

Siantar Hotel: Silent Witness of the October 15, 1945 Bloody Event

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Abstract

This study aims to find out thoroughly about the Siantar Hotel which was a witness to the bloody incident on October 15, 1945 which left various kinds of relics and the meaning of these events among the community. The method used in this research is the historical method which includes 4 stages, namely heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and explanation. This study shows the findings; this event is a form of struggle of the Pematang Siantar people in fighting for and defending Indonesian independence against the Dutch soldiers who did not want independence and tried to disrupt the Pematang Siantar situation especially the incident regarding the Siantar Hotel Bloody incident was not widely known to the public so efforts were needed to introduce and disseminate it widely through learning local history about the struggle of the nation, especially in Pematang Siantar City, conducting shows or dramas about the 1945 Bloody Siantar Hotel in the community, and making the Siantar Hotel as a Cultural Heritage to be used as a source of learning for students and the younger generation today.

Keywords

Pematang Siantar City; Siantar Hotel; October 15; 1945



I. Introduction

The city of Pematang Siantar is one of the cities in the province of North Sumatra and is known as an area with quite a long history or traces of history and is widely spread in the city. In line with the statement above, it can be interpreted that there are historical relics which of course have a story behind them and generally historical relics in the City of Pematang Siantar are in the form of buildings or monuments.

One of the various historical buildings or monuments in the city of Pematang Siantar and well known by the wider community is the Siantar Hotel. Siantar Hotel is one of the legendary inns as well as the oldest hotel in Pematang Siantar City, which is located at Jalan WR Supratman No. 3, Proklamasi Village, West Siantar District. Usually, tourists who come from outside the area choose to stay and rest at the hotel and the location of this historic hotel is also quite strategic because it is in the center of Pematang Siantar with close access to various recreational areas such as Merdeka Square, the Siantar Becak Monument and the Siantar Becak Monument. H. Adam Malik which is one of the iconic places in the City of Pematang Siantar and also various other things.

In fact, not many people know about the events of the bloody Siantar Hotel by the people of Pematang Siantar City and its surroundings, the people's paradigm of this Siantar

Hotel is only as a place to stay for tourists from outside the area simply without ever knowing about any important events that have occurred at the Hotel.

The bloody Siantar Hotel incident is a part of the city's history in Pematang Siantar about the persistent and heroic struggle of youths in defending Indonesia's sovereignty and independence from KNIL and NICA soldiers who did not want Indonesia's independence.

In writing this article the author obtained several studies with a similar theme discussing the bloody Siantar Hotel incident. For example, an article entitled Bloody Event Of The Siantar Hotel October 15, 1945 was written by Putri Lestari et al. The material discussed in this article is (1) The history of the founding of the Siantar Hotel, (2) The background to the Siantar Hotel Bloody Incident on October 15, 1945, (3) The process of the Siantar Hotel Bloody Incident on October 15, 1945, (4) the condition of the legacy after the Incident Berblood Siantar Hotel October 15, 1945. In addition, there is also a thesis entitled Community Perceptions of the Siantar Hotel Event October 15, 1945 in West Siantar District, written by Ancient San Sridayanti. The material discussed in the thesis is: (1) The history of the founding of the Siantar Hotel, (2) the background and process of the Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945, (3) West Siantar Society's perception of the Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945.

From the results of the analysis of the previous studies above, the difference between this paper and previous studies is that they want to inform the community about the Siantar Hotel bloody incident and build understanding and strengthen the local identity of students in Pematang Siantar City about the importance of knowing local history in the area where they live through learning. local history.

