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The Fight For Merdeka

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT D. INF. 2/56/127(CM)

The following is an English translation of the speech by The Chief Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in Malacca ~~today~~ (February 20, 1956), on the return of the Merdeka Mission, said: -

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am proud of you all who have come from far away to welcome the return of the Merdeka Mission from London. The success that we have achieved was mainly due to the earnest prayers of all of you. With the blessing of Allah we have for the first time in the history of Malaya succeeded in setting the target date when Malayan independence will be announced.

one paragraph

I would like to state that it was in Malacca that it was first decided to send me to England to discuss the question of the Federal elections. Then you gave not only money for my expenses to London but also every support for my trip to London to ask for elections on democratic principles, so that the number of elected members would be more than those nominated by the High Commissioner.

Although we were not successful in England that time, I was not dispirited but jubilant and had one aim, to go forward at all costs until independence was achieved.

one paragraph

Being unsuccessful, we refused to cooperate with the <sup>then</sup> Government and as a consequence, you will remember, we came out successful. Although we did not get all that we asked for, we got almost all we demanded, that is, three-fifths. Finally, when the Federal Elections were held, through your support, especially the Malays, men and women, young and old, we achieved a victory unparalleled in any part of the world. While on my way to London, I met the Governor-General of Ceylon, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke who said that it was the first time that a Chief Minister had so large a following and won so many seats. He was proud to have welcomed me and the Merdeka Mission.

It has been said that in the history of the world no national party has received such wholehearted support.

one paragraph

The drawback in the struggle of other countries is probably the gulf between the rulers of those countries and their peoples. In Malaya, the rulers are firmly united with the people.

Our struggle has an outstanding feature uncommon to any other country. Here people of various communities, Malays, Chinese, Indians and others, are all united with one voice "MERDEKA" and have a common understanding. We thank God for all this. Our negotiations in London were conducted with sincerity. I went to England to settle four big questions - financial control, internal security, Malayanisation and an independent constitutional commission.

We agreed to the setting up of such a Commission to prepare and draft a constitution for an independent Malaya. Most important we got the British Government to agree that Malaya will declare her independence on August 31, 1957.

In England we spoke to a number of Englishmen most of whom said that not a single Mission from any other country had ever achieved all its aims as we had done. I thank the Almighty for this and may all the praise be upon Him. Here I would also like to mention the help which I received from the representatives of the Rulers. When we first left for England we belonged to two parties, one from the Alliance and the other from the Rulers. Suddenly, when we were on board the ship we negotiated and cooperated and there came about the feeling that we were the sons of the Malay States with one heart and one soul, and that if other countries could achieve their independence and sovereignty there was no reason why we could not do the same.

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As a result of such a feeling the representatives of the Rulers and the Alliance worked hard and all my burdens were reduced.

In London they worked very hard and were very loyal to me, to their country and the people of Malaya. According to the Kedah dialect they were "Bergolut" meaning "very busy". I only gave advice on how to do this and that but they performed all the work and shouldered most of the responsibilities.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to them. All of them are here and I hope they will come forward and say a word or two in support of our struggle for independence when I finish.

You already know what is contained in the report or agreement which I signed because the Information Department has compiled a book in all languages, which will be distributed to all of you. So it is not necessary for me to elaborate on the contents of the report. However, I would like to remind you that the first Malay Ruler who made an agreement with the British Government was my own grandfather. He ceded Penang to the British under a lease and they are still paying for the lease today. (Now God has decreed that his grandson shall take back not only Penang but the whole of Malaya. I am a bit worried about Singapore. Every time I mention its name I am attacked but please do not attack me today. I leave it to the people of Singapore to decide what they want and what they ought to do. If God wills it we shall also get back Singapore. But this will have to be on the wishes of the people of Singapore themselves. I hope the Colony of Singapore will also come in with us. But that is only my hope, it is left to them. For my part I am very pleased, proud and grateful that so far Malaya has succeeded in its struggle. Perhaps you all remember that in our manifesto we wrote that we would achieve independence in four years and self-government within two years, but because of your support we have achieved self-government within six months and with your prayers and full co-operation we will achieve independence within one year and seven months. I do not wish to say anything else but to say thank you. I have been your servant for the last four years. I have received so much support that I cannot repay it ~~mu~~ because we cooperated and because we love our country we have advanced far.

Two years ago nobody ever thought that in so short a time we would be on equal status with other sovereign and independent nations.

