

# No peace without freedom, no freedom without peace

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**Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra's take on freedom was so simple, yet profoundly philosophical, writes PRABHAKARAN S. NAIR**

IT was the height of the Cold War when Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman visited a divided Germany in 1960.

A visit to troubled Berlin — divided into West Berlin and East Berlin — was on the itinerary and Willy Brandt was the mayor of West Berlin.

Brandt presented Tunku with a replica of the "Freedom Bell", a bell that rang out daily to remind Berliners of the meaning of freedom.

Tunku thanked Brandt for the "Peace Bell". But in a loud stage whisper one of the Malay dignitaries tried to correct the Tunku.

"It's the Freedom Bell, sir," he whispered.

Without missing a stride, Tunku said: "You can't have peace without freedom, and you can't have freedom without peace."

The assembled dignitaries in the room broke out into an applause, and there was laughter and smiles all around. Tunku's statement had obviously struck a chord with the West Berliners.

In a flash of inspired spontaneity, Tunku managed to express the whole philosophy of the free world

I said once in Berlin, and it still seems to me to be very true and necessary to say once again, that peace and freedom are one and the same thing, that there can be no peace without freedom and no freedom without peace.

Tunku Abdul Rahman  
(Malay Mail, July 11, 1962)

## No Peace Without Freedom

The older generation of Malaysians who had lived through the difficult years of the Japanese Occupation and its aftermath would have no difficulty with the statement "No peace without freedom".

By the middle of the 20th century, it was no longer possible to stem the tide of nationalism that was sweeping across the region.

It was impossible for the people, organised along party lines for the first time in Malayan history, to accept colonial rule as it existed before the War.

Tunku feared that "nationalism will be forced to find other dangerous outlets" if the people's aspirations remained unfulfilled.

Communism was the most dangerous outlet and ironically represented yet another form of subjugation that was ideologically opposed to individual freedom.

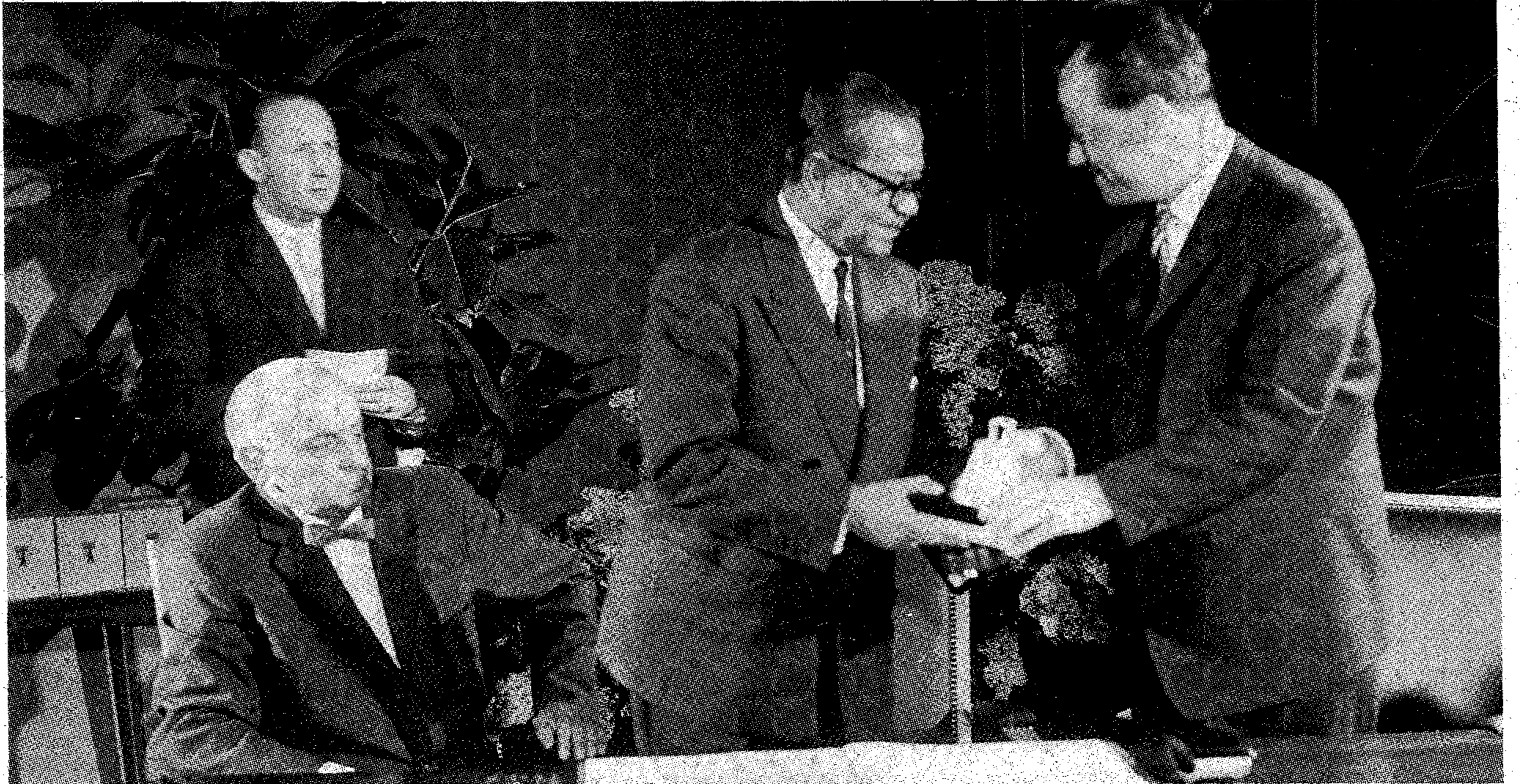
In Tunku's words, communism represented "the suppression of the liberty of the individual in the country".