The things that are discussed in this study are then poured into several questions, namely:

- 1) What is the history of the establishment of Siantar Hotel?
- 2) What is the background to the bloody Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945?
- 3) How did the Siantar Hotel Bloody incident on 15 October 1945 happen?
- 4) How did the bloody Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945 affect Indonesia or the city of Pematang Siantar at that time?
- 5) How is the bloody Siantar Hotel incident on 15 October 1945 interpreted by the people of Pematang Siantar City?
- 6) What efforts should be made so that the Siantar Hotel Bloody October 15, 1945 incident is widely known by the people of Pematang Siantar City or throughout Indonesia?
- 7) How is the current management of the Siantar Hotel as a historical site and as a place for learning history?
- 8) What are the legacies of the bloody Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945?

Departing from these questions, this paper will describe and present the bloody Siantar Hotel incident which also contributed to the spread of the news of the proclamation of Indonesian independence, especially in the Pematang Siantar City area and generally in Indonesian territory.

II. Research Methods

Research method The method used in this research is historical research method. In writing this article, there are two methods used, namely by conducting interviews directly in the field and assisted by other literary sources such as books and journals. With the data and information obtained, it is hoped that it will produce comprehensive writing according to the topic raised.

III. Discussion

3.1 History of Establishment of Siantar Hotel



Figure 1. Siantar Hotel of the Past

Source:https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/769431?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=08f25fdd6d307cc154f0&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=0

Siantar Hotel was built when the Dutch Colonial Government was still occupying and colonizing Indonesian territory, especially the City of Pematang Siantar, namely in 1913 and then inaugurated on February 1, 1915. The Siantar Hotel itself was built and was initiated by three Swiss nationals including Heinrich Surbeck, Hedwig Euse Surbeck and Lydia Rosa Otto Surbeck. The three founders of the Siantar Hotel certainly have significant and important rights and authorities, especially when they gave the trust to manage the hotel to Uegen Ralph Otto where he later served as the main director of the Siantar Hotel. Until then in 1969, the highest leadership of this hotel was officially held and owned by a local businessman named Julian Hutabarat.

3.2 Background to the Bloody Siantar Hotel Incident on October 15, 1945

The Dutch initially did not intend to carry out an expedition to the Simalungun region because they had already benefited a lot from plantations in the East Sumatra area, especially in the eastern coastal area which was part of Malaya and at the same time a strategic area.

The Dutch began to come to Simalungun in the 19th century where their intention and arrival was to control this area while intending to open and expand the plantation area (Agustono, Budi et al. 2012: 45). At that time the area in Simalungun was still in the form of a kingdom which at that time still numbered four kingdoms and included the Siantar Kingdom with the ruling king surnamed Damanik. When the Dutch were about to explore the Simalungun area, they heard news about a split in the Simalungun area. This then made the Dutch even more determined to expand their plantation area in Simalungun in 1889 and to conquer the kingdoms in Simalungun as evidenced by the government's decision of 23 October 1889 no.25 and 8 June 1891 no.21 (Harahap, 2019: 19-20).

When the kingdoms in Simalungun were under Dutch control, the kingdom could still stand and comply with the policies set by the Dutch and this was also used by the Dutch to carry out the divide et impera policy as happened in other areas in the Dutch East Indies. with the impact that Simalungun was split into seven kingdoms and the kingdom that experienced a split among the four kingdoms was the Dolog Silou kingdom into three new kingdoms, namely the Purba Kingdom, Raya Kingdom and Silimakuta Kingdom.

In the end, Dutch efforts to expand plantations in the Simalungun area were realized with the successful occupation of the area. This plantation expansion system was also

inspired by the Agrarian Law in 1870 with the enactment of a system of liberalism which at the same time ended the forced cultivation system and also opened up great opportunities for the entry of foreign investors into Simalungun which also included Pematang Siantar (Breman, 1997: 14).

After that, the division of several areas in Simalungun began, namely the establishment of the Simaloengoen en Karolanden afdeeling which was initially centered in Seribudolok and then moved to Pematang Siantar in 1912 (Budi, 2012: 212-213).

The status of Pematang Siantar as an administrative area of the City has also been regulated in the Governor's Decree dated 27 July 1917 No. 14 Staatsblaad 1917 No. 285 by being given the authority to manage their area independently. City administration is carried out with a city council consisting of nine people with details namely: five Dutch people, three native people, and one from another foreign nation (Purba, 1995: 63).

