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A great day of flag-waving and a timely call to spirit of honest

DKL

THE 31st of August is a flag-waver, the day to recall or appeal to the spirit of Merdeka and patriotism. Yesterday, we poured forth a flood of deserved national selflaudation. We need patriotism, honestly practised, not superpatriots nor mock loyalty.

Although the Diarist disagreed with the separation of Singapore and his conservatism, the founding father Tengku Abdul Rahman Putra was a serious, modern prince.

Had Dato' Onn Jaafar been politically savvy, he would have been our first Prime Minister. His mistake was to accept a British knighthood in the Coronation honours, which did a good deal of political harm. The fatal blow came when he said independence should be gradual. Tengku demanded it sooner.

Onn, realising that the title "Sir" was of no benefit to him, reverted to Dato'. But it was too late.

The British overestimated Onn's political prospects and undervalued Tengku's because they considered him a playboy. He was, but he was also a nationalist.

The Diarist wants to put the record straight. Tengku might have disenchanted many contemporary nationalists or Islamiccentred Malays, yet his commitment to his race and religion was strong. He was not a hypocrite. He never tried to hide his weaknesses.

The Diarist was a young politician during the Tengku's time and enjoyed his hospitality and parties, if not his personal confidence. It was a great privilege to serve him. The Diarist, a witness to the nation's creation, knew Onn and has served all the Prime Ministers.

He recalls that when we became independent, we took possession of a well-run government. Merdeka was as easy and as painless as the take-over of a well-maintained orchard. At 45, the dusun has attained successes that would never have crossed the minds of Tengku and his senior colleagues - Tun Razak, Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun V.T. Sambanthan. The Diarist often talks about these statesmen who, alas, are now largely forgotten.

Malaysians owe much to Tengku. Let Merdeka reign, and the sun shall never set on our achievements. If it were not for Tengku, Tun Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, we might be living in a