

Force 136 (1)

(Siri Sejarah Lisan Pendudukan Jepun, no. 2)

Interviewee: Mr. Tsang Jan Nam
Interviewer: Mr. Tan Kim Hong
Date: 11 Oktober 1984
Place: 45 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah,
Pulau Pinang

Penyelaras: Abu Talib Ahmad
Penyunting: Sakinah Che Embi



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Penerbitan ini merupakan keluaran kedua Siri Sejarah Lisan Pendudukan Jepun di Tanah Melayu. Temubual ini mirip dengan autobiografi seorang bekas anggota Pasukan 136, Encik Tsang Jan Nam. Keluaran ini adalah hasil daripada Jawatankuasa Sejarah Lisan yang telah ditubuhkan pada bulan April 1982 dan dianggotai oleh Timbalan Naib Canselor (Penyelidikan dan Pembangunan), Profesor Sharom Ahmat sebagai Pengerusi serta ahli-ahlinya yang terdiri daripada wakil dari Bahagian Sejarah (Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan), Perpustakaan dan Pusat Teknologi Pendidikan dan Media. Mereka ialah Encik Abdul Rahman Ismail (digantikan oleh Dr. Abu Talib Ahmad), Dr. Cheah Boon Kheng, Encik Mohd. Lazim Hamid (kemudiannya digantikan oleh Encik Merza Abbas). Dr. Paul Kratoska, Dr. Yuen Choy Leng, Dr. J.S. Sidhu dan Cik Tang Wan Fong (digantikan oleh Puan Sakinah Che Embi). Profesor Sharom kini telah dipinjamkan ke Universiti Brunei Darussalam dan telah digantikan oleh Dr. Abu Talib Ahmad sebagai Pengerusi sementara Dr. Yuen, Dr. Kratoska dan Dr. Sidhu telah menamatkan perkhidmatan mereka dengan Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Tujuan utama Jawatankuasa ini ialah untuk mengumpulkan maklumat tentang zaman Pendudukan Jepun di Perak Utara, Pulau Pinang, Kedah dan Perlis. Aspek-aspek yang dijadikan tumpuan termasuklah kemasukan tentera Jepun ke Tanah Melayu, hal-hal ekonomi, dasar-dasar sosial dan ketenteraan, pentadbiran, pergerakan penentangan, serta peristiwa-peristiwa yang berlaku di sekitar tahun 1944-45 dan kedatangan semula askar-askar British.

Sejarah Lisan kini dianggap sebagai satu sumber penting yang dapat memperlengkapkan gambaran berkenaan peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah tanah air. Pengumpulan sejarah lisan dilakukan dengan cara menemui orang-orang tertentu untuk merekod pengalaman mereka tentang peristiwa-peristiwa yang telah mereka alami sendiri. Temubual ini merangkumi berbagai-bagai lapisan masyarakat agar satu perspektif baru tentang peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah dapat dihasilkan.

Dalam sejarah lisan sangat penting bagi penyunting merakam sejauhmana yang boleh, suasana interaksi di antara pencerita dengan penemubual, keadaan kesihatan dan ingatan pencerita pada hari itu, perasaan pencerita tentang sesuatu isu, iaitu sama ada beliau berasa gelisah atau pun senang dengan topik-topik tertentu. Keadaan ini harus dipelihara kerana seberapa yang boleh. Perasaan dan keadaan sebegini cuma dapat dibayangkan oleh pendengar/pembaca melalui cara pencerita menjawab dan bercerita. Oleh itu, sekiranya terdapat kejanggalan dalam teks monograf ini, ianya adalah disebabkan oleh usaha kami untuk memelihara keaslian temubual ini dan arus pemikiran pencerita.

Setakat ini pihak Jawatankuasa telahpun berjaya mendapatkan lebih daripada 25 temubual dan adalah menjadi harapan Jawatankuasa agar kesemua maklumat ini akan dapat disebarikan tanpa penyuntingan yang besar kepada para pembaca yang lebih luas. Harapan Jawatankuasa ialah dengan penerbitan maklumat-maklumat ini masyarakat akan lebih sedar tentang masa lampau mereka dan seterusnya dapat merangsangkan minat dan penyelidikan dalam sejarah tempatan.

Akhir kata, saya ingin merakamkan terima kasih kepada Encik Tan Kim Hong yang telah menguruskan temubual ini dengan jayanya. Terima kasih juga diberikan kepada Cik Yvonne Rasen dari Bahagian Malaysiana dan Arkib, Perpustakaan Universiti Sains Malaysia dan Unit Percetakan Pusat, Universiti Sains Malaysia yang telah menguruskan penerbitan temubual ini.

- Dr. Abu Talib Ahmad -

Sinopsis

Tsang Jan Nam telah dilahirkan di Hong Kong pada 1922 dan kemudiannya telah berhijrah ke Sabah (ketika itu Borneo Utara) bersama-sama keluarganya. Encik Tsang telah kembali semula ke Hong Kong sebelum Perang Dunia Kedua untuk menyambung pelajarannya tetapi telah tergendat apabila Jepun menduduki Hong Kong dan keadaan perang yang berterusan di negara China. Beliau kemudiannya telah bekerja di sebuah kilang radio/wireless yang dipunyai oleh kerajaan Chiang Kai Shek.

Sebelum memasuki Pasukan 136, Encik Tsang telah terlibat di dalam usaha mencuri alat-alat radio/wireless yang tertinggal di Hong Kong. Berdasarkan kepada latar belakangnya yang tertentu, beliau telah diterima untuk memasuki Pasukan 136 dan telah diberikan latihan di India dan juga di Sri Lanka. Pada Januari (Februari?) 1945, beliau dan kumpulannya yang digelar 'Dragon Four' telah digugurkan di kawasan Baling di Kedah dan berjaya membuat hubungan dengan pasukan Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) yang sedia menunggu.



- Tan:* Good morning, Mr. Tsang.
- Tsang:* Oh, yes, good morning.
- Tan:* First and foremost, we would like you to tell us, when and where you were born.
- Tsang:* I was born in Hong Kong, 1922. My parents migrated from China and settled down in Hong Kong. I had my primary education in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a British colony, and Cantonese is the local language but English is the second language. After I received my primary education, I entered an English Middle School until 1939, then my parents migrated to Sabah. During that time, it was not called Sabah yet; it was called British North Borneo. I stayed in Sandakan for a few years until 1941, [then] I returned to Hong Kong and had my further studies.
- Tan:* When you were in Hong Kong, that was in 1941
- Tsang:* Yes, 1941, March.
- Tan:* March 1941, that was before the beginning of the Pacific War. When the War broke out in December 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbour and later on the fall of Singapore and the whole of the Malay Peninsular, did you hear of the fall of Singapore and Malaya?
- Tsang:* Oh, yes, when the Japanese started to invade Southeast Asia, they occupied Hong Kong first. I still remember, [when] they started to bomb Hong Kong it was in 1941, December 7 and within two weeks they occupied Hong Kong. Then, I still remember that by Christmas, 25th of December, the Japanese Army had fully occupied Hong Kong. During that time also there was... propaganda which mentioned about the fall of Singapore. They described Singapore as a Golden City. The British claimed [that Singapore] would never fall to any enemy. I still remember.
- Tan:* So, what was your reaction, together with all those who were staying with you, in other words, your classmates, from Malaya or Southeast Asia?

Tsang: During that time I was so innocent, I did not know any politics at all. All my classmates, some of them from Indonesia, some of them from Sabah and a few from Singapore and Malaya, we were all very young, I think we were about less than 20 years old. So we did not really feel, what is called independence [nationalistic]. All the time we had been staying in a free country. Everybody knew that where the British government was ruling, any [one] in colonial [territory, was] very free, in our normal life [i.e. can lead a normal life]. But of course, the elderly people might know the difference between a free country and colonial rule, and this and that.

Tan: So, in other words, you all didn't react patriotically towards the fall of Singapore or British North Borneo?

