides.

The main finding of this thesis is that each side viewed the issue from a different perspective. The government believed that Chinese Middle Schools were the breeding ground for communism, and the student movements were the manoeuvres of the Malayan Communist Party to create chaos so as to capture political power from the government. The collective memory of different interviewees, on the other hand, revealed more reasons other than the one stated in the official history.

It is hoped that this systematic discussion would present readers with a clearer picture of the student movements in Pre-Independence Singapore, and that my analysis will be able to help and inspire more people and researchers to enter this field of study.