



TAN
CHEE
KHOON

FROM VILLAGE
BOY TO MR.
OPPOSITION



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BOY TO MR.
OPPOSITION**



An Autobiography

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TAN

*This book is gratefully dedicated to my parents,
Tan Chin Ghee (Father) and Tay Kim Siew (Mother)
to whom we, their children,
owe so much for everything
that we have accomplished.*

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CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

MY FATHER Tan Chin Ghee was 19 years old when he left his native land in 1898 with hopes of making a living in Nanyang since life was extremely difficult at home. By the time he passed away at the age of 74, all his children had grown up and had married and he had several grandchildren.

I had been to father's birthplace, Chan Tow in Fukien, China, when I was barely 2 years old, but I have no memory of it. However, in 1973 I went with a Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) delegation to China and on the return journey, I stopped at Shanghai while the rest of the delegation returned home. I only had two weeks to make a trip to Fukien. I had appealed to the Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs and he had approved of my trip to Fukien. It was only when I arrived at Beijing that I could make an application to visit Fukien for which I had to state the main purpose of my visit.

From Shanghai I travelled by train to Foochow, the provincial capital of Fukien, right opposite Taiwan, after which I hired a taxi to Chan Tow and as I moved along the countryside, I could see why three quarters of a century ago, father left Chan Tow for far off Nanyang.

On my right was the rocky mountainous side covered with sparse vegetation. One could not possibly make a living there. On my left, the plain rolled towards the sea but there was not enough land for the teeming millions who crowded in Fukien.

FATHER

He was born in Chan Tow on 16th October, 1879. His father was a tea merchant and was said to be prosperous in the village, but unfortunately, he was illiterate and he had to depend entirely on his workers to read and write for him. In the end, he was cheated of his money; he fell ill and died. He left a widow with three small sons and a daughter. There was also an adopted son. My paternal grandmother was unable to cope with the task of bringing up five young children, under severe conditions of privation. The eldest of them was Tan Chin Ghee, my father, who tried his hand at various odd jobs. Once he became a fisherman. One day while at the seaside he was swept away by a big wave. That was certainly drama on the high seas. His younger brothers began wailing for him while his group of fellow fishermen very quickly thought of a bright plan. They hastened to form a human chain, and when the next big wave hit back they grabbed his pigtail and pulled him ashore! Thank God. Father also used to pick leftovers (after the farmers had harvested their sweet potatoes and groundnuts) to feed the hungry mouths in his family. His mother, like his father, had no education but she did odd jobs by the light of a tiny oil lamp, amidst silent sobs and deep sighs. That helped to earn a little money to feed and clothe the family, very often going hungry to feed the sons first. Towards the end of the last century, missionaries had arrived in Chan Tow. The good news was spread to the villagers. Father and mother heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and became Christians later on.

CHAN TOW, MY FATHER'S BIRTHPLACE.

Father *pajak* (leased) agricultural land from other farmers and had to share the harvest with them. Life was certainly a struggle where there was seldom reward for hard and

honest work; it was hopeless sometimes. He used to work on land where peanuts and sweet potatoes had been planted before. Naturally that yielded poor harvest.

ANCESTRAL WORSHIP

Every year there was ancestral worship at the Tan Ancestral Home which was about 6 miles away from home. A great deal of time and precious money was spent in the preparation of food for the ancestors. Father carried the cooked food balanced on a bamboo pole at each end across his shoulders. Once his foot hit a few stones on the road and he sprawled on the ground. The meat balls and chicken was strewn on the ground and mixed with sand. The ancestors were deprived of their food and father burst out crying. He was still crying when he returned home, shattered, but his mother commiserated him. Father was only 14 years old then and his mother said that since they could not get any help from their ancestors, it was time that they changed their form of worship. The missionaries who were in the village urged his mother to go to church. That was how the impoverished Tan family left their ancestral and idol worship to believe in Jesus Christ. At the tender age of 14, father left his home for Amoy where he was given a caretaker's job in a church, thanks to the missionaries. In Amoy, he widened his circle of friends and from the overseas Chinese who returned from Nanyang, he learned of its Eldorado!

FATHER'S TRAVELS AND WORK

In 1898, at the age of 19 he decided to leave for Nanyang by junk. First he stopped at Singapore where he worked as a rickshaw puller for a short period of time. There, he met his friends from Chan Tow. They exchanged news. Those were unforgettable days with sweet memories to keep, especially when there were no telephone calls or letters then to keep



Tan Chin Ghee



Tay Kim Siew



*The Author and
some of his relatives
in Chan Tow, 1973.*



*Author standing in
front of the house
where his father was
born in Chan Tow,
Fukien.*



Mother and Father.



*The author and his
mother.*

in touch, except for an occasional traveller's tale by the wayside.

Soon father came to Kuala Lumpur where he lived on the outskirts of Ampang. There, he worked at the Hong Fatt Tin Mine where his job was to carry heavy loads of earth which soon became too great for him to bear. Later on, he pushed these excessive loads on a wheelbarrow. Shortly afterwards his back became hunched. This hunch back later became permanent, and for the rest of his life he had a marked kyphosis which must have been a hindrance to him. He was paid about \$3- \$4 a month. He survived on rice with salted coconuts and black beans. An egg eaten on a special occasion was as tasty as a delicious, roasted chicken! During his days in Ampang, as an odd-job labourer, father collected leftovers as swill to feed a few pigs which he sold to the butcher. The money collected was saved for his dear folks, especially his beloved mother in China. He had come to Nanyang for that express purpose though God alone knew the tearful parting. While the others drank, ate and smoked opium, father was extremely frugal and saved up every cent for the future. On Sunday, he put on his Sunday best to attend the Cantonese service which was held at the present Wesley Church K.L. after which he'd eat a simple meal of gruel and vegetables at a stall along Foch Avenue.