Tsang: Regarding this, I mentioned earlier, we were too young to know, not like today. Today, all the young people have some sort of education [which tells them how countries] become independent and how was the colonial rule by other countries, especially in Southeast Asia. Like Indonesia was ruled by the Dutch; Indo-China was ruled by the French; Malaya, India and Burma and [the] whole of Southeast Asia at that time were all under British [sic]. So history, is an opportunity to let the people staying in this region feel what is an independent country and how life is [sic] like under colonial rule.

Tan: Was there any anti-Japanese feeling or sentiment amongst your classmates? For example, China had been invaded by the Japanese as early as 1931, and then in 1937, there was the Marco Polo Bridge incident. Were you not all aware of these incidents?

Tsang: Oh, yes, we knew. But just now, I mentioned at that time it was still the Chinese Government [in control] before the fall of Canton. The British Government was very smart and they stood neutral in Hong Kong because they thought the Japanese wouldn't attack Hong Kong. All the years of war between China and Japan, they never [expected] the fall of Hong Kong and also the whole of Southeast Asia. I still remember the entering of Kowloon and the New Territories by the Japanese Army. At that time, all the Chinese, no matter old or young, were just watching the Japanese Army walking along the streets.

Actually, in fact, we had a feeling of sadness, [but] what could we do? Therefore, I only had the idea [and that is] to try and get away from Hong Kong.

Tan: So, after the fall of Hong Kong, you went to China.

Tsang: Oh, yes, on the first available transport. I have to mention that after the Japanese occupied Hong Kong, I think, the Japanese also had a problem. The food to keep all the Hong Kong and Kowloon people alive was rather difficult [to get]. They had already started the War in the whole of Southeast Asia, [and] the food supply from Canton and New Territories of Hong Kong [was diminishing]. So, they found difficulty in feeding the people. Therefore, they had one idea, [decided] to let all the people go. This means [sic] that you [could] go back to occupied China, like Canton and all the surrounding areas. It was up to you to go back, to make Hong Kong and Kowloon population as few [small] as possible. Therefore, there was an offer of free passage to leave Hong Kong. You only register your name and then you could go anywhere. So, I had the opportunity to leave Hong Kong. I went to one place called [Kong Mun]. Kong Mun is the mouth of the Pearl River. From there, we started to go back to the Free China Zone. Free China Zone means the area occupied by the guerillas of the Chiang Kai Shek Government. And from there, crossing certain points, you [will] cross occupied China to Free China. I crossed into Free China and totally left Japanese territory.

Tan: So, exactly when did you arrive in the so-called Free China zone?

Tsang: That was the beginning, I think between January and February, 1942. I was in Hong Kong until the beginning of 1942. Then I left Hong Kong.

Tan: In other words, when the Japanese campaign was going on in Malaya and Singapore, you were not in Malaya?

Tsang: No.

Tan: You were then in China.

Tsang: Actually, in fact, as I mentioned earlier, my hometown is in

Sabah. Then in Hong Kong, I continued my schooling. Because of the war, I had the opportunity to leave Hong Kong, and went to Free China.

Tan: So you attended school and college in the Free China zone?

Tsang: Yes.

Tan: Can you tell us the name of the school and college you attended?

Tsang: At that time, I think the Canton University had moved out from Hong Kong and had started in one small town near Toi San. [It was] in Toi San because the owner of the University, (this University is a private one), Chan Peng Kuen, was a Toi San district man. So he started a branch - a Canton University in Toi San. When the Japanese occupied Toi San, the school moved up to Kup Kong. Kup Kong has another name called Sow Kuan - two names. So the Japanese occupied more of the coastal area. Then the Chinese Government moved up to the rural area further north. So all the refugees - from Hong Kong, from Macao, from neighbouring countries, they all gathered at Kup Kong. Kup Kong at that time was considered very crowded.

Tan: So, you attended the Canton University at Kup Kong. So when were you contacted by the Chinese Government to join Force 136?

Tsang: Actually, in fact, I mentioned Kup Kong was the capital of Kwantung, the capital of Free China. The Provincial Governor was there. They functioned quite well except sometimes they had air raids by Japanese aircraft - bombers, because Canton and Kup Kong is very near. If the Japanese like to give trouble to Free China they just had to send four or five aircrafts to bomb here and there - to scare you. At that time, I started at the school there - the war school. All the buildings were of straw, not concrete buildings but with bamboo, bamboo straw and some clay together with the straw to make the wall - all these. During the war, all the materials were made used of. There was not much of building materials. But for the people there, the spirit was very high. Since the Pacific War broke out, all the educated and those considered quite well to do people left Hong Kong and Kowloon. So there was this gathering of all the

educated people and wealthy people there (in Kup Kong). The Chinese Government also considered making use of the people. I stayed in Kup Kong for sometime, until 1942. I joined one semi-government communication transmitter manufacturer. Some friends recommended this factory for me to work in, because when I was in Hong Kong I was in a college, Milton College [which was an] electronic communication college. I had been there more than six months. I studied radio communication. Since I have the background, somebody recommended me to this manufacturing factory. So I joined. Actually it was quite good for me because I started this radio communication. Then, I had an assignment by the Director of the factory. One day, he asked me to see him personally in his house. And then he asked me about my background - when I was young what I had done. I told him, there was not much to tell. I could only tell him that I was a Boy Scout. You know, during my younger days when I was in Hong Kong, [in] primary school and middle school, I was a Boy Scout leader. Then I told him about my activities. So he enquired whether I could do something for the factory as well as for the provisional Government. I said "what is that?". He asked me whether I [would] dare go back to Hong Kong again. I said "Why go back to Hong Kong? It was so difficult to run away from Hong Kong, now I was [sic] to go back to Hong Kong." He said "Yes, if you like to have some sort of adventure - you may have the job". Then after that I was thinking not of money or reward. At that time, all the students in China loved our own country. So I told him I didn't know whether I could do it. He said, "Don't you worry, we will train you in a very short period. Then if you really want to do something, we test you and you have to pass this examination. If you cannot get through, we won't ask you to do the job". So I fortunately got through all this. Then the job was very simple.

Tan: By the way, were you told specifically, the nature of the job?

Tsang: He did not tell me at first, because that was before *Force 136*. That is why I am telling you how I got this *Force 136* job, to link up (to establish connection). This story I did not tell, (name of a person mentioned) because at that time he mentioned only *Force 136*. Now you are asking me about my background. So, at the same time, I take this opportunity to

mention it. This is personal and I don't want people to know. But the job is some sort like a cat burglary or something. After I went through all the tests, I qualified. And then he sent me to a group of people, male and female together. Among those, were some very rich people. From there we started my operation. Then he told me that my job was to go to Hong Kong, and break into the godown and then to steal for the factory radio materials, like condensers, wires - all that were for communications. In fact, after that I found out, this factory had a big order before the Japanese occupied Hong Kong. The goods had already arrived in Hong Kong sent by an American supplier. So all the goods were kept in one godown. But unfortunately, the war broke out, they had no chance to take out the goods. Because during that time, these war materials were very important for making a transmitter. So I was selected as one of the members of a group of 20 persons. 20 of them, some of them were more senior than me. They were below 30 [years of age], both male and female. Some of them were very well trained but they selected me because of my background, since I was born in Hong Kong and also had been a Boy Scout. Before they selected, they interviewed quite a number of overseas Chinese students. So fortunately or unfortunately, I was selected because I was from Sabah. My personal life had been very clean, very innocent. I belonged to no political party or anything, never got mixed up with communists elements. Secondly, I had been living in Hong Kong. I had my education in an electronic and radio college. So that means, I know what is a condenser, what is a resistor tube, all this and that. Because of that, they selected me. So I joined them and then acted like one of the village people. We went to the guerrilla zone. This guerrilla zone, during that time, they called in Cantonese *sam part mun* which means, all three parties didn't care about ruling that area - the Japanese official, Kuomintang Chinese Government officials and the guerrillas themselves. The guerrillas were very active. The people of the three sections [adopted the attitude of] - you watched me, I watched you. They did not want to create any trouble. That area was some sort of communication point between three areas. If anybody from Free China, wanted to go to Occupied China, could go through. If anybody from Occupied China, (the Chinese people) wanted to go to Free China, could also go through. The guerrillas there were the masters of that area. That means they collected money, they collected

protection money and then they gave you the proper paper.

