

# Struggle that must be retold

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**AS I SEE IT**  
TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

**I** WAS asked by an interviewer from RTM whether there was a need for students to be informed of the difficulties and struggle for independence. In fact, not only students but every Malaysian should be reminded of what we had to go through to get the independence we now enjoy.

People seem to take everything for granted. Some people think independence would have been given to us in any case because of what is happening today (1980), where even small countries are given freedom whether they like it or not, for example Brunei. But it was not so in the old days.

After the Second World War, many dependencies started their movement for freedom. Our neighbour, Indonesia, fought many a bloody battle for independence. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in the struggle. The whole of Indonesia had to be restructured to play its new role as an independent country.

Just as Indonesia was fighting the bloody battle, so were the communists in Malaya - the only difference being the communists were not the indigenous people of Malaya and they were fighting to set up a communist regime.

They fought a subversive as well as shooting war, losing many of their men and at the same time killing many of our men and the



Tunku Abdul Rahman (right) signing the 'Merdeka' agreement at a ceremony in Lancaster House in London on Feb 8, 1956. Looking on is Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Below: His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, as personal representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, handing the Constitutional Instrument to the Prime Minister as representative of the people of the Federation of Malaya. — Arkib Negara Malaysia

**»You do not expect to get independence unless you fight hard, fight strongly, fight wisely. Independence is won through the prison gates«**

MR BUSTAMANTE

were in agreement with me that we must win over the other races. So we joined hands with the MCA and the first big event that brought us together and nearer to our goal was the first Kuala Lumpur municipal election. We won that fight, and that was the beginning of the realisation of our dream.

Next came the state and federal elections. It took the British a long time to accept our terms. Finally, they agreed when the Alliance decided to withdraw cooperation from the government of the day.

When election was held in 1955, the Alliance swept the board with the loss of only one seat. I was asked to form the government with the Alliance members and three ex-officio members of Federation Government.

It worked so well that we won over the British with our clear thinking and broad-minded policy, so much so that when we suggested that the time had come to take a decision on independence, they agreed. We fixed a target of four years initially, but later we cut it down to two. Finally we got it in less than two years.

Events that led to the achievement of independence are so important that it is necessary for the people of Malaysia to remember and treasure them always, particularly the young people and students.

In this connection, books should be written recording all these events and incidents for students to read in schools and colleges.

At that time, no country was given independence on a silver platter, except India, Pakistan and Ceylon where the British had promised independence if they supported the British war effort.

All the other countries had to fight for it. Nkrumah fought for Ghana's independence and the people of Ghana had to go through hell before they finally won it. Nkrumah himself was imprisoned for many years.

Kenya had to fight for her independence with the same aches and pains before Kenyatta finally got independence for his country. And the same story goes for the other African states.

We achieved independence without a drop of blood spilled but we had to fight for



it. When I went to London with T.H. Tan to seek an interview with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Lyttelton, he would not see us.

During the time we were campaigning in London, I met Mr Bustamante, who had won independence for Jamaica.

He said to me: "You do not expect to get independence unless you fight hard, fight strongly, fight wisely. Independence is won through the prison gates."

I told him: "That's exactly what we are doing and, if necessary, we will go to prison for it."

The name of Malaysia is synonymous with the success of the emergence of a newly independent country that bears no comparison with any other in South-East Asia or any other part of Asia.

For a country and people who have never known independence, we are naturally proud of our newfound status for which we must thank all those who took

part in the struggle.

We give thanks to God for his mercies. We are not asking to be glorified but, at the same time, we see no reason why all these patriots who fought for our country should be passed over.

Umno's history is the history of independence of this country and, together with its partners the MCA and MIC, it shaped the future of this country.

Umno chiefs formulated the policy and carried it out honestly and conscientiously, beginning with Datuk Onn bin Jaafar, the founder of the party, and improved upon by other leaders, including myself, Tun Abdul Razak and now Datuk Hussein Onn.

With the cooperation of MCA leaders, Tun Sir Cheng Lock Tan, Tun Tan Siew Sin and now Datuk Lee San Choon, and MIC leaders Tun Sambanthan, Tan Sri Manickavasagam and now Datuk Samy Vellu, Malaysia enjoys peace and prosperity unparalleled in the history of this country.

Commonwealth soldiers.

This battle continued for nearly 12 years and would have gone on had the British Government not yielded to our demand for a general election as a step towards independence.

So when I came on to the scene, I knew that we could not shoot it out with Britain as the British Government had made it quite clear they would not give independence to any single community or to the communists or to an Islamic party whose politics is based on narrow religious concept.

I concluded that: We must have independence because nothing could be done for the indigenous people (bumiputras) of this country unless they have a big share in the running of the government; and I had to get the support and cooperation of all the peoples of this country.

The British had said they were here to guarantee the safety of others. Those entitled to protection were the Rulers of the Malay States, the Chinese, the Indians and all the others who had decided to make a home of this country.

Independence was the crux of our survival and it had to be won and how it must be done was something we had to think about very carefully.

We had dedicated leaders at that time: the Malay Graduates Association of Johor who