About 3 years of continuous hard labour, father had saved up about \$120, mostly in coins. No one knew his hiding place! He made very careful plans to return to China, to his dearest mother; and when he handed that heavy sum of money to her, she was jubilant! There was much rejoicing in the family and general excitement among the neighbours. News spread! Soon his other brother accompanied him to Ampang. His second brother, Chin Huat settled in Batu Road and soon became a gangster. He died soon after. His third brother Chin Kai returned to China to

study medicine in Amoy, but before he could complete the course, the founder of the College died and so his medical studies were terminated. He returned to Chan Tow thereafter and practised as a "sinseh". In about 1908, father shifted to Klang where he took care of an estate belonging to the late Lee Thiap. He must have worked very hard and saved up, for together with two partners, he was able to buy a very small plot of rubber estate.

When father came from China at about the age of 19 in 1898, he had very little schooling, but he could read the Chinese newspapers and he could read and write Romanised Hokkien. He would read avidly the news about the civil war among the warlords in China, and discussed such matters with his boss. He had very little social life and being a hunchback his chances of marriage were poor. However, he continued to work very hard and saved every cent he possibly could.

MARRIAGE

By the time father was about 35 years old, his church friends encouraged him to get married, so he sought the help of a match maker, Mrs Yeo, who was known to both parties.

Mrs Yeo approached Mrs Tay Soon Lee for the hand of her third daughter Miss Tay Kim Siew with the view to marriage with father. With or without intention, Mrs Yeo told Mrs Tay Soon Lee that father was honest, hard working, thrifty and patient. He was a Christian as well as a landowner which was not quite true, for he had only a one third share of a very small piece of land. Anyway, when Mrs Tay told her third daughter about the proposal with the help of father's photograph, mother cried and rejected it.

Mother was born in Kolongsu, in Amoy on 18th February, 1890. She was given away at an early age to the

Tay family who later settled in Kuala Lumpur. She was the third amongst seven girls and six boys in the Tay family who were all adopted. She and two other aunts were the only ones who stayed at home to do all the household chores. All the rest were sent to good schools where they were educated in English. Mother, though not given the opportunity to study in school was determined to make use of every opportunity for learning. She was able to read and write in English from bits and pieces she learnt at home. Her brothers and sisters had become teachers, nurses, government servants, etc. By the time the matchmaker visited, she had already learned to read and write Romanised Hokkien.

Mrs Tay then counselled her daughter. She explained the harsh realities of life and told her that she would be left on the shelf if she missed that proposal. Besides, father was honest, thrifty, hardworking and patient. The matter of father's eligibility and his postcard size photograph rested with the Tay family. However, it was secretly discovered that mother loathed father's moustache and as soon as the matchmaker got wind of it, she scurried to reach father, hot on his trail. That ticklish question was soon rectified with a close shave and so, father married mother who was 11 years his junior, in St. Mary's Church, beside the Gombak River in 1915. Father looked very smart in his outfit and mother a little nervous, wore a pure white gown and veil. She carried a big bouquet of clematis and white honolulu.

God has richly blessed that holy matrimony till death parted them after a span of 39 years of togetherness.

CHERAS

The newly married couple first settled down in the 9th mile, Cheras Road. One night, father got out of bed to investigate an eerie noise. From the marks made by the paws of

the animal, he guessed it was a tiger. It transpired that father went in one direction, while the tiger went in the opposite direction! As time went by, there was a misunderstanding among father and the partners of the small piece of land. That caused him to sell out his share and move to 11th Mile Cheras.

When mother arrived at 11th Mile Cheras on the back-seat of father's bicycle, she found that he had no property there. It was state land, and the talk about his land ownership was only hearsay! That did not deter her from living happily afterwards! She promptly set about putting things right. She and father went to the District Office and then to the Land Office in Kajang. That itself was a courageous move, for in the early part of the century, women remained in the background. Mother was remarkable. She learnt to speak and write some English although she never went to school. She communicated with the officers in the Land Office. *Mirabile Dictu* she was granted four acres of freehold land and father and a few helpers planted it with rubber.

Over the next fifteen years or so mother managed to acquire three other small plots of freehold land. That acquisition of land caused jealousy and resentment amongst the villagers in Cheras for they were squatters living on state land and they did not know how to apply for land. Then in the mid-thirties, father bought a narrow piece of land which gave us access to the branch road which led to the town.

Life in Cheras was not much different from the former place. There was forest to be cleared, the eternal mosquito problem—drains and wells to be dug and endless hard jobs to be done, but father and mother faced their difficulties with patience and fortitude. All their five children were born and bred in Cheras. The first son, James Tan Chee Wan was born in 1917. The second son, David Tan Chee Khoon

on 4th March, 1919, the third, Philip Tan Chee Chuan was born in 1922. Then came two girls, Catherine Tan Saw Ewe in 1924 and Helen Tan Saw Sim in 1927. Thank God, we are all still around, and mobile in 1990.

Mother had a few miscarriages and all her children were either self-delivered or delivered by the village 'midwife' who had long fingernails and no formal training at all. I was delivered by that mid wife. Mother had narrow escapes when haemorrhage set in. Thank God she survived all those frightful ordeals.

I was a sickly child and gave my parents endless problems. In the end, father decided to pack mother together with my brother and me to Chan Tow (China), to show us to his aged mother as well as to put me under the care of his younger brother, Tan Chin Kai.

In Chan Tow, I was still sickly and mother had sleepless nights on account of me. She also had problems adjusting to the climate, especially the severe winter and conditions of privation in Chan Tow, as if she had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. She suffered in silence and after a stay of two very long years, father went back to Chan Tow to fetch us home to Cheras.

Father used to carry sacks and sacks of rice and animal fodder, weighing about 140 katis each sack, for a distance of about 160 yards from the roadside (where the village lorry was parked) to the house where we lived. In addition, Father also carried heavy loads of human and animal manure to spread in the garden. Considering that the ground was often wet due to the rain, that could be dangerous work, especially for a hunch back. He saved every cent he could. Soon Father left for China for the third time and on that trip he was captured by bandits who thought they had made a good catch. The timely arrival of his brother Tan Chin Kai helped to rescue him from that ter-

rifying experience which caused him to flee back to the sanctuary of Cheras.