Tan: These guerrillas, were they sympathetic to the Kuomintang Government?

Tsang: No, these guerrillas were purely for money. Those people cared for Chinese Government more than the Japanese but because of circumstances in that area, those people wanted money, they wanted the good life. In that area, there was gambling, women, everything. But the only thing they wanted was money. That particular area was where anybody who wanted to smuggle things to China or maybe take messages back to Occupied China meet. When we went from Free China down to Hong Kong we had to go through there. We had to get an identity card. If you don't have the identification you cannot go back to the village. From the village you cannot cross the border between Occupied China and Hong Kong.

Tan: So after you had been selected, were you sent back to Hong Kong?

Tsang: Oh yes. That is exactly what I tried to tell you. A group of our operators, went back to Hong Kong and acted as one of the village people. We went down to Hong Kong by fishing boat, and then landed and mixed with the fishermen. Fishermen in Hong Kong are called *tang-kai*. They were Hong Kong natives, same thing as what we call *Sakais* here. Aborigines. They are sampan people. They only travelled between Pearl River and Hong Kong along that area, because they had no other place to go. They stayed permanently on board the *sampan*. So from there, we made use of those in Occupied Hong Kong, who in Chinese were called *running dogs*. Those people were serving the Japanese to make a living in Hong Kong. Also they wanted money. So we made use of this advantage. We brought a lot of gold and notes, their notes were still *laku* (in use). The American notes and all these notes, we brought to bribe them. Of course, this was underground activity. So eventually we succeeded in getting all the material from the godown. But when we moved out of the godown there was also a problem. How to move this out of Hong Kong. If anything happened, the head had to go, chopped by the Japanese. So of course, our experienced comrade, they knew. At first, I also did not know

how they did it, I was only part of the team to guide. They used in China, a big bamboo. The bamboo was about, I can say nearly about one foot in diameter, i.e. 12 inches diameter.

Tan: Quite a big one.

Tsang: Big one. In Hong Kong, the labourers used [it] to carry those big baskets with vegetables inside - very heavy. Nearly more than 100 katis. So they used this bamboo. Bamboos are in sections and there are joints. Inside the bamboo they broke through these (the sections and joints). If there is a bamboo of 12 inches diameter it is quite big. So all the tubes, resistance condenser everything were hidden inside, one by one. Nobody knew. Then from there some of them we just carried, using these bamboo sticks. Actually, in fact, it was not heavy. If it was too heavy it would break. We used to carry one by one back to the fishing village. So the whole boat had all the big bamboos but inside them were all these materials. But luckily we successfully brought them back.

Tan: So, when finally you all got back to Kup Kong you surrendered your goods to your factory manager.

Tsang: Then the mission was considered successful.

Tan: Then how were you finally selected or recruited to *Force 136*?

Tsang: That is the follow up of the story. After my role in this operation, of course, the factory treated me well, treated me like one of the junior executives. At that time I was very young. I was on some sort of supervisor's scheme. The factory was making transistors and everything. I learnt lots of things from there for about nearly one year. I think at that time the government had been associated with the British Military Mission. That was 1943/44. Then the higher authority recommended that I joined this Intelligence Service. But actually at that time we did not know where we were supposed to go. They just said that the British Government wanted manpower from the Chinese Government, especially those Overseas Chinese who had been educated in English. You know, at that time, some of the students did not receive any

English education. So I had the opportunity, even though I had to go through tests and other things, especially the physical fitness. I think altogether there were about three or four hundred recruits. Quite a big number of recruits for this mission. But only 60 of us were selected.

Tan: How was the selection done?

Tsang: The selection was by using some sort of Morse Code - Morse Code communication. Of course, all the recruits were tested, not only Overseas Chinese. Many of them worked at the National Bank as wireless operators, and some of them were from the army unit also working at the radio communication sections. They recruited all the radio communication section people for that special job. After the recruitment there is another important point I have to mention. The fact, whether you were a communist or not, was also very important. The last test was having to face one group of Kuomintang people. They asked whether I had participated in any youth movement when I was [in school]. The Kuomintang was something like the CIA. They had all the personal records files. They were holding my record file and then asked me when I was schooling in Hong Kong, what youth movement had I participated in, this and that. But at that time, I told them I had never been involved in any youth movement. Only when I was a kid, I was interested in the Boy Scouts. Boy Scouts means [it was approved by] the British Government. We know the founder member of Boy Scout was Baden Powell. Now [sic] I realised why they asked about my participation in youth movements. That is why, I could judge, (from what we could see) it was important that those members they recruited to participate in this mission didn't have any communist ideas. This I could assure them. So after I had been selected, after one or two weeks, we had to leave for another province, called Kuilin. There I met Chong Hui Chuan. In Kuilin there was some sort of headquarters for the recruitment.

Tan: Did you meet Lim Bo Seng?

Tsang: No, Lim Bo Seng never had a chance to meet all the *Dragon* people. But at that time, I think Lim Bo Seng was already in Malaya - during the time of my recruitment in 1943/1944. So for Chong Hui Chan, his mission was to recruit the Chinese

overseas students. I met Chong Hui Chan there. Then also quite a number of our colleagues. Many of them as I have mentioned were from the banks, some of them from the military unit. There were about 50 of us. This group was only for wireless operation. From Kulilin, we went further, to Kunming.

Tan: In Yunnan?

Tsang: Yunnan province, Kunming - that is the place of exit to India. On the way we travelled on the military mission truck. During the War there was no petrol at all. The highest grade used was spirit. On this military mission they used the load truck. I can see the sign there [on the truck] *British Military Mission*. As I mentioned earlier the Chinese Government straight away handed over all the students to the British Military Mission.

Tan: You mean, you all were under the care and supervision of the British Military Mission?

Tsang: Yes, at Kunming. When we arrived at Kunming, we stayed at the Military Mission quarters - we were given a very old bungalow and there we had all the facilities - good food and good clothing. We were waiting for the time to leave Kunming for Calcutta. There [in Kunming], we had the opportunity to meet some of those ex- ... or maybe the existing servicemen. They came back to Kunming on leave from Calcutta. Sometimes we chit chatted with them and then they would tell us some stories. There was some sort of curiosity [on our part]. Then they let us have about three days leave before leaving Kunming for Calcutta. So, during that time, you know what happened? We still had all our personal *barangs* (belongings). It was better to sell off what things we had. When we went to Kunming we sold the clothings. In Calcutta, everything was provided for by the British Government. So we started to sell off everything, even fountain pens, everything. Whatever cash we collected we gave the money to one of the officers. Then from there they would remit to our family members. So that was the time I left Kunming for good.

Tan: Were you married then, Mr. Tsang?

Tsang: Oh yes. That time I was married. Because of the war, I married

a Hong Kong girl, and we went to China together. That time I think I had my first daughter. During that time we didn't have a good life in China. So, every young man tried to get some sort of adventure. Also my wife was quite understanding. She was educated. She stayed together with my first child - of course under government care. One thing, the government cared about the daily life, finance, all these they took care of. That was why we had a peaceful mind when we left the country.

Tan: So you all went from Kunming to Calcutta, so what happened in Calcutta?