With the opening of plantations in Simalungun and including Pematang Siantar, the flow of immigrants also increased, including the Javanese, Toba (or commonly known as Tapanuli), and other tribes in the plantation area who were brought in by the Dutch to work on plantations in the Simalungun area. With the increasingly dynamic and development of Pematang Siantar, it is also accompanied by the development of social systems in society such as the spread and development of religion (especially zending), education, culture, and so on. The above has further strengthened Pematang Siantar as the second largest city in East Sumatra after Medan and has an important role one of which is being a city with a strategic location between the East Coast region of North Sumatra and also the West Coast region. In this case, Pematang Siantar has a role and acts as a connecting area between the two regions. Because of the progress of Pematang Siantar, a hotel was built as a place for officials, tourists, and people from outside the area on the initiative of three Swiss nationals, namely the Siantar Hotel in 1913 and inaugurated on 1 February 1915.

From the above, then inspired Bronckgeest to come with his armed troops to occupy the territory of East Sumatra at the end of September 1945. His troops, numbering 27 people, were stationed at the Siantar Hotel, Pematang Siantar. They were also more confident and confident that they could easily conquer Indonesia where the British also supported and provided assistance to Bronckgeest and his troops. Bronckgeest and his troops always make actions that disturb and endanger order and security in the Pematang Siantar area. Where this became a trigger for the bloody incident at the Siantar Hotel (Lestari, Putri, et al. 2019: 5-6).

3.3 The Process of the Occurrence of the Siantar Hotel Bloody Event on October 15, 1945

At 12.30 noon on 15 October 1945, the Dutch flag was raised in the courtyard of the Siantar Hotel by the NICA. Right in front of the Siantar Hotel, there is the BKPI (Indonesian Youth Service Agency) youth headquarters and almost at the same time the Red and White flag was also raised. Seeing the Dutch flag being raised by Dutch soldiers, the youths were not happy about this, so they chased the Dutch soldiers and they ran to save themselves and entered the Siantar Hotel. Until finally, the Dutch troops opened fire on the youths who had gathered and were about to attack the Dutch troops at the Siantar Hotel. The actions of the Dutch troops further ignited the anger of the youth at that time resulting in a fierce battle between the youths and the Dutch army at that time which led to the burning of the Siantar Hotel using oil. Because the Siantar Hotel was filled with smoke and fire, the Dutch troops immediately left the hotel and saved themselves and surrendered to the youths (Hutabarat, et al, 1996: 64).



Figure 2. *The Siantar Hotel Building which was Burnt by Youths*
Source:<https://theindoproject.org/a-festive-massacre/>

Not only burning the Siantar Hotel building, the residents of Pematang Siantar also gathered and found that there was a tunnel which was considered to be the hiding place for the Dutch soldiers and their allies where this tunnel could pass to PT. Ice factory located on Jalan Pematang (Dasuha, 2011: 141). The founder and first owner of PT. The Ice Factory is the same person as the founder and owner of the Siantar Hotel, Heinrich Surbeck.



Figure 3. *The Tunnel in the Siantar Hotel Area which is Directly Connected to PT. Ice Factory on Pematang Street*

A moment later the Japanese troops arrived under the command of Colonel Orita who intended to condition the situation as well as the party that would maintain security. In this case, the chairman of the BKPI, namely Burhanuddin, was asked to be present at the Siantar Hotel because there would be negotiations being held. When the negotiations were held, the youths then came to the Siantar Hotel and prepared to attack the enemies who were still in the hotel area. Upon arrival at the Siantar Hotel, Burhanuddin and Orita were shocked by the appearance of shots fired from the Siantar Hotel occupants, which in this case was the trigger for the attack at the Siantar Hotel which marked the start of the attack on the Siantar Hotel area.