Looking back over a span of 60 years, I now marvel at how father could have possibly carried such heavy loads.

Father also worked in a 40-acre rubber estate in Sungei Long, about 5 miles away. He usually woke up at about 5.30 a.m. to make preparations, feed the animals and then set off on his old, rickety bicycle by 7.30 a.m. On Saturdays when we did not attend school, we sometimes accompanied father to Sungei Long. We did the lighter jobs. It was indeed a good experience to work together with father and to learn all about the difficulties of his work. He kept long hours working in Sungei Long and returned home at about 4 p.m. daily, and then continued working on his own patch of vegetables, rubber and fruit trees which were grown from seeds, when we were yet small. Father did almost all the heavy, tedious work himself since he could not afford to have an extra hand. 15 hours of hard work was a normal work day for father who had to prepare food for the animals before he retired.

For that job he had to chop potato, tapioca and water hyacinth leaves and banana trunks into slices, deep into the silent night. His bare back was covered with hungry mosquitoes, sucking his blood. We gave him hot drinks in the pig sty where he worked with the help of a small, smoky, oil lamp. By the time it came to the last chop of the banana trunk, he'd breathe a deep sigh, get up slowly from the low stool he had been sitting on for at least 1 1/2 hours, stretch himself and then have a quick wash by the well before he retired to bed and a hard earned rest at 11 p.m. or so, after he had checked through the chores which he and mother had set out to do at the beginning of the day. For at least 25 years, he toiled in that manner without taking into consideration his earlier years of hard labour.

As soon as we were able to help physically we did whatever we could and should.

SUNDAYS

On his way to church, father would visit his boss whom we children called Liam Peh. I always enjoyed such visits which enabled me to have the chance to read the daily newspapers and magazines which we could not afford. Sometimes Liam Peh would ask me about my examination results. Upon hearing the good news, he'd reward me with a few dollars and a good, used bicycle which was gratefully received. Soon after the visit we proceeded to church rolling along on our bicycles.

Father was Hokkien-speaking, but for one reason or another, he took us to the Cantonese service at the Methodist Church after which father would buy provisions: ikan bilis, salted fish, duck eggs, 10 katis of tiny cockles, 5 katis of very small fish and a few more basic necessities. Rain or shine, he'd remember mother's favourite sweet *buah kana*, preserved olives.

With all the items tied securely on our bicycles, we cycled home from Kuala Lumpur reaching Cheras at 6 p.m. or so. It was getting dark and one would have thought that, that was enough for the day, but it was not to be where father and we were concerned.

Father had to prepare the food for the animals for the next day. The big job and other items would take his time right up to 11 p.m. All of us had to attend to the 10 katis of very small cockles and 5 katis of very small fish and prepare the ingredients. Coconut was grated on a special old-fashioned gadget which was time consuming indeed. Mother cooked the curry and all of us sat down to a good dinner.

When I was very small, mother was driven to despair because of me. At the age of three or four, I still could not speak, and mother thought I was dumb! Fortunately, with the passage of time I began to utter intelligible words which made sense – to the delight, joy and relief of my parents. I was, one might say, a late developer.

None of us can ever forget how very hard father and mother slogged each day and night, and we soon learnt at an early age without being told much that we should do likewise if we wanted to make good in life. I for one soon learned the virtues of hard work and self-sacrifice from father and mother. After school, I'd help out with farm work, tilling the land, clearing the weeds with my brothers and do some reading under the shade, in between work in the farm. I'd do my schoolwork by kerosene light, working well past midnight, not trying to ape superman, but time was spent helping my younger brother and sisters, too. We could not afford to turn on the light too brightly because it could consume too much kerosene. Like our parents, we also had to wake up early to cycle to school in Kajang, 5 miles away.

HUMBLE DWELLING IN CHERAS

More than half a century ago, Cheras was a sleepy, insipid hollow. We lived in a small wooden, zinc-roofed house but built on stilts on freehold land. There were two small bedrooms, as well as one room which served as a bedroom and sitting area. There was a verandah where we did our reading and schoolwork. About five steps below there was a small kitchen and downstairs was a little dining area. Next to it was a rather dim storeroom where the bicycles were kept. That was our vital means of transport. In the storeroom was a bunk which served as a bed in an emergency. Thirty yards away stood a roughly constructed

bathroom made of old flimsy planks and a rusty zinc roof. Fortunately there was no strong wind!

A multipurpose well was situated next to the bathroom, and when that vital well dried up during the dry spell, it was every member's headache. We bathed beside a stream of clear waters well hidden from public view, a good distance away. The women folk managed to bathe with the help of sarongs. There was never an absence of mosquitoes and thank God no one had dengue fever those years, although I once suffered from severe attacks of malaria.

The toilet was similar to those of most farms. A big hole was dug in the ground about 50 yards behind the hut for that purpose. For lighting, small kerosene lamps were used.

We were a poor but happy and united family. In our work, there was always team spirit. We didn't have lots of Lat (Asia's top cartoonist) to amuse us, but we brothers and sisters cracked little jokes about life in our kampung over some eccentric characters (and Laurel and Hardy) – the two comedians on celluloid of yesteryears whose antics appeared in the comic magazine, *Film Fun*, of our time.

Most of the families that lived around us were farm squatters. They kept animals and grew a variety of vegetables which were often given to us as a friendly, neighbourly gesture. Father would give them some pomelos, rambutans, jackfruit or sometimes, durians, as a token of appreciation. The fruit trees were grown by father from selected seeds. Although father was sometimes questioned about the wisdom of his working so diligently tending to the various fruit trees (because of his age) he lived long enough to harvest the rich fruits of his hard labour.