Tsang: It was the first time all our classmates - everybody was very young, left the country; from the war in China to go to Calcutta. It is a big city. We were considered very lucky. From the war area, we went to a big city - Calcutta. India is a very big country. After we arrived in Calcutta, we stayed in a very big camp. Camp means some big bungalows looked after by one officer. All the workers were Indian nationals - the caretaker, gardener and so forth. The next day, I think the officer-in-charge introduced us to a leader of our group. Our group had a British officer - a lieutenant. This British fellow was very smart - he spoke very good Mandarin. I still remember his name - Mr. Kapp. He had been a newspaper man in Shanghai before it fell to the Japanese. He was very well built. He spoke very good Mandarin. They had to select one officer who spoke Mandarin because quite a number in our group did not speak English, they all spoke Mandarin. A few of us spoke English. Of course when we speak English we had a lot of advantages. I could say ... he was some sort of our group leader who took care of everything. And then after the introduction of this officer-in-charge, they brought one Chinese - [an] ordinary Chinese gentleman. So he advised this Chinese gentleman to guide us shopping. "You boys, anything you want you just say, the bill will be taken care of by this gentleman". So [in] one group we just followed him to the Calcutta market. Of course there was a certain limit [to the] number of pieces of shirts, [and only] necessary things for our daily lives. So whatever we wanted we bought. In fact, it was like [leading a] student life, everything [was] supplied free. So we had everything, we were very happy. During the war we were short of materials, especially luxury goods, like shirts or shoes or this and that. [But] we were very happy. So from there

we started our training. Our training was led by our officer-in-charge.

Tan: What kind of training was that?

Tsang: The training was fantastic. Actually this training was very good. The first thing, I still remember was physical training. I remember for the first training, they took us to Bombay. Of course during that time we travelled by rail. In India, they had a very good network of rail communication. From Calcutta we travelled to Bombay - crossed the continent to Bombay. I still remember one town; it is a holiday resort, called Poona. Poona is up [on] the hill. I think the hill is quite high, they don't use a locomotive, they use electric train to go up to Poona. It is a very nice place. There we settled down. I think there were about 25 of us divided into different groups. We had all sorts of tests - physical, intelligence, all this. After about two weeks, some of our classmates, were moved out. From 25, less than 20 remained. These 5 we did not know them, but it was whispered that they were sent back to Calcutta, this and that, later [it was found out that] they went back to Chungking.

Tan: The number became smaller and smaller.

Tsang: Yes, the number became smaller and smaller. From there, we went to Ceylon. I still remember the last place in Ceylon, one sea port called Trincomalee, a submarine base. There we also had part of the physical training - under one British captain. I still remember, he was called Captain Knott. He tested our knowledge on radio communication.

Tan: Was there any training given in the fields of ... say sabotage?

Tsang: Yes, that part was later. We had physical tests again, like swimming and how to rescue, how to go through with a rubber boat. Some sort of preparation, for when the time comes when we had to make use of these rowing boats. There, we had physical training in connection with the sea, to see how we could survive and how we could make a landing from a submarine, how we row the rubber boat to shore and then what to do in case of a Japanese attack.

Tan: So the training was different from one place to another place.

Tsang: Oh yes. Just now, you mentioned about sabotage. It was another game. We went back to Calcutta. In Calcutta we had this training on sabotage.

Tan: Any training in espionage work, spying ...?

Tsang: Oh yes, part of the game. In fact we had training in Calcutta and after that received lectures. During lectures, sabotage was mentioned, how to run away if you get caught. I give an example - if you wanted to contact your war colleague in a town, but at all times, the fifth column or a spy is following you - how you would run away and avoid those people following - how you could make things complicated (difficult). Things like going to a coffee shop, at a particular time. You sit in one corner and maybe put a box of matches or something like that and then somebody will come and borrow a match from you - and then after the fellow had borrowed the match from you a message would be inside already - something like that. And then there was another method. You may act as a beggar or a refugee; you sit down there begging from people. And then some people may come and talk to you, this and that and then mention one or two words, or you may receive information from somebody who advertises a piano for sale - the address, telephone number. You know, this was some sort of communication among our comrades.

Tan: By the way, was there any political indoctrination?

Tsang: No, actually during that time we didn't care about politics. During that time I was in India. When we mixed with the Indian nationals and when they found out we came from Hong Kong, we were instructed to mention that we were seamen, since Calcutta was a port. There were a lot of Chinese working on board ships as seamen. At that time, [the] British Government Intelligence received reports of quite a number of German and Japanese fifth columnists working in Calcutta. Calcutta was a seaport and air centre for the supply of war materials to Chiang Kai Shek. At that time the war zone's headquarters was in Ceylon. So that area was sort of like Hong Kong or Switzerland - all the spy activities were there.

Tan: What about your training in Kuilin and Kunming? Did it include any Kuomintang indoctrination? Say, for example, the crusade against communism ...

Tsang: No, because at the time nobody would mention this, and in fact, the higher authority did not want to know where you were going.

Tan: Oh, I see.

Tsang: They just wanted to recruit. This may be considered very confidential. What they were simply saying was that they wanted our service, how we could serve this mission. Once they found out you were not a member of the communists that was all, because they knew all the young people especially in Southeast Asia, the students were very innocent. Possibly you were young and were influenced by the communists or you didn't care at all. As far as I am concerned I have no political ideology.

Tan: To you, Mr. Tsang, would you think that this is a policy or a measure of the Kuomintang Government, or, the Kuomintang Government had been told by the British Military Mission not to select any youngster of your age with communist leanings?

Tsang: Yes.

Tan: What do you think? Do you think it was deliberately done by the Kuomintang Government alone or was it the understanding between the Kuomintang Government and the British Military Mission?

Tsang: I believe there was a bit of understanding because I believe these British people, were highly intelligent. They knew, this operation was to come to this country, Malaya, and to occupy Malaya. They knew all the guerrilla activities were led by communists, that was why they had an understanding with the Kuomintang Government, that it was most important not to have communist thinking. I think, first, the Kuomintang were totally against the communist, although during that time in Chungking they worked together with the communists. Mao Tse-Tung and Chou En-Lai at that time were stationed in

Chungking also. What they wanted was to fight the Japanese. They didn't care whether you were a communist. But the British cared. The British knew the communists, as they had been disturbed before Singapore fell. The communists made quite heavy demands. It is not to say that they hated communists but they knew what the communists would be in time to come. As far as the Kuomintang and the British Government were concerned, if they could avoid they would do so. They recruited whoever they could but tried to avoid any communist elements.

Tan: To the best of your knowledge, your training which was so comprehensive and intensive, was it in any way different from other members of *Force 136* who were trained before you? Was the training similar or different?

Tsang: Yes, similar. I still recall after the war when we met and everybody would mention one area to the next area. Say, for instance, I would mention Ceylon, the name of a town, as well as the officer-in-charge. At that time, one training centre had one officer-in-charge. Another training centre, for instance, in Bombay, there was one training headquarters in the charge of [another]. Majority of them had Chinese interpreters because many of them had Chinese education, especially those from China. Those bank operators or the military unit people could not speak English. But wherever we had training our officer-in-charge spoke Mandarin. They just wanted us to be an operation member, they didn't care what type of language you spoke so long as you can fulfill your job. That's all.

Tan: So after the training, of all those who joined the group, how many were left?

Tsang: In the end, about less than fifty. These fifty we called MCS or Malayan Country Section. As far as I know the group of fifty is in the picture you have seen; that is the whole group. There were about less than fifty of them in the Malayan Country Section. Some of them were sent to Indonesia, but we didn't know about that one because it was under Lord Mountbatten. [Those] in Ceylon, some of them may have been sent to Indonesia. But as far as our MCS was concerned, it was within Malaya. This Malayan Country Section - almost all [were] sent

by the Chungking Government and were called the *Dragon*, *Dragon 1st* to *Dragon 5th*. 5th was the last - almost all Sabah boys.

Tan: All Sabahans.

Tsang: I think now there are quite a number of Sabahans who were all my old colleagues. The highest position of one of them is Director of Fisheries, Sabah. Just retired one or two years ago.

Tan: Mr. Tsang, you belonged to *Dragon* ...

Tsang: Four. I was in *Dragon Four*.

Tan: So, how many were there in your unit, in *Dragon Four*?

Tsang: *Dragon Four*. Actually I don't remember exactly, but according to the record of the book published by the Taiwan Government, there were less than ten.