Like waves on the sea, youths and people invaded and carried out attacks on the Siantar Hotel and many of the Dutch were killed in the attack, but there were also parties who escaped from the incident by being rescued by the Japanese and relocating them to Medan City. The end of this attack claimed the lives of 17 people from the Dutch side as well as serious and light injuries while from the Siantar side there were two people who died as national heroes, namely Muda Rajagukguk and Ismael Situmorang including several people who were injured (Hutabarat, et al, 1996: 65).



Figure 4. Photo of JC Groenenberg who was a Victim of the Siantar Hotel Incident

Source: <https://theindoproject.org/a-festive-massacre/>

The occurrence of the bloody Siantar Hotel incident then made the British visit Pematang Siantar the next day to check on the situation and condition of the Siantar Hotel at that time, right on October 18, 1945 Brigadier General TED Kelly requested and gave an ultimatum to the public that the Indonesian people were obliged to hand over their weapons to the allies in the sense of prohibiting the Indonesian people from owning weapons (Dasuha, 2011: 141).

3.4 The Influence of the Bloody Hotel Siantar Incident on 15 October 1945 for Indonesia or the City of Pematang Siantar in the Past and Present

Based on the results of an interview with Mr. Hisarma Saragih who is a lecturer in the History education program and the postgraduate program as well as a historian at Simalungun University (USI). The Siantar Hotel Berblood incident which occurred on October 15, 1945 had something to do with Indonesian nationalism.

Beginning with the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945 in the city of Jakarta while in October 1945 in Pematang Siantar the news regarding the proclamation of independence was still uncertain. There are several factors that cause the uncertainty of this proclamation news including:

- 1) Only residents who live around Pegangsaan Timur heard the news of the proclamation and those who played the radio broadcast.
- 2) Because at that time there was a limited number of delegations from various regions including from Pematang Siantar who reached Jakarta. As a result, news about the proclamation of Indonesian independence tended to be known slowly in Pematang Siantar.
- 3) Envoys from the Sumatran region brought news by road and often stopped to convey the news of independence in various regions.
- 4) The figure who brought the news of independence from Medan to Pematang Siantar did not dare to declare Indonesia's independence because the Japanese Army controlled Pematang Siantar.
- 5) At that time the Japanese army which controlled Pematang Siantar placed the Siantar Hotel as the headquarters of the Japanese army and was followed by the Dutch who formed the KNIL and made the Siantar Hotel the headquarters of the soldiers.

If it is related to the influence of this event on the Indonesian nation and the people of Pematang Siantar, then at that time it was because the Indonesian side that supported the Republic felt impatient to immediately tell the news that Indonesia was already independent and that the form of independence in Pematang Siantar was what was being debated among the youth or BPI, so that among these young people there were those who dared to raise the

red and white flag on the Pagoda field (now known as Merdeka Square or Flower Garden, formerly also known as Youth Field). Even though right in front of them were the headquarters of the KNIL soldiers and the Japanese army. This resulted in two different reactions and responses:

- 1) For Japan this was left alone, because they had already lost.
- 2) Meanwhile, the KNIL soldiers, with their ambitions, wanted to return to colonize and occupy Indonesian territory because NICA was also in Pematang Siantar and prepared to destroy and disrupt Indonesia's independence which had been proclaimed.

However, it turned out that through the youth who managed to raise the red and white flag on the Pagoda field, they wanted to declare and show that Indonesia and, in this case, including the city of Pematang Siantar, were completely independent from colonialism and foreign occupation. This then ignited or sparked anger from the Dutch soldiers by shooting into the midst of the youths who were there until finally the young man attacked the Siantar Hotel resulting in an extraordinary battle which resulted in the deaths of several people on both sides.