Father sold a good portion of the harvest of fruits as well as the garden grown vegetables. In return, he'd buy provisions and other basic necessities for the family. We

had pork once or twice a week and our protein intake consisted mainly of ikan bilis and dried fish. A meal of chicken or fish was a luxury and when rice was scarce, it was substituted with home made tapioca flour mixed with ikan bilis, a little meat and some vegetables made into a gruel. Washing up was done by my sisters. We boys had to keep the hut clean, both inside and outside.

There was a poultry house with an annexe where the latex was mixed and rolled into sheets. That was the rubber tapper's job. We children would help out with the collection of eggs and the chicken dung. Whenever possible mother took care of the feeding of the chickens and ducks. She'd feed them with crushed garlic when they were listless and that would often bring them to life again. Mother was regarded by some of the villagers as a *sinseh* ("doctor").

For cuts, she had a standard treatment, Tincture Iodine and for fever, she had a few ready cures which ranged from Quinine, Aspro or Aspirin.

There was once a young mother who ran to our hut with her infant daughter held tightly in her arms. The young mother was begging for help while her little child was crying with a bleeding wound. Mother called for her cream cracker tin which served as a first aid box. My sister assisted mother who calmly removed the bits of broken glass and cleansed the wound with some carbolic lotion. She applied some medicine over the wound and bandaged it neatly. Mother changed the dressing after a few days and thank God that wound which had caused her anxiety began to heal, much to the joy of that young mother and everyone concerned. It certainly inspired me later on in my studies at medical school.

Father and mother kept their marriage vows to the letter. Although their marriage was an arranged one, they

grew to love each other not only for their own sakes, but also for the sake of their children whom they loved. With the passing of the years, mother became weaker. The years had taken their toll. Father used to cycle to Ulu Langat Road to fetch the Chinese *sinseh* ("doctor"), Oo Peh, to treat mother's illness. She had a few kinds of headache. He was a compassionate, old man who always undercharged us and he would treat us free, sometimes. Years later when I became a doctor, I recalled Oo Peh, the *sinseh* with very fond memories and I could also treat some of my very poor patients free.

When we grew older and were able to look after ourselves, mother visited her mother in Kuala Lumpur whenever necessary. It was a joyous time for her. She whistled merrily as she made preparations for the bus or hired car journey, eleven miles away from home. My sister got ready her sarong and kebaya (clothes). She also plucked a rose to decorate mother's hair *sangul* (hair made into a bun). Next, she took out mother's *keronsang* (a set of decorative pins) to fasten the front of the kebaya together. She held a small mirror for mother to see whether her hair-piece was in place. All that seems to be tedious now but that early training from mother had helped my sister to be a dutiful daughter-in-law and a good wife in her adult life. When the farm products for my maternal grandparents were properly tied on father's bicycle, both my parents walked to the town together with my sisters. Father stood by mother until either the bus or hired car arrived, after which he'd carry all the things for mother. Then he'd come home to us, and so mother left for Kuala Lumpur with the scent of the rose in her hair. She stayed there with my sisters for just a few days, and then returned home, refreshed, and with news to widen our horizon.

The bright stars or fireflies were a sheer delight at night, and a full moon over Cheras was heavenly lit. One can't help humming the tune "Terang Bulan" or "Moonlight and Shadows" by the gorgeous Sarong Queen, Dorothy Lamour. It was such a joy to welcome the beautiful, bright moon in Cheras because of the complete darkness during all the other nights in the thick rubber estate and farm.

We had our light moments too. During the heavy rainy days when father couldn't work in the farm he'd tie a snake skin over an empty round tin and sing along while he made some music with it. Sometimes he'd tell us stories of bygone days or give us warning about so and so who had eloped. At other times he and mother sang hymns of praise and we'd join in.

I do not remember having open quarrels amongst the siblings, as far as brothers and sisters were concerned. We seldom fought. Mother often warned us to hold our tongues! The cheeky ones would stop giggling or put an end to further nonsense, knowing very well that mother had father's moral support. Besides, those who were involved would receive their fair share of the rotan or have chillies rubbed on their lips.

There were times when mother shed tears quietly. I suppose she compared her lot with the ease and comfort her brothers and sisters were enjoying then. Soon she began to pity herself, but father being eleven years her senior, who was truly older and wiser helped to cushion the blows. When I graduated, she was in her sixties. I tried to provide her with the comforts of life which she richly deserved. My siblings also rallied around my parents.

Life in Cheras was marred by two crisis. In the early thirties, the rubber estate which father was in charge caught fire during a dry spell. A cigarette butt thrown by a careless smoker might have caused the catastrophe which

originated from father's boss's estate and father was blamed for it! There was gloom over the household and everyone was utterly shattered especially my parents who were in great despair but they quickly committed the whole matter to God for his mercies. The other owners came to a compromise and I believe father's boss settled the claims. Thank God.

Another crisis concerned our own estate. One day, mother's elder brother turned up at Cheras to everybody's astonishment! No relative had bothered to visit us, the impoverished ones. It turned out that mother's brother was in deep financial difficulty and had wanted to borrow our rubber estate title deeds to mortgage them. Father objected to it, but mother wanted to help her brother. Finally we lent him the title deeds of the land. Time passed, and one day, the mortgagee turned up at Cheras and told father he would have to auction our land if father did not redeem the mortgage. The notice was nailed to a rubber tree! The properties would be auctioned off! That was certainly a great shock to father and to mother in particular. She never dreamt that her 'soft spoken' brother would ever want to cheat her so very outrageously! It was soon proved that her brother had no intention whatsoever to repay her at all, not even a fraction of what he had borrowed! That was the first time I saw my parents quarrel and it seemed a helpless case, but father was undaunted. He took great pains to trace the mortgagee who meant to avoid hearing his sob stories, but father spoke up with conviction. He explained everything and for the first time, father broke down so pitifully! The mortgagee finally gave his word to waive the interest accumulated during the years. He was merciful and we were thankful for it. He consented to accept father's payment in small sums. My parents in particular, slogged for years to settle the sum of money which mother's elder brother had

cheated us of. This is one of the ways the so-called well-off cheat the weak and poor.