Tan: And how long did the training take all together ...?

Tsang: You mean in India?

Tan: From Kuilin right up to your espionage and intelligence training in Trincomalee.

Tsang: More than a year. But some of them in the earlier stages like the *Dragon One* and *Dragon Two* [units], didn't train as wireless operators. The first batch and second batch [of] *Dragon One*, and *Dragon Two* - almost all of them were instructors. I think, from *Dragon Four*, they were mostly wireless operators, because every operation group must have one wireless operator. For those already in the jungle, they only sent one or two operators parachuted into that area later.

Tan: Oh, you were parachuted? So when was *Dragon Four* parachuted into the jungles of Malaya.

Tsang: I am only concerned with my group. I think we parachuted in, in January 1945. In fact, we would have been dropped in

earlier, but during that time the British Government didn't have the long range aeroplane. In fact, we the *Dragon Four* were the first group [to be] parachuted in. Before 1945, the British Government in England didn't have any long range bombers. These long range bombers left the base, went to the enemy occupied area like Malaya and dropped the parachutists there, then the aircraft ... turned back i.e. from the starting point, go to the operation area and then return. These flying hours were suitable to the range of flying hours [of these bombers]. I still recall that during that time, during the European war, they only had the B-25; B-25 was a bomber but it did not have the range of flying hours which would suit the Pacific War until early 1945. In late 1944, the American supplied one type of aircraft called *Labrador*, also called B-24. One or two of these aircrafts were supplied to the British in Calcutta. I still remember, about 80 miles from Calcutta, was the place I alighted the aircraft and flew to Malaya. That was the first unit of *Labrador* supplied to the Military zone in Ceylon under Lord Mountbatten. The base was in Calcutta.

Tan: So how many of you boarded the aircraft?

Tsang: Five, I mean five Chinese and one British officer. Five Chinese: myself, Mr. Lim Hong Pei, two were from [the] Military school, Mr. Chang and Mr. Chin.

Tan: Their full names, please.

Tsang: Chang Chow Koi, Chin Kwok Ying and another fellow born in Hong Kong, Wong Sui Sern and Lim Hong Pei - Penang born, and myself.

Tan: Who was unit leader?

Tsang: Major Hislop. He was a Scottish. Actually he was a planter in one of the estates in Malaya, I can't recall which. He was one of the plantation managers. Then he went back to U.K. Then after that, he joined the national service or something like that.

Tan: So, Mr. Tsang, you were all parachuted in, in January 1945 by the B-24 bomber, right?

Tsang: Yes.

Tan: Where were you all parachuted?

Tsang: Actually, in fact, they called it the DZ - the Dropping Zone. This DZ had already been chosen by headquarters, SEAC (Southeast Asia Command). Before we planned to land in any area, [it] must be approved by higher authorities to safeguard all manpower as well as materials. If anything went wrong we would be 'finished'. And also if the winds blew, i.e. if weather conditions were not right, the petrol and manpower [used] to fly there and back to India would be wasted. So this selection was very important. As far as I know, the selection of where to drop had been decided. They also selected according to [the] information they had, i.e. which area was the nearest to the guerrilla headquarters where there were activities. They guessed, not 100% [sure]. Number one, the base, and number two, safety, i.e. whether [in that] area, the enemy had a camp or was under their (the enemy) strict control, or whether that area was a military target. Number three, they had to have an actual survey of that area before they parachuted. That means, some aircrafts must make a flight first to look around, to see whether the zone to be parachuted into had a hill or high trees. So I consider our dropping, our landing in that area [to be] very lucky and safe. I want to explain further; the air dropping was totally different from other landings because the speed of an aircraft was at a minimum of, say 100 m.p.h. That area was not very big, it was worked out [to be big enough] only for three persons, i.e. only three persons can drop; the fourth person will be on the higher jungle, so they selected that area. Only good for six persons. So the first row [dropped first] and [for] the second row [of persons, the aircraft] had to make one and half circles and then come back again. Now this dropping was very important. All personnels [after being dropped] must have a chance to meet together despite the distance. If they pressed the button late or something like that, the distance of first group and second group would be about two miles away. So you would not have a chance to reunite. So our dropping down was considered lucky (based on luck) and also fate. It was lucky that within half an hour we met - at midnight.

Tan: Exactly how many of you were dropped?

Tsang: Six of us. Five Chinese and Jimmy Hislop. Major Hislop [was] the leader.

Tan: The five, were those you mentioned.

Tsang: The names mentioned earlier.

Tan: Can you specially tell me why that part of Kedah was chosen as your base? What is the name of that place by the way?

Tsang: Further up Baling, one small village called Kampong Weng. Kampong Weng was the nearest village to our dropping zone. Then further up was Tanjong Pali (Pari). Tanjong Pali (Pari) was the nearest to the fringe of the jungle and the village. From Tanjong Pali (Pari), inside was the jungle. And then before that, there was one place called Batu Lapan. Batu Lapan must be about 8 miles from Baling. Another small town further down from Kampong Weng was called Bandar. It was Bandar, then to Baling. Baling, Bandar, Kampong Weng, Batu Lapan then Tanjong Pali (Pari) - which was the fringe between the village area to thick jungle. I believe they found that area was safe because our target was Baling and Kampong Weng. And then, between Kampong Weng and Baling, there was one jungle path to Kuala Nerang. There was a district near Gurun side. Gurun, then further up was Sik - Sik and Sok. Further north was the Thailand jungle. Hilly. So the selected area must have a good location. In that area, we also had information about the Eighth Independent Regiment [*Oi Pa Tu Li Tui*] which was around there. That Regiment was the last formation of the MPAJA (Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army). You know, the first, second and third [regiments] were in other parts of the states. It was only in Kedah that it was not well organised. You know, our group was the last group to be parachuted into that area.

Tan: Were there any special or explicit instructions from the SEAC?

Tsang: Yes. There must have been, otherwise why would the SEAC select the area. For the past so many years, after the war, I visited the places. So, to answer your question, I believe an important factor was the movement of the military; the army and equipment [were] based in Sungai Petani. There was one airstrip in Sungai Petani.

Tan: You mean the Japanese Garrison?

Tsang: Yes. In fact, in North Malaya, they were stationed in Alor Setar and Changloon near the Thai border, and Sungai Petani was [also] considered the northern part of the military manoeuvre area. I still remember, there was an airstrip in Sungai Petani. And I remember the Headquarters, warned us to find out [first] what was the surroundings and position of the Sungai Petani airstrip, because I received the message and passed the message to this Major Hislop. Then, we had a discussion with one of the heads of the MPAJA. We discussed with them and then tried to send their men to get the direction (information) where the petrol storage was and all the other information.

Tan: Who were the leaders of the MPAJA, the so-called *Eighth Independent Regiment*?

Tsang: During that time, we did not know exactly who they were because after we met, the first person who met them was Mr. Lim Hong Pei, our colleague. We sent him to contact the local guerrillas because we had received information from Headquarters saying that we could go to certain areas and meet certain people. So Lim Hong Pei was assigned to do the job as he was a Malayan. That time our camp was quite far from Tanjong Pali (Pari). I still remember the name of the *sungai* - Sungai Lasor and Sungai Muda - between Sungai Lasor and Sungai Muda, these two rivers. I do not remember the exact position but I remember that it was one big river and there was one small branch. We had our headquarters there. So we sent Lim Hong Pei to go to Kampong Weng, that means to Batu Lapan, the civilised area. Inside that, was the jungle.

Tan: You mean that was where the MPAJA area was before?

Tsang: I mean, those people used to have their activities there. So we sent Lim Hong Pei to contact the MPAJA. Fortunately Lim Hong Pei managed to contact the first person whose name was Lau Yeang. I think he was also one of the leaders of the MPAJA. He was quite famous. He met Lau Yeang and brought him to meet us. During the time of our meeting, we did not let him know where our base camp was because we did not know

whether he was a *running-dog* or maybe a spy for the Japanese. So we did not take any chances. At that time, he had a very old revolver and had a follower with him. From his face (looks), I could see that he was short of good food.

