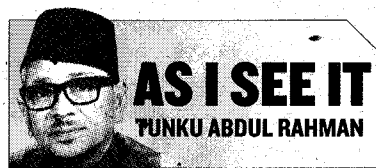


Towards self-government

The Tunku recounts how he took up residence in Kuala Lumpur as the first Chief Minister of the country in August 1955 and the conditions he laid out to the Secretary of State to pave the way for an early independence.

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On Aug 5, 1955, I gave a *kenduri* at my house in Johor Baru, the house which had been my home for nearly two years, and which was rented to me "cheap" by Datuk Ahmad Perang. The *kenduri* was followed by a dinner where prominent members of Umno and MCA in Johor and Singapore attended in full force.

The then Chief Minister of Singapore, David Marshall, and a member of his Cabinet, Haji Hamid Jumat (also a member of Umno), attended and the prominent personalities on our side were Tun Razak, Dr Ismail, Datuk Suleiman and Khir Johari.

It was a memorable evening for it marked the end of a hard and hazardous journey towards independence. All those present promised to swim or sink with me until independence was finally achieved.

Datuk Suleiman received one of the greatest tributes on that occasion because he scored the highest number of votes returned for the whole election, and against Datuk Onn, too.

It is worth recounting here that Datuk Onn first challenged me to fight him in Johor Baru but it was Datuk Suleiman who took up the challenge since he was a Johor man and, according to him, I should return to Kedah and fight the election there and at the same time spend my time campaigning throughout the country as everybody in every constituency would need my presence.

I left on Sunday, Aug 7, 1955, to take up residence in Kuala Lumpur as Chief Minister of the country. When I got there, the first thing I did was to call on the High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray, and presented him with a list of my colleagues with whom I would like to work in the new joint Cabinet.

For sentimental reasons I would like to name them here. They were Tun Razak, Dr Ismail, Datuk Suleiman, Sardon bin Haji Jubir, Abdul Aziz Ishak, Leong Yew Koh, Col. H.S Lee, Ong Yoke Lin and V.T. Sambanthan.

The High Commissioner agreed and gave me a list of his government officials, which I accepted.

I found that we had no houses to live in, no cars for our use in fact those of us who lived outside Kuala Lumpur had nowhere to go to.

I then told the High Commissioner that the least the Government could do was to make available some government quarters for us. His reply was that he did not know who was



Making it official: Tunku signing the 'Merdeka' agreement in Lancaster House in London on Feb 8, 1956 before Secretary of State for the Colonies Alan Lennox Boyd.

going to win, but I said the point was whoever won would have to join the Government and they would be expected to be given houses to live in.

As it was, no thought had been given to the newly elected ministers. It was all right for people like H.S. Lee who had a nice home in Kuala Lumpur and a big car to take him about. But the others and I had nothing but an old tin can that had seen its best days, so I naturally would expect an official car from the Government. Instead we received a cold shoulder.

Finally, I was shown a two-room government quarters for clerks that I refused to accept. How could the Chief Minister live in a two-room house, while all the MCS, expatriate officers and administrative officers lived in better quarters? Some even had flashy cars with official drivers.

The first Chief Minister of the country should be accorded better treatment.

Then the Deputy Chief Secretary took me to a house formerly occupied by the Mentri Besar of Selangor that, according to him, had been vacant for a long time.

So I accepted it. But one night when it rained heavily the water seeped in through the roof and drenched us in our bed.

I then realised why it had remained vacant for so long. The colonial Government did not disguise their bitter feeling towards the peoples' representatives, and I vowed that the colonial Government must go.

In the middle of August we were informed that the new Secretary of State, Alan Lennox Boyd (later Lord Boyd), would visit Malaya and we were naturally happy to have the opportunity to discuss the many issues with him right here in Malaya rather than having to travel to London.

My colleagues and I met Boyd soon after he arrived and we brought up five important matters for his consideration:

- The offer of a general amnesty to the communists as an incentive to bring about their surrender and an end to the Emergency;
- To have a fully elected national legislative council as a step towards self-government and eventual independence;
- To enlarge the scope of citizenship to allow people born in this country to acquire it;
- To formulate an education policy where by Malay shall be the national language and English shall continue and Chinese and Tamil shall also be allowed to be used; and
- To appoint an independent commission to review the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya and amend, where necessary, to provide for these changes.

I told the Secretary of State that I would bring up these matters in the first session of the Legislative Council, and I would like him to take the floor and make his reply if he cared to do so. He accepted it.

On Aug 31, 1955, the council met for the first time with an elected majority. The

speaker then suspended the session to allow the Secretary of State to take the floor in the council.

I was called upon to address the Secretary of State. The speech was long but here's the gist of what I said on that memorable occasion.

I told him how proud and honoured I was to hold office as Chief Minister.

I told him how necessary it was for this country to attain self-government and independence. This was the only answer we had to the communist insurrection and their claim to fight for independence.

This independence we asked for should be given not later than four years. There were many in our party who said that four years was a long time to wait and if this independence were delayed beyond this period the British Government would only help to spread communism, as communism thrived and flourished on colonialism.

The communists said they were fighting the imperialists, so imperialism must end quickly in our country. By offering the communists amnesty it did not mean that we intended to recognise the Communist Party, or that we wished to negotiate peace with them. All we wanted to do was to bring peace to this country within a reasonably good time and without their help.

In the Federation of Malaya Agreement 1948, Her Majesty's Government and their Highnesses the Rulers had given their assurance that "progress should be made towards eventual self-government in Malaya."

In the light of this assurance we requested that a special independent commission be appointed to review the Federal Constitution.

We also asked for the Malayanisation of the public services, including the Legal and Judicial services and the abolition of certain posts, which symbolised colonialism, in order to give tangible proof of the British Government's intention to help us towards eventual self-government.

We also demanded that all matters connected with security, the police force and local armed forces should be committed to our care, and we also felt that the financial matters should be entrusted to us.

In respect of education, it was agreed to make Malay the official language but English shall also be used. The Chinese and Indians insisted on having their own schools and this should be allowed.

My impression of Boyd was that he was an affable, kindly, sincere and sharp man. On his return to England, he immediately wrote me a long letter in which he expressed a wish to see me in London to work out the terms of reference for the appointment of an independent commission.