Father worked all his life and I had not heard of him taking a long holiday. He had no illness that I knew of until early in January 1950. That Sunday evening, as he was alighting the bus at Cheras, he fell on the road, the victim of a stroke. I was just then about to graduate, and I was shocked. From what I knew, father did not have high blood pressure or diabetes. As soon as I graduated, I nursed him at home for about five years with the help of mother and my wife. After the first year, he had a fall in the bathroom and fractured his left hip. He could not walk thereafter. Being a hunchback and bedridden, it was a matter of time that he developed bed sores. He was a model patient who demanded nothing. He was always cheerful, with a smile on his face, especially after a warm bath.

In the beginning, he read the Chinese newspapers which I had ordered for him. Later on, he began to enjoy some of the good things in life. My brother or I would take him for evening drives. He was contented in adversity. My sisters also helped in whatever ways they could. The grandchildren talked to him and touched his hand, while those who were babies then, were held by him for a few minutes, just to let him be either photographed with them or let him have the happiness of holding the little chubby bundles of joy.

As time passed, father's health deteriorated. On the early morning of 8th December, 1954, he went home to the Lord at the age of 75, and so a blameless and good man passed away. He was a beloved father who had given large pieces of himself equally, to his sons and daughters who will always cherish his self-sacrifice for them.

God had finally released father of all his earthly pains and given him eternal peace and rest. Praise be to God.

I have named a scholarship in memory of him in my old school, the Kajang High School, and I shall continue to honour his name till my dying day.

By the time father passed away in 1954, our family had owned 16 acres of land which mother had wanted to sell. I thought of buying all the land from mother but I was afraid of unforeseen ill feelings among my brothers and sisters so I sold the whole lot to Mr Yap Khay Cheong for \$16,000 which was a large sum of money more than three decades ago. What I should have done was to have got the land valued and bought it from mother. But if it had done so, the land would still remain in the family and we can develop it for the family as an ancestral home. Anyway, what was to be, had been. Farewell Cheras!

After father's death, mother continued to live with me and my family. As I progressed in life, she was humbly and silently proud of her offspring. She was particularly fond of me and used to take special care of father and me. She boiled special herbs and cooked nutritious dishes for us, to my embarrassment, sometimes. She also loved her other sons and daughters. She adopted a girl named Grace who is still around and there was also an adopted son named Joseph Tan Chee Yong who became a doctor but he has passed away.

From time to time especially after father's death, I had encouraged mother who was in her sixties then, to visit the West and China in the company of friends and relatives, but she just refused to do so. Very often she required time to adjust herself. I urged her to move around with her other sons and daughters but she was reluctant to do so. She was contented and happy to do as she wished. As time went on, she went to Singapore to stay with her two daughters for as long as two years at a stretch sometimes. One seven year old grandchild was overheard whispering to the helper,

"Please don't tell Grandma of my badness!" Goodness or badness, Grandma loved her grandchildren. She'd help in whatever way she could or whenever she was asked to stand by. The beautiful part of it all was, she had a free hand in disciplining the grandchildren and those who had accepted her teachings in good faith, remember her with affection and love.

With the advancing years mother's health was indifferent and poor. She had diabetes for about twenty years. Her memory had failed her and she was bed ridden for a few months. She was a good patient. Everything possible was done to make her feel comfortable. She was very well cared for. My wife, my brothers and sisters were with her. The grandchildren helped to administer to her needs, too. There was a helper just to look after her. In her last few days, she was in a coma. On the morning of 7th February, 1973 when I went into her room to see her, she had gone home to the Lord at the age of 85. She had fought the fight with all her might, kept her faith, and gone to heavenly peace and rest. Praise be to God.

As I look back over the yesteryears, I feel sorry I did not spend enough time to talk to mother of her early days in Amoy, her birthplace, and of Chan Tow, father's birthplace. The transition of life experienced in the urban area where full amenities were enjoyed before marriage, to a sparse dwelling in Cheras with no electricity and water which has to be drawn from the well, would have defeated many a brave soul. But she was determined to face such unspeakable hardship with courage. She must have endured much, especially as a newly wed in the beginning, and the long years that followed. There were only a few people to talk to, let alone confide in, but she wasted no time. She got time to the serious, harsh, cold facts of Cheras living and was a true help mate to father. She sewed for us, too, but it turned out

to be a disaster sometimes. My sisters pouted when they wore the broad, baggy, new clothes which mother had sewn for them. We sulked sometimes, because our heads were thoroughly clean-shaven by mother who made no bones about her Yul Brynner style. Whether we liked it or not, we learnt to accept our parents as hard taskmasters who did not even spare themselves.

In my sober moments, I regret I could not do enough to lighten my parent's burdens. Father was quite well until the final year of my medical studies. Then he was down with a stroke which actually stunned me. Mother had always preferred to stay at home and she was contented to do as she wished. However there is a very comforting thought which sometimes soothes the inward pain. When my sister repeatedly asked father towards his last few months if he had any special message to convey to us, he finally shook his head gently, waved his feeble hand slowly, and said in Hokkien, "No, I have nothing special to impart. You have all grown up and all know what to do". Praise God.

There was an occasion when mother sighed and asked him, "You have me to help to nurse you now, but who is going to look after me if I should be in your condition?" He replied without hesitation, "You have no fear. The children will look after you." Such was his simple faith and trust in God and man.