Tan: Were you then the second-in-command of the unit?

Tsang: No. We did not have any second-in-command because all of us were under Jimmy Hislop and we had our own jobs to do. So Wong and I were in charge of wireless, and then Chang Sow Ko and Chin Koe Ying, two of them were responsible for training and sabotage. Lim Hong Pei was mostly in PR because he is a Malayan born. Everybody had a job. Jimmy Hislop was closer to Tan Kok Eng because he was a bit elderly and more steady. He (Tan Kok Eng) was also very close to Jimmy Hislop. So, during the meeting, we set up some terms to find out what he wanted and to prove that there was guerrilla strength. What we wanted was the strength of the guerrillas. We wanted to know how many guerrillas he had because we wanted to help them. Our aim was to help them organise, how to recruit those Chinese villagers to become members of the MPAJA. The first meeting was successful. After we met Lau Yeang, we went back to our base camp and sent back the message to headquarters.

Tan: To the best of my knowledge, the MPAJA and SEAC had an agreement sometime in 1944. Actually, the first agreement was reached on the first of January 1944, in terms of co-operation between the two, pertaining to the Japanese during the Occupation Period. You all were parachuted in, in January 1945, exactly one year after. We would like to know whether Major Jimmy Hislop and your colleagues were told of this agreement which was reached one year earlier. What I meant is when you all were parachuted in, other than the wireless message you received from the SEAC, were there any particular instruction to make contact with the MPAJA because of the existence of this agreement?

Tsang: The agreement you mentioned must be a high authority agreement. If this agreement existed, it must be because of, John Davies, Lim Bo Seng and those in *Dragon One*. Those senior men had been in this country first. They had made Ipoh their headquarters. The first landing was in 1943, by a

submarine, into Lumut. That was the first landing of Allied Forces on Malayan soil. At that time, the MPAJA was not well organised. During that time, in Perak, there was the *No. 5 Independent Unit* led by Liau Wei Choong. I think John Davies and the senior people reached an agreement, but had nothing to do with our group who were just operators. Our group's instructions were to assist, to train and to supply. If an agreement had been reached, it was only logical. During that time, we did not care about communists or non-communists. The one aim was to reoccupy Malaya. The guerrilla warfare was important because we did not expect the Japanese to surrender. We only hoped that one day, when the opportunity arose, the Allied Forces would force a landing in Peninsular Malaya and at the same time, use the guerrillas to attack the Japanese, that is, should the Japanese run away or retreat to the jungle. So, the guerrillas were to counter attack, that was the original plan.

Tan: So, in other words, the contact was made on receiving instructions from SEAC.

Tsang: Yes.

Tan: Another thing we would also like to know is the size of the MPAJA as well as the Japanese troops in Baling or in and around Baling. You were telling me that the MPAJA were fairly active at Kampong Weng area and there were also Japanese troops in and around Baling. We would like to know how strong were these two in terms of size?

Tsang: When we landed at Kampong Weng and Baling the guerrillas were not well organized. They did not even have any association with any other state, for example, Perak ... Kroh.

Tan: Not even Kroh which was nearby?

Tsang: Kroh had another officer-in-charge and it was a special area because it was dominated by anti-communists characters; pro-Kuomintang guerrillas were there. Those people were mostly Kwangsi people who had connections with South Betong.

Tan: You mean the OCAJA - Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army.

- Tsang:* Yes. In Kroh, Kerian and Betong. Betong (South Thailand) is nine miles from Kroh which is nine miles from Baling. Later, I found out that in our neighbouring area there was another group of parachutists in the Sik and Sok area. We found out that there was a group of SEAC people led by one Major and there were some other non-Chinese members or guerrillas.
- Tan:* Can you recall the name of the Major?
- Tsang:* I can't recall. We only knew from the guerrilla officer who said that there was one *angmor* (white man) wandering in the jungle and that they kept him in their camp. They did not even allow us to see him. We had no chance to contact this man.
- Tan:* Oh, you mean this European Officer was kept by the MPAJA?
- Tsang:* Yes, because he had no where to go since his followers had already left him. Once the radio set broke down [and] there was no source of supply, it meant you couldn't survive.
- Tan:* So this very officer was stranded in the jungle and later rescued by the MPAJA people?
- Tsang:* Yes, and they brought him to their camp.
- Tan:* As a hostage?
- Tsang:* No, I don't think as a hostage. They still thought our organization was not well organized. Otherwise how could an officer-in-charge be left in the jungle? I was told those members were non-Chinese. The environment plus other factors attributed to the survival of those non-Chinese. We Chinese found it easy to survive once we leave the jungle but not the officers. Eventually the British officer was rescued.
- Tan:* So what was the general attitude of the MPAJA towards your unit?
- Tsang:* At that time, we had free time and sometimes invited them for lunch and we talked. They wanted information from us, like where we came from, etc., i.e. our background. We did not mind telling them as we had nothing to hide. At that time, our

Chungking Government had already joined hands with Mao Tse-Tung. At that time, if I am not mistaken, Mao Tse-Tung and Chou En-Lai were already stationed in Chungking working together with Chiang Kai-Shek. The best army of the Communist Party was used and it joined hands with the Kuomintang to defend China against the huge Japanese Army in Northeast China when they wanted to invade North China. So we told the leader that we were students from Chungking and we were serving our country and that we did not have any political beliefs. They accepted what we said with caution. They queried us about our future, but we told them that we did not worry about the future. Our only concern was to fight the Japanese. Without the British we had no arms, without the American aircraft that was supplied to us, we could not survive in the jungle. They realised that, as they received a lot of supplies from us. I still recall, at a later stage, one evening, five B-24 came to supply arms to us - Stengun, Brengun, hand grenade, 0.45s which were meant for officers, but for the individual unit only the Stengun [were given]. Stenguns were made by the British and were very cheap. They were very powerful but you have to handle the Stengun with care otherwise your hands may get burned.

Tan: Other than the so-called Lau Yeang you mentioned, who were the leaders of the MPAJA whom you could recall?

Tsang: Lau Yeang brought Chen Lo. He originally came from Labu Pusuat, Kulim. Other leader was Tan Lip Huat. We also met Chang Yuen who was from Kulim. He was a Hakka, a small size but intelligent fellow. Another leader was a young and tall chap who did not reveal his true name. But, after the war, during the emergency, I recognised his picture and his name was Pai Si-bok. These few were high ranking. I did not know the others since we did not visit their camp.

Tan: Were you allowed to visit their camp?

Tsang: No. We were not allowed. We only spoke to their young officers.

Tan: Their rank and file.

Tsang: We only met at meetings. Although they supplied some

information about their camps, they did not want us to know where they were.

Tan: So, how was information exchanged between the two groups?

Tsang: They visited us. They knew our camp but we did not know their camp. After we had settled down, we had eighteen Gurkhas stationed with us. One British Captain who spoke the Gurkha language took care of 18 of them and they were our guards. They were stationed at the foot of the hill where our headquarters was. My job was to provide a very good transmitting and receiving station on that hill.

Tan: These 18 Gurkhas were also parachutists?

Tsang: Yes. After we parachuted down, we took nearly a month to walk to our destination near Kampong Weng, Batu Lapan, because we were strangers to the area and the only map we had was a survey map. The Muda Dam was near where we parachuted down.

Tan: You were saying that the MPAJA were not allowed to come.

Tsang: We could not visit them.

Tan: You were not supposed to visit them. Now, if you would like to send them any message how did you all contact them?

Tsang: Our instruction was only to communicate with our headquarters. If the guerrillas wanted our assistance, [they were] to send a message to Perak; they had to go through our headquarters in Colombo - our headquarters at Southeast Asia Command, in Colombo.

Tan: You mean the SEAC?