Although the two Cs — colonialism and communism — were both opposed to freedom and the right to self-determination, communism went further in adopting non-peaceful means of struggle.

It is interesting to note that the problems of both colonialism and communism were addressed through a common solution — the adoption of a peaceful and constitutional approach to independence.

And this made it increasingly difficult for the terrorists to justify their struggle and for the colonialists to stay in power.

On Aug 31, 1957 Tunku declared independence, and on July 31, 1960 he declared the end of Emergency. Freedom had been fought and won on two fronts.



Willy Brandt, mayor of West Berlin, handing over a replica of West Berlin's famous 'Freedom Bell' to Tunku Abdul Rahman on the occasion of his visit to Germany.



Australian troops pass a bullock cart on a rural road in Malaya.

In announcing the end of Emergency, Tunku said: "We have won our freedom as a nation, and now we have won a battle against our enemy, the communist rebels."

"Free men everywhere should rejoice with us today in this double triumph of democracy... our victory in nationhood and our victory over communism go together; the one victory led to the other."

It must be emphasised that Malaya was the first country in the world where communism was defeated. Says D.C. Alfred, a passionate student of the Malayan Emergency: "The defeat of communist terrorism represented a first for Malaya as this was the first time in the Free World that the forces of communism who were determined to impose on the peace loving peoples of Malaya an ideology and a way of life that was completely alien to them,

had been resoundingly and convincingly defeated."

## No Freedom Without Peace

Even as early as 1957, Tunku used to emphasise that Merdeka would just be an empty slogan if there was no peace in the country, and if the different races were disunited and lived as a nation of strangers.

On one occasion, Tunku said that "racial war will make a mockery of Merdeka". On another occasion, when asked to cite the one reason for Malaya's success as a free nation, Tunku answered unhesitatingly: "It is racial understanding and co-operation."

Tunku also emphasised that freedom was not freedom if the people were not happy. They must also be free from fear, hunger, ignorance and disease.

He pointed out that there was no better way of undermining the people's support for communism and securing peace in the country.

Equally important was the need to join the Free World in the common struggle against communism.

To this end Tunku, was determined to join forces with the Free World in the fight against communism.

"In him (Tunku), the Free World has a reliable ally in the fight against communism," reported the *New Commonwealth* magazine in 1957.

Tunku justified his decision to sign the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement with a grim warning: "Without a single vessel to patrol our shores, the powers friendly to the communists would soon send help in men, arms and equipment to help their comrades fight this battle."

Tunku lamented that "we have no air force — not a single plane and no navy — not one sea-going craft".

"If we did not enter into a defence treaty with Britain, we would be signing our death warrant."

Tunku visualised that if the pact was not signed "capital would leave the country and the British officers serving with us will also leave".

This would play into the hands of the communists "who strive and gain ground where the government of the country is bad or where the people are dissatisfied and

starving".

The country reaped the dividends from Tunku's foreign policy when the Commonwealth troops came to the defence of the fledgling nation, and helped to end Emergency.

Some years later, the same troops helped in the defence of the newly formed Malaysia against the Indonesian Confrontation.

In retrospect, let us not forget that the joy of Merdeka would have been short-lived if the country had been taken over by the communists or invaded by foreign forces.

"If this country were ruled by communists not only would there be no freedom at all but a rule of iron would have been established in this country which would completely destroy the happy characteristics of the Malayan people."

Happily, this did not happen in our country and we have Tunku's pragmatic foreign policy to thank for this.

Today, we have left both colonialism and communism far behind us.

But the challenges to freedom and peace have persistently followed us through the years like shadows from the past.

As we commemorate 50 years of independence, we must understand the basic need to address the challenges to both peace as well as freedom that continue to plague us in various shapes and forms of disunity, injustice, fanaticism and lack of ideals. — MPS