Of course, the bloody Siantar Hotel incident indicated a sense of nationalism from all elements of society, especially the youth who fought to defend and expel the Dutch soldiers who did not recognize Indonesian independence and wanted to re-occupy Indonesia for the second time, especially for the city of Pematang Siantar. So, from this it seems that the people of Pematang Siantar were getting bolder and enthusiastic at that time because the nation they had aspired for had long been independent and apart from various interference from foreign parties, moreover the nation itself had the right and deserved to be the government in the territory of Indonesia.

If it is related to the present, for the younger generation there is something that has been forgotten so that they do not understand the bloody Siantar Hotel incident and its relation to the present has begun to diminish. The motives for the emergence of this phenomenon certainly vary from the younger generation who do not love history to students who teach history subjects where they are less able to provide history subject matter that is suitable and relevant to local conditions.

3.5 The Meaning of the Siantar Hotel Bloody Event on 15 October 1945 by the People of Pematang Siantar City

According to Mr. Hisarma Saragih, so far, he has not seen the public interpret the Siantar Hotel Bloody incident, not even that many people in Pematang Siantar City know that this bloody event will occur, so it is difficult to understand, let alone interpret this event. Mostly only from people who are in the field of history, such as students who take courses in history. Even though this event had a recorded contribution to Indonesia at that time, where this event was one part of the struggle to defend Indonesia's independence in the City of Pematang Siantar. From this,

3.6 The Efforts Made to Make the Siantar Hotel Bloody Event 15 October 1945 Widely Known by the People of Pematang Siantar City or All of Indonesia

According to Mr. Hisarma Saragih, the effort that can be done is to carry out national ceremonies at every event, for example, on Heroes' Day, a drama performance will be held either in the city of Pematangssiantar or other cities. Performance is a person's success in carrying out tasks, work results that can be achieved by a person or group of people in an organization in accordance with their respective authorities and responsibilities (Wulandari, 2021). This means that in work contains elements of the standard that achievement must be met, so, for those who reach the standards set means good performance (Wahjudewanti, 2021). The drama tells the story of the nation's struggle in the city, especially in Pematang

Siantar, which made a historical drama about the Siantar Hotel incident. In this case, competitions can be held at the school level and through this the school students will read scripts, compose, and design a story that is reconstructed from the incident of the bloody Siantar hotel in accordance with existing historical facts. Through this, the public will be interested in watching and witnessing the drama about the bloody Siantar Hotel incident. Thus, the people of Pematang Siantar City will immediately know, appreciate, and appreciate every storyline that is shown to the wider community about historical events that have occurred at the Siantar Hotel considering that public knowledge of Siantar Hotel is only limited to a place to stay. In addition to this, there must also be a form of cooperation between the Government and academics working in the field of history with the Education Office so that the Education subject of the History of the National Struggle is revived with teaching materials in the form of local events that have contributions at the national level. In this case, the Siantar Hotel bloody incident includes local events which also have contributions both at the regional and national levels. and appreciate every storyline that is shown to the wider community about historical events that have occurred at the Siantar Hotel, considering that the public's knowledge of Siantar Hotel is only limited to a place to stay. In addition to this, there must also be a form of cooperation between the Government and academics working in the field of history with the Education Office so that the Education subject of the History of the National Struggle is revived with teaching materials in the form of local events that have contributions at the national level. In this case, the Siantar Hotel bloody incident includes local events which also have contributions both at the regional and national levels. and appreciate every storyline that is shown to the wider community about historical events that have occurred at the Siantar Hotel, considering that the public's knowledge of Siantar Hotel is only limited to a place to stay. In addition to this, there must also be a form of cooperation between the Government and academics working in the field of history with the Education Office so that the Education subject of the History of the National Struggle is revived with teaching materials in the form of local events that have contributions at the national level. In this case, the Siantar Hotel bloody incident includes local events which also have contributions both at the regional and national levels.