Tsang: Yes, in Colombo - our headquarters at Southeast Asia Command. The system was like this. All the parachutists in various parts of the country had the same frequency on the transmitter. We sent messages using the Morse Code. We used the crystal as an oscillator to vibrate the sound. We all had a

different communication time fixed for each group. Supposing my time was 8 to 8.15 in the morning and since there was only one frequency, I could only use that 15 minutes. The most I could use was an extra five minutes. If I did not stop, it would disturb communication of another area as we used the same frequency. The advantage of using the same frequency was that it was easy for headquarters to check our message. Our area was a danger zone because we could be raided by [the] Japanese at any time. If the guerrillas wanted to send a message to Perak, they had to send it through us and we sent it to headquarters. Then headquarters would code it and then sent it to Perak. There was no direct communication.

Tan: Now, I follow you. There was no messenger in both the camps, I mean the MPAJA or your Unit?

Tsang: No. We didn't have. We had some sort of understanding in our organisation. We had strict instructions not to leave camp for security reasons. We only had a meeting with the head of the guerrillas when they visited us. The next meeting would be fixed at the end of that particular meeting to see what help we could give them, like medicines, food, arms, etc. However, the final decision lies with headquarters. Any reasonable requests for the welfare of the members, would be supplied.

Tan: Incidentally, did the Japanese know that you all were active in and around Baling?

Tsang: Oh, yes, they knew for the simple reason that our supplies sent in by the B-24 used to arrive in our area before dark. The Japanese were unable to detect us at that time. The drop lasted only for 10 minutes. After the pre-arranged signals, [description of actions and signals made] the final drop was made. This was how we operated.

Tan: Did the Japanese ever try to attack you all?

Tsang: They didn't. The Japanese had some sort of reserve unit. At that time, at the beginning of 1945, the American had already started to attack the Pacific Islands, so the Japanese concentrated on the sea coast. The Japanese morale was weakened by then.

Tan: It was when they were about to lose the war?

Tsang: Yes. At that time, Yamashita was stationed in Singapore. All their military strength were gathered in Singapore. They only concentrated on the coast. They had only limited soldiers at the jungle fringe. For instance, at Baling, they knew it was at the Thailand border so they did not concentrate so much on that. Even though they knew that the Allied Forces were organising the guerrillas, they estimated that this guerrilla force was not big enough to fight them. I found out later that the Japanese had no respect at all for the MPAJA.

Tan: Another question is, did you all have any knowledge of the local living conditions, in and around Baling?

Tsang: Yes, we knew there was a shortage of food. We knew that the Malays continued to plant their padi but they did not have a luxurious life. However, the guerrillas depended on public support as they had no chance to plant their own food. The Japanese were very strict with their distribution of rice and there was rationing. So there was no chance of rice being given to them. So the guerrillas depended on tapioca as they could grow it in the jungle where there was open space. Their health was not very good.

Tan: So I could conclude that the MPAJA was only a very small task force?

Tsang: Oh yes, especially in Kedah, as it was the last place where the guerrillas were organised. During the time we met them, their force was less than 100. That was why at the meeting we wanted them to recruit more members. The supply of arms on our end was not a problem. What we needed was more guerrillas so that we could send our men to train them. Unfortunately, when it was time for our two men to train them, the Japanese had surrendered.

Tan: So, when you all heard of the Japanese surrender, what was your immediate reaction?

Tsang: We paid more attention to the radio. Although we were isolated in the jungle, the news of the war was very important. Our

radio was very sensitive and we used to receive BBC broadcasts and American stations. We knew the activities of the war. After we heard that the Allied Forces had occupied Rangoon and that America had bombed the mainland, the Japanese knew that the end was near. The instruction from headquarters was that in the eventuality of any surrender, our instructions to the local guerrillas was that they [the Japanese] should not be attacked, their camps should not be raided, and there was to be no killing. After the surrender, everybody was very happy, and we informed the guerrillas not to attack the Japanese Army.

Tan: So, you were all expected to play the role of intermediary, to tell the MPAJA guerrillas to stay put and not to leave their camps and not to have any revenge or attack the Japanese troops.

Tsang: Yes.

Tan: So, you all came out of the jungle?

Tsang: Although we gave instructions to them they did not obey. I found out later that one guerrilla had executed 18 Japanese secretly. He was in the MPAJA Reserve Unit.

Tan: So, where were you all housed after the surrender?

Tsang: After we had camped at Kampong Weng, we stayed at the Forest Checking Station quarters. That was the nearest station. Our first camp was at Kampong Weng and we sent Lim Hong Pei with the guerrillas to contact the leader of the Japanese Army in Baling. They also informed the local Chinese who also cooperated. Dr. Chang Sin Yuen was one of them. He was very young then. So, together with a few of the community leaders in Baling, they formed a committee and informed the Japanese Commanding Officer there, that there were Allied Forces in the jungle. Since the Japanese had surrendered they wanted to come out. The Japanese could not make up their mind. The reason was because General Yamashita, the commanding officer of South-east Asia [sic], could not make up his mind to surrender. We waited for Yamashita to give instructions to all Peninsular Malaya army commanders, all the province/state commanders to surrender. Even though the Emperor of Japan had made the announcement to all his forces, the General in

Singapore kept quiet and did not give further instructions for a couple of days. The Navy did not dare land in Penang.

Tan: You mean the British Navy?

Tsang: Yes. There was no announcement. The time was very crucial. If Yamashita wanted to fight and disobey the Imperial Command there would be a war. So, after a couple of days, an announcement was made and the Japanese commanding officers in Baling negotiated with the local Chinese community leader and welcomed us out. We came out and stayed in one of the Malay schools in Baling. Our officer stayed in the D.O's (District Officer's) quarters in Baling.

Tan: You mean Major

Tsang: Major Hislop. He stood very near the Japanese Army Officer. Dr. Chang Sin Yuen acted as an interpreter.

Tan: I think it was Dr. Chang Ching Chuan. What about the MPAJA guerrillas?

Tsang: The Japanese had no respect for the MPAJA. They treated them like cowards and did not give them face. About 30 of us came out to Baling including guerrillas, British agents and us, the Japanese commanding officer gave instructions to their sentries that only Allied Forces were allowed to carry arms. Any non-Allied Forces including the MPAJA guerrillas were not allowed to carry guns. Because of this, the guerrillas could not do anything, they could not clash with them. So they had to use the back road to go to their camp at Kupang, about 6 miles from Baling town.

Tan: So, when you all were in Baling, did you all witness any misconduct of the Japanese or of the local people, things like looting or robbery during this period of transition?

Tsang: The security of that area was very good. The relationship between the Japanese commander and one group of Chinese community leaders, Mr. Lee Kok Aun, Fan Fian Kun and another one who is still alive - Ying Peng Choon, a Hainan person. If you have a chance to interview him, he still may be

able to tell you what happened in Baling during the Japanese Occupation. Due to the good relationship between the Japanese and the local community, there were no incidences, it was very peaceful. Regarding security, there is one important point I would like to mention. One evening, we received a message from one of the Japanese officer. He came with Chang Ching Chuan. It was confidential information to us. It was shocking. The Japanese had information from their own spies that the guerrillas wanted to attack us at midnight and they had formed a government by themselves. On receiving this piece of information we had a meeting - Major Hislop, Captain White, Major Lasse, one sergeant and some other officers. So we sent an S.O.S. signal using the emergency frequency which operated 24 hours. They received the message. We wanted a rescue team from Penang but the answer was "Sorry, not available". Since we could not get any help we had to defend ourselves. There were the eighteen Gurkhas. So we lay beneath the Malay school where we were staying. We stationed ourselves at the concrete columns and reached for our machine guns, hand grenades [ready] for war. The Japanese also helped by guarding the road. So we were safe on one side. We were very excited as we were now fighting our own people when it was the Japanese we came to fight. We waited from midnight till dawn but nothing happened. Probably word had got back through the spy that we were prepared, or maybe they received instruction from higher level that they could not take such action.

Tan: So, no attack took place? Was there any official ceremony held in Baling to mark the surrender of the Japanese?