CHAPTER 2

LIFE AT CHERAS

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, I have already written about Cheras from my parents' point of view. My parents had six children the eldest of whom was James Tan Chee Wan. He was easy going and for a short while he cycled from Kuala Lumpur to Kajang, a distance of about 15 miles. It was obvious he could not carry on for long and midway through about 1935 he left school and joined the Government Trade School in Kuala Lumpur. After passing out from that school he joined the Survey Department in Kuala Lumpur but developed a gastric ulcer in 1951 and was boarded out. He joined me when I opened the dispensary in 1952 in Batu Road. He worked there till 1984 when he retired from Sentosa Medical Centre. He married at an early age and has six boys and two girls. Two of his boys are planters, one is a clerk, another joined the army, qualified as a lawyer and is now in private practice. One is an accountant and the last one is in business in Australia. The girl is a clerk in a private firm. The life of my elder brother showed the importance of hard work and a good education to succeed in life. My younger brother Philip Tan Chee Chuan went to school in Kajang High School. He was a few classes behind me and passed the Senior Cambridge just before World War II broke out. He joined Philips Co. Ltd. X-Ray Department and soon became the head of that department. He has a daughter, an economics graduate who works in a local bank. His second child is a boy, Patrick who attended the Methodist Boys' School after which he went to Canada for higher studies. However, he did not complete his course and today he breeds dogs at home. Philip, in his retirement

is a gentlemen at leisure. He goes abroad on holidays whenever he feels like it. My two sisters are both younger than I am and both were teachers in Singapore. The elder of the two is Catherine Tan Saw Ewe and both of them went to the Kajang Convent. She passed the Senior Cambridge just before World War II broke out. During the Japanese War she worked in a Japanese firm and she married Hu Yung Chong. They have three children. The eldest is Danny Hu, a doctor in private practice in Singapore. Next is Caroline Hu, an arts graduate from the University of Singapore and is working as an administrator in the Singapore Polytechnic. The third son is David Hu Tching Ming, an architecture graduate of the University of Singapore who is in private practice in Singapore. Catherine returned to Shanghai together with her husband who is a Shanghainese. When Shanghai fell to the Reds, husband and wife escaped to Singapore and later they settled in Singapore where my sister became a teacher for nearly thirty years. My youngest sister is Helen Tan Saw Sim, who also attended the Kajang Convent. All the six of us would cycle to school and it was tough going especially for the girls. This was because the girls were often disturbed by the boys on the way to school. They were teased by the boys who would also pull my sisters pigtails. If it rained, cycling to school was most trying and difficult especially for the girls. We were too poor to travel by bus or by taxi in the beginning. Very few children of my generation travelled by bus or taxi. Furthermore very few children were able to go to school. There was a small Chinese Primary School but not many boys attended that school. There was a Malay School in Cheras and as education was free for the Malay children, attendance was much better.

Helen Tan Saw Sim did not complete her education when World War II broke out and when the war ended she

refused to go back to school. At that time I was preparing to go back to the College of Medicine in Singapore and I spent days trying to persuade her to go back to school. She had a taste of work during the Japanese war having worked in a Japanese firm. I warned her that unless she had an education she would not be able to get work. Finally she went back to school and passed her Senior Cambridge. She was trained at the Teachers' Training College in Singapore. After College she stayed on to teach in Singapore. She married a teacher and they have two children, a girl and a boy. The girl is a graduate in Linguistics. The boy passed as a lawyer from the National University of Singapore and is in private practice.

Mother did not go to school as I have said before but she insisted that all her children should go to school. It was a great sacrifice for her, to send her girls to school which would mean less hands at home for the household chores. But she willingly made the sacrifice so that her children could get the education that had been denied her. If I am not mistaken father did not encourage the girls going to school as that was only natural in our little village of Cheras where most girls did not go to school. They stayed at home to help in the household chores. Mother adopted a girl, Grace Tan, who although she was adopted, was sent to school. But she stopped at about standard five of her own volition. She married but her marriage was not successful and today she is living in Seremban. In 1932 mother adopted a boy, the son of one of her younger sisters. He proved to be a clever boy and entered Kajang High School in 1937, the year I left the school to join Victoria Institution to study Latin and prepare for the Queen's Scholarship class of 1938. The young lad who was named Joseph Tan Chee Yong proved to be a brainy boy. He had a double promotion and he studied Chinese in the afternoon. At the end of his primary

education he was almost at the top of the class. After the war he went to Victoria Institution where he did well and was also near the top of the class. His admission to King Edward VII College of Medicine posed a problem to mother and to me too. He was admitted to the College just at the time when I was preparing for my final examination. In Kuala Lumpur mother tried unsuccessfully to get a guarantor for the boy. She approached a banker friend of her family but was turned down; presumably because we were too poor and was looked down by her family friend! The young man arrived in Singapore without the guarantor's letter and posed a problem to me. I did not know any rich man to be a guarantor and I took my problem to the Principal of the College, Dr G.V. Allen. He laughed at me and asked me if I did not know any of the young graduates of the College. I was surprised at the suggestion and hastened to approach Dr K.S. Ratman, later the Professor of Pathology. I had learnt my first lesson even before I graduated. Thereafter whenever I was approached as a guarantor I usually obliged.

The poor very often did not know the rich and the famous, so very often they have this problem when they are about to enter a university in this country and they often need a kind soul to act as guarantor.

I supported Joseph throughout his undergraduate career and he sailed through the course with ease. He got into trouble with the Special Branch when he was arrested for being associated with the ABL, Anti-British League. He had been to a Chinese school in Kajang and must have been imbibed some left wing ideas in his school days in Kajang. Later he went to the United Kingdom and qualified as an Orthopaedic Surgeon. When he visited me after his post graduate studies in England, he turned down my invitation to join me. He set up practice as a private Orthopaedic



The Tan Family in the '70s.

*Tan Family –
Mother, with
brothers and sisters,
nephews and nieces,
1951, at
Government
quarters in Circular
Road (Jalan Tun
Razak), Kuala
Lumpur.*



Surgeon in Singapore. He married a doctor and they have two children, a boy and a girl. Both of them are doctors now. Joseph passed away of cancer of the liver. Looking back I am glad that Joseph Tan did not join me for he and I have a different outlook on life. I have often identified myself with the common and deprived people but he had different plans. Such a pity.