3.7 The Management of the Siantar Hotel Currently as a Historical Site and Place for Learning History



Figure 5. Siantar Hotel Today (2022)

Siantar Hotel is owned by an individual, so the intervention of the owner is limited. From a historical point of view, according to Mr. Hisarma Saragih, this Siantar Hotel should not be overhauled and should maintain and maintain the authenticity of this building so that this building can show that the hotel is one of the historical buildings that exists and is a

preserved historical witness. It would be nice if the hotel building was proposed to become part of a cultural heritage and in this case the government should work together with various historians and also authorized figures to make this happen. For the people of Pematang Siantar City, Siantar This hotel is one of the distinctive icons of the city of Pematang Siantar because it is the oldest hotel in Pematang Siantar City. Various other historical buildings in Pematang Siantar City such as the Simalungun Museum, Juang 45 Building and other historical places in Pematang Siantar City are poorly maintained and receive little attention from the Government. Simalungun Museum which is located in Pematang Siantar City is one of the historical buildings in Pematang Siantar City with a strategic location and is a building which is also a place of cultural and historical heritage, but the museum has received little attention from the government to manage the place. It seems that a lot of attention from the public and the government is required so that people do not forget about these historical sites and buildings. bearing in mind that the places mentioned above are the basic foundation for the formation of national identity and character for the people of Pematang Siantar City, especially for the current younger generation who have begun to lose their identity and begin to fade their sense of nationality. The trick is to turn historical sites into historical tours so that there will be income for the management of historical objects or sites in the city of Pematang Siantar, especially in terms of learning history, teachers must also teach about various historical events or historical buildings that exist or have occurred in the city. Siantar District.

3.8 Legacy of the Siantar Hotel Bloody Event on 15 October 1945

Every national movement event that occurs in a region in Indonesia must be accompanied by the existence of some kind of monument, or a building capable of reviving the memory of the movement's events and because of its memorial nature. In this case there is a special monument commemorating the services of the nation's warriors who have fallen in the area around the Siantar Hotel. The monument is a square shape made of andesite stone material which is attached using cement and this monument turns out to be a donation from a businessman named Sintong Bengei who is the owner of a well-known cigarette factory in Pematang Siantar, namely the STTC cigarette factory (PT. Sumatra Tobacco Trading Company).



Figure 6. The Siantar Hotel Bloody Monument

If we look carefully, in the center of this monument we can find that there is an inscription "Date October 15, 1945 the invasion and destruction of the NICA team at the Siantar Hotel by the people of P. Siantar City and the surrounding Simalungun Regency, died Young Rajagukguk, Ismail Rajagukguk, Victims of the enemy side 17 people".



Figure 7. *Painting of the Siantar Hotel Incident*

Source: Thesis. Please, Syandicro. 2016. *Art and Politics: The Role of Artists in the Struggle to Maintain Independence in East Sumatra (1945-1949)*. University of Northern Sumatra

Apart from this monument, there is also a kind of memorial object which seems to bring us back to the memory of the bloody Siantar Hotel incident, namely a painting which is now enshrined and is in the Museum of North Sumatra. The painting depicts the action of the Youth Front and the people's paramilitary at the Siantar Hotel with the aim of attacking the KNIL soldiers who also had NICA soldiers in them.

IV. Conclusion

The Siantar Hotel as a historic building is not only a place to stay and spend the night, but also a witness to the struggle of the youth and people of Pematang Siantar to defend independence from the Dutch who did not want this independence through the bloody Siantar Hotel incident on October 15, 1945. However, not many Pematang Siantar people know about this event and therefore it is necessary to collaborate between the Government, academics in the field of history, and also the Education Office to be able to include the Siantar Hotel incident as one of the local history learning materials and it also needs to be held performances in the form of drama so that people can know and appreciate the services of warriors who have died on the battlefield. Besides that, the Siantar Hotel building can also be made into a cultural heritage that can be used as learning material and is useful for increasing the understanding of today's young generation about the national spirit and knowledge of regional history which is regional in Pematang Siantar City. With the implementation of the three things above, it will create a spirit of nationalism and pride in local identity and history in the city of Pematang Siantar, especially for the current younger generation as the nation's successor.

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