Tsang: No. We only had some sort of tea party organised by the local leaders. Everyone was amicable. According to the civilians in Baling, the Japanese commanding officer treated them well. Only the *running dogs* ran away. A ceremony took place in Sungai Petani. On a later date, we moved from Baling to Sungai Petani.

Tan: Approximately when was that?

Tsang: The exact date I don't think I can recall. Within the month of the surrender.

Tan: It should be sometime in September 1945.

Tsang: That is correct. Do you want to hear about the ceremony?

Tan: Oh yes, of course.

Tsang: We stayed in Baling but attended the ceremony at the airstrip in Sungai Petani. We went there about 8 o'clock. One British Brigadier-[General] came from Penang to officiate the ceremony. In the morning, there was very heavy rain. So with some of the dignitaries, the D.O. etc. we were there at 8 o'clock but the Brigadier-General only came at 9 o'clock. But the P.O.W's had lined up since 5 in the morning. We did not give those instructions. Probably the Japanese Commanding Officer gave the instructions to his men to queue up at different times according to rank. The ceremony was very simple. All the Sungai Petani civilians were allowed to attend. The guerrilla representatives used the *Three-Star* uniform - the *Bintang Tiga* uniform. The man-in-charge was a very young man.

Tan: Can you recall his name?

Tsang: Maybe I will be able to recall later. All I remember is he was a very young fellow. There were less than 20 of them, and walked into the airport ceremony stand with a five-star communist flag. They were very proud of it.

Tan: Why five-star, not three-star?

Tsang: Five-star. I do not know why five-star, maybe it represented something else. The funny part was that the red flag was made with inferior dye so that the flag bearer was all covered in red due to the heavy rain. Everyone laughed.

Tan: So, approximately how long did the surrender ceremony last?

Tsang: It took a long time. The ceremony was simple but it was conducted in a sarcastic way. Every Japanese officer had a sword. Each one walked in front of his Brigadier-General, bowed, turned and laid the sword on the ground. There was a small hill of swords after the ceremony. The total number of prisoners-of-war was about 8 to 9 thousands, including the

civilians. Those who were wearing white were civilians such as hospital assistants. I am talking about the whole of Kedah, people from Alor Setar had to come too. Sungai Petani being the central point, as they could not use Penang as well as Alor Setar. After the ceremony, the Japanese had to camp along the Baling - Kuala Ketil and Sungai Petani Road. I knew it as I saw them on my way from Baling to Sungai Petani where I was stationed next. They had to stay there until they were deported back to their homeland. The British Military Government had no other place for them to stay. It was a difficult time for them, then. Some local people even stayed with them there. It was some time before the ship arrived in Penang to take them home to Japan.

Tan: So, we might now have to come to the last part of our interview. At the end of the Pacific War, which ended in August 1945, and subsequently the surrender ceremony held in Sungai Petani for the state of Kedah, where did you go after that?

Tsang: Oh, that is a very good question. I can say, that was when I had a holiday. After Sungai Petani, I spent about two weeks in Penang.

Tan: Were you discharged honourably?

Tsang: No. I was still wearing the uniform. People treated me like a hero. I came to Penang with Datuk Lam Kok Long and relative of Lam Kok Long; Lim Beng Choo was a Chinese school teacher who still lives in Penang. Both Lim Beng Choo and Lam Kok Long brought me to Penang as I was a stranger then. I went to the British Headquarters.

Tan: Where was it then?

Tsang: It was near Metropole Hotel. After that, I met the Commanding Officer who respected me as they considered me a hero from the jungle. My uniform still had the Chiang Kai Shek's 12 blue star on the hat. They asked me if I was a stranger to Penang. So they called a Corporal to take me around Penang. I was driven around in a jeep by a British officer and to the local Chinese who rarely saw an army officer with a Chinese face, I was a hero. I was followed by a lot of people and the jeep

could not be driven fast. Everywhere I went, people followed.

Tan: Where were your other colleagues, like Mr. Lim Hong Pei ...?

Tsang: I can't recall where they were as I thought only of myself. We all had our own programmes. It was a very happy time for me. I was with the Kuomintang then. It was double ten, i.e. October 10th 1945 but I did not go to Kuala Lumpur. I went to Kuala Lumpur in November. So the Chinese community leaders like Saw Seng Kew, Lau Yet Chooi, all Kuomintang people, they invited me and we took that [sic] picture. I stayed in the Japanese Officers' Mess which is Savoy Hotel today. I stayed there free of charge. Lots of people came to visit me. One of them being Mr. Ho who was the proprietor of Boston Hotel who still remembers me. He is still alive and is a teacher in Tanjung Bungah.

Tan: You mean, Mr. Ho Soon Ching.

Tsang: Yes. Lots of people followed me. It was a memorable time of my life as everyone treated me like a King. Then I had instructions to go to K.L. for a reunion of all the state members of *Force 136* [where] all members in the Malayan Country Section gathered. We were put up in three hotels - Tivoli, Rex and Coliseum Hotel. Our food was catered by Lee Wong Kee near the Odeon Theatre. It was a reward of some sort for us. It was only in 1946 when we were disbanded.

Tan: You all were discharged?

Tsang: Discharged. Majority of them went back to China and a few of us were left behind. So, in the beginning of 1946, we gathered in Singapore where there was another ceremony for Lim Bo Seng. They had dug up the remains of Lim Bo Seng who was buried in Ipoh and brought it back to Singapore as he was a Singapore boy. The Singapore Government honoured him by providing a military truck for the funeral procession round Singapore. Even today, in Singapore's Elizabeth Walk, there is a memorial for him.

Tan: So, in retrospect, when you look back, how would you like to evaluate or assess your own part as a member of *Force 136*?

- Tsang:* Speaking from the bottom of my heart, it was an opportunity for me to serve the country and it was circumstances which gave me that chance. I was a Sabah overseas boy but had to go to Hong Kong for further studies as Sabah was then backward. Hong Kong was not my birthplace but I was familiar with it. Circumstances forced me to go to China when the Pacific War broke out. The Overseas Chinese were well treated and respected in China then, by the Chiang Kai Shek Government.
- Tan:* So, if you would like to assess yourself, what important part has *Force 136*, especially your unit in Baling, contributed to the defeat of the Japanese?
- Tsang:* We did not expect to win the War against the Japanese. The atomic bombing by the American Air Force was unexpected. The British had their base in India, where they tried to fight back and reoccupy Southeast Asia. In case of a landing by sea the Japanese would go to the jungle. It was our job to sandwich them in between. That was our main purpose in operating behind enemy lines ...
- Tan:* One final question, Mr. Tsang, after you had been discharged honourably from *Force 136*, what made you chose Malaya as your home instead, for example, of going back to China.
- Tsang:* I consider myself lucky and fated to be here. During that time, many of my colleagues wanted to go back to China. Chiang Kai Shek had regained all the Chinese territory occupied by Japan. All of us were young and wanted good jobs as we had gone through hardships. But they were in fact disappointed, because there were too many people and few jobs ... My home was broken up in Sabah because of the war. So there was no point in going back to Sabah. My first trip was to go to Hong Kong to meet my wife and first daughter and to bring them to Penang to start my civilian life. I knew some people in Penang both Chinese and British, had the opportunity to start a good life as I was given the timber and lorry permits. Before I conclude, I would like to say that I am very proud to be a Malaysian citizen and to fit [in] with the community. However, I do not have any political ambition.
- Tan:* I hear you are a very successful business man.

Tsang: No, no. I will still work as long as my health permits. I am a typical workaholic.

Tan: Thank you very much, Mr. Tsang.

Tsang: By all means.

END



Epilog

Tsang Jan Nam bekas Leftenan dalam Force 136 telah diberi pemberhentian secara hormat dari perkhidmatan tentera selepas perang. Selepas itu beliau bekerja dengan Syarikat East Asiatic dan kemudiannya menjadi Pengarah Pacific Development Credit Berhad. Kini beliau adalah Pengurus MBF Leasing Sdn. Bhd.