On looking back to the early fifties both mother and father must have been happy that their hard work and sacrifice had paid off. One son had graduated as a doctor, an adopted son was about to graduate as a doctor in Singapore, two daughters were teachers in Singapore and two sons had been working in Kuala Lumpur. Later on when mother survived father and lived with me, I made sure that she got everything that she needed in life. When I made good in life, she too must have looked on her children and thanked God for the bountiful gifts that He had showered on us. And when our hair turned grey with age we often got together to thank the Lord for the bountiful blessings that He too had showered on us, the children of Tan Chin Ghee and Tay Kim Siew. The country yokels from Cheras have come a long way since those far off days and have planted their roots in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. Now the old couple is buried, side by side in Cheras Cemetery, slightly below the monument for Sir Henry Gurney. Often I visit their graves and pray and thank them in the quiet serenity that prevails in the place where they have finally rested. May they rest in peace.

It is now 35 years since father passed away and on the 4th March 1989, the day I reached three score and ten, their children and grandchildren paid a visit to their graves at the Cheras Cemetery. The tombstones had been cleaned and the letters on them had been repainted. James and Helen were not present as they were ill at that time. Quite a

number of their grandchildren were present. I thank God for father and mother and as I looked back on the days I spent in Cheras, I could not control my tears as I recalled the sacrifices that father and mother made for us. Catherine Tan Saw Ewe said a special prayer and most of their grandchildren also thanked God for giving us such wonderful parents.

CHAPTER 3

SCHOOL

MY MOTHER CAME from the Tay Family who in the early part of this century lived in Pudu Road. They owned two houses which were used as a Primary School. The Pudu English Girls' School was started by Miss Cage Brown. My maternal grandfather was Tay Soon Lee who worked as a government servant in the Chinese Protectorate which was also known as the "Poh Leong Keok". It was natural that I should attend that school in the pre-school classes. I was there until I reached Standard I when I went over to Victoria Institution in Jalan Bandar. My contemporaries in Pudu English Girls' School were Tun Ong Yoke Lin, the late Frederick Arulandom and Toh Boon Huah, etc. I was in the old VI for about two years where I lived in Java Street now renamed Jalan Tun Perak. When Victoria Institution was shifted to the present site in Jalan Hang Tuah, it was turned into a purely secondary school. The primary section shifted to Batu Road known as Batu Road Boys' School. Another government primary boys' school was started at Pasar Road known as Pasar Road Boys' School. These two schools were feeder schools for Victoria Institution. My mother transferred me to Kajang High School which was nearer home in Cheras. The school had been opened in 1930 by the Sultan of Selangor. The school which was situated near the Police Station was shifted to a new imposing building with a large playing field just outside the town. I was admitted into Standard III and stayed on till 1937, after I had passed the Senior Cambridge. The teacher for Standard III at that time was Mr B.R. Sundram and later, when I was in the College of Medicine in Singapore, I found out he

was the younger brother of Dr B.R. Sreenivasan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya. I was happy in the new school and made many friends. One Sunday when I was in Pudu, I came across a thick book of about three-and-a-half inches thick. It was a History of England which belonged to one of my uncles who had no further use for it. I promptly "borrowed" it and took it to Cheras where in the next few weeks I read it from cover to cover. The reader must remember it was 1930 and in Cheras we had no reading material whatsoever to speak of. We had no money to buy newspapers, books, magazines, etc. There was no radio or TV about fifty years ago in Cheras. Imagine the joy I had when I devoured the book from page to page till I completed reading it from cover to cover. From that time my interest in History was aroused. Later on, when we studied "History of the British Empire" I took an immediate interest in it. From that time onwards I had an abiding interest in history and I always came out top in history in school. After I left school and College, I took an interest in military history and history of the Middle East and of the Arab-Israeli Conflict. After becoming a doctor I could afford to buy books on World War I and II and started to read such books. That was how I collected these books and today I have a collection of more than 5,000 volumes stocked in my library.

Coming back to my school days as soon as I reached Standard IV I was allowed to use the school library. I seized the opportunity and used it especially during the interval. I borrowed three, four or even five books at a time and finished reading all of them within a week. My favourite authors then were G.A. Henty and Robert Scott who wrote historical novels. I used to read them but alas they have now vanished from the bookshelves of our libraries as British History is taboo today to the present generation.

What a pity as we do not have equivalent books on Malaysian History to replace them today.

Throughout the seven years that I spent in Kajang High School, my main competitor was Kong Siew Hock, the son of a businessman. Kong Siew Hock had a very neat clear handwriting. Despite a deformity in the left arm he played a good game of badminton. Later on both father and son went to Kuantan and started another bus company. Later on, Kong Siew Hock joined the MCA in Pahang but he did not go far in politics because I think he was not shrewd enough. I am very happy that at my 70th Birthday Dinner Kong Siew Hock was able to be present.

Another school mate who, I remember to this day is Datuk Tajuddin b. Ahmad. He excelled in all sports, namely football, cricket, hockey, badminton, athletics and was the Victor Ludorum, i.e. champion athlete for about two years. He represented the school in all the games that I listed. While in school he represented the Federated Malay States in hockey then the highest honour in sport that one could hope to achieve. After he left school he joined the Police Force which surprised me for Tajuddin was a very playful person. He joined as an ordinary *mata mata* and he rose to become the Chief Police Officer of Kelantan. Looking back I now see that the late Tun Razak trusted him to keep PAS (an Islamic Political Party) in check. He has long since retired, and is now living in Petaling Jaya.