This jubilant spirit is not found only here. Malays, wherever they are, feel proud. This is not all. Wherever we stopped our Mission was regarded as one from an independent country. In Ceylon, India and Pakistan we were welcomed as independent people.

You will recall that on my return from Hiroshima, I mentioned in Malacca how I was looked down upon and that I was not even allowed to speak as an equal with delegates from independent countries.

That has passed, and now, thank God, there is no trace at all of such an attitude anywhere - in India, England, Pakistan, Egypt. On arrival in Egypt on our way to England I wanted to meet our students there, 114 of them. It was 5 a.m. and the students were already waiting for us. So I promised them that I would meet them again in Cairo on my way home. I arrived at 3 a.m. I had previously sent a cable asking the Malay students not to come at that early hour because it was cold. But on arrival I saw that there were women as well with their babies. They felt proud. I was garlanded. There were also representatives of Indonesian students who have cordial relations with Malay students there. Two representatives of our students in Mecca flew to Egypt to meet me, their passage being paid from contributions.

While in England I had asked for a hotel to be reserved for the Mission in Egypt, but on arrival there I was received as a guest and accommodated in a big and beautiful palace. Such was the good reception given to our struggle today. When I met Colonel Nasser, the Premier and President of Egypt, he said he was welcoming me as a very close friend despite the fact I have never met him. In former days I did not have that status to meet him but through your efforts and help I am now received by peoples of other sovereign countries as an equal. The Egyptian Government, according to Colonel Nasser, has given a piece of land on which to build a hostel for our students there. If God wills it, I shall ask the Federation Government to provide money for the construction of a big and beautiful building. I had, similarly, promised students in Mecca that the Federation Government would also build a hostel there.

Another important matter which also impressed me was the attitude of our students in England, not only the Malay students but also the Chinese, Indians and Eurasians. They all have changed in attitude and become nationalists, proud of our success. When I went to see them there was no room to move because the place was filled to capacity by those who had travelled long distances. In London there were two organisations filled and run by those who might be called Communists. During our time there the students, because of their strong nationalist feelings, discarded all the Communists from their organisations. In London, I saw wonderful cooperation between the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races. I was very much impressed because they are not particularly concerned about race so long as they come from Malaya. They only want independence and nothing else. This is the result of your support and cooperation. For my part I shall serve you as long as you want me. I am speaking on behalf of my Minister colleagues. They and I are not men who may be referred to as clever or wise. We are men who have the same spirit as you have and our aim is also to work for the people and the country. We do bother about hardships. If our work is not perfect or not quite satisfactory I would beseech you to give us time to learn our jobs. We all want to do the right thing. That is my earnest wish and may God help me in this.

I notice there are people here from Johore, from Perlis, Kelantan and Trengganu. I do not know where you all slept. If you didn't sleep we are all in the same boat because I didn't sleep either. But I admire your spirit. With such a spirit as you have shown today I believe we can achieve independence sooner than we think.\*

Here is a scroll to serve as a souvenir and I am going to sign it. It concerns the date for independence. I would like to read it out to you. "Proclamation of the date for independence. History has shown that no nation can survive if it does nothing. It has only two choices - to progress or to decline. It depends on the capacity and consciousness of that nation to face changes and developments. When the people are content with their status and position they are always suspicious of anything that might bring about changes. They feel suspicious of new ideas. But since the history of mankind is a history of changes and developments for the better, the contented nation would be stagnate and finally become extinct and only brought to life again by future historians. We are fortunate in that our nation has been given by God determination and courage. We were once a great nation with proud traditions. Although history has reduced our status from that of an independent and a great nation to that of a humble and subservient people, yet we have been able for the past 400 years of colonial rule to uphold God's gift of self-pride, dignity, justice and an unwavering spirit.

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Be it known that we the people of Malaya being united in our aim for independence by constitutional means today have achieved it. Therefore in the name of God the Compassionate and the Merciful and in the name of the people of Malaya I declare that full independence for the Federation of Malaya within the Commonwealth in accordance with the agreement concluded in London will be effected on August 31, 1957. May God grant it.

*one paragraph*  
As a souvenir of our assembly here today I shall now sign this scroll.

This is all that I can say to you. Last but not least I thank you for the trouble you have taken to come here. Only God can repay you. I conclude my speech with three cries of MERDEKA.

MERDEKA, MERDEKA, MERDEKA.

~~KUALA LUMPUR,  
February 20, 1956.~~

~~(Issued at 2100 hours)~~

*Signature*

~~Signature~~