Another schoolmate I remember was Lee Moke Sang. He lived in Serdang and he travelled by train from Serdang to Kajang. He was in the class above me in school. I remember him as a rather gregarious student often involved in fights. After he left school, he joined the government service which was not an easy thing to do in the mid-thirties. He became involved in trade unions and became a leader in the trade union movement. After independence, he joined

the Labour Party of Malaya. It was Lee Moke Sang who persuaded me to join the Labour Party. I believe it was he too who got me involved for the staff side of the negotiations between the Government and the unions. I rather enjoyed that experience. In the first arbitration case I was asked by the Junior Staff Association of the Malayan Railway to be one of their team in their arbitration against the government. Before the case was due to be heard, I was invited by the union officials who briefed me on the merits of their case. When the case came up for arbitration, I was well prepared to argue the case of the junior officers of the Malayan Railways. It was fortunate for the railwaymen that the Chairman of the arbitration was Yong Pung How who had been in Victoria Institution when I was there in 1937.

On the official side were the senior officials of the Federal Establishment Office. I remember one officer was J.M. Gullick who later became head of the Federal Establishment Office. The official side was led by the senior Establishment Officer, Mr Gracie. Mr J.M. Gullick had a sharp mind and knew his case inside out. When the case opened before Yong Pung How they were surprised by the probing question which I asked. To cut a long story short, the Staff Side won their case and they were happy. As a result the official side found me a thorn on their side. They also found out about my being briefed by the Staff Side. They must have applied pressure on the Staff Side to stop briefing me, but by then, I had less time for such work as I had become a Member of Parliament and could not spare the time to help the Staff Side. More than three decades later when I was writing this chapter I checked up my facts with Lee Moke Sang and he remembered the case very well. He was the secretary of the Staff Side. He came to know the Tunku when he was the Chief Minister. Later, when the Tunku be-

came the Prime Minister, Lee Moke Sang was made an Executive Officer and was sent to London to be in charge of the students' unit there. Lee Moke Sang was an honest civil servant who did not take advantage of his friendship with the Tunku to make money.

Two of my seniors in school were Dr Low Nan Wan and Heng Cheng Swee. The former was the second son of Towkay Low Ti Kok, a landed proprietor in Kajang. He sat for the Queen's Scholarship Examination but failed to win it. He then went on to the United Kingdom where he qualified as a doctor. Later he practised in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong. Heng Cheng Swee also tried for the Queen's Scholarship Examination but he too failed to get it. He entered the Government Service and rose up to be a fairly high officer in the Labour Department. Subsequently he qualified as a lawyer in London. On his return, he joined the private sector and then emigrated to Australia where he passed away.

One class below me in school were the indomitable trio who made good in life later. One was the late K. Paramalingam who became a court interpreter after leaving school. He was prominent in the Kajang High School Old Boys' Association. He won a scholarship and qualified as a lawyer in London and on his return he was made the Public Trustee. While he was in his forties, he became a diabetic and passed away.

TAN SRI KADIR B. SHAMSUDDIN

He came to Kajang High School via the Special Malay Class and was always at the top or near the top of his class. After he left school, he gained admission to Raffles College on a scholarship and was awarded a wartime diploma in arts after the war. He won further scholarships and qualified in law from Bristol University. After that he did further post-graduate courses before he returned to Malaya to serve his

country. He became a favourite of the politicians and his rise in the civil service was rapid. He ended as Ketua Setiausaha Negara (KSN) and on the death of Tun Aziz b. Majid, he became the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Kajang High School. At the time of the Reid Commission he was one of the three UMNO members who represented UMNO in their negotiations with MCA and MIC.

The other two were Encik Ismail Ali and Khir Johari. That showed the high esteem UMNO had for Kadir Shamuddin. After he retired from government service he became chairman of Petronas but alas he passed away soon after. I succeeded him as a Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Kajang High School.

LOH YIT LOCK

The last of the trio was Loh Yit Lock whom I remember as an artist. After he left school he did not rush into the government service but he tried to find a niche in the private sector. Today he is still in business, running, I believe, a factory.

There were two other outstanding school mates of mine in Kajang High School namely Tan Sri Shariff b. Samad and Datuk Maarof b. Sheikh Ahmad. These were two bright boys in the school and Tan Sri Shariff ended as Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Datuk Maarof also became a Permanent Secretary. The most successful of the old boys was the late Tun Abdul Aziz b. Majid. He had left Kajang High School before I joined in 1930. He was the State Secretary of Selangor and ended as Ketua Setiausaha Negara. When he retired from the civil service he was made Governor of Malacca. He was the first President of the Kajang High School OBA and we worked very hard for our old school. I succeeded him as President of Kajang High School OBA and those were halcyon days when the Kajang High School OBA was very active.

The most significant event happened to me when I was in Senior Cambridge. The previous year I had come out top of the Junior Cambridge Examination which rather surprised my headmaster, the late Mr C.E. Gates. In 1936 he set an essay for us in the class and asked us what we proposed to do after the year was over. I boldly wrote that I intended to try for the Queen's Scholarship which was then the top scholarship in Malaya. In Kajang High School only two students had ever sat for it, namely the late Dr Low Nam Wan and the late Heng Cheng Swee, a lawyer. I suppose Mr C.E. Gates was surprised by my boyish ambition and he called me to his office. He quizzed me about my ambition and I told him that after the Senior Cambridge Examination, I would try for the Queen's Scholarship Examination. I wanted to be a doctor. I suppose I must have convinced him then, for he offered to teach me Latin. To take the Queen's Scholarship examination, the candidate had to study an ancient language, usually Latin or a modern language usually Chinese or Malay. I was the only one in school studying Latin and that too under the Headmaster himself. Towards the end of 1936 when I was preparing for the Senior Cambridge Examination, I remembered that Lai Peng Seong of Serdang asked me to help him in his preparation as well. As a result, he stayed with me in Cheras for about three months. I had to spend a fair bit of my time to help him. The outcome was, when the results of the Senior Cambridge Examination were announced the following year, I did not do as well as I had hoped. Lai Peng Seong of course passed and that was important. At the end of the year when Mr C.E. Gates went to England on leave, I would study by myself, do the exercises and send them to him by post. That was the only way I could learn Latin with the help of Mr Gates. To this day, more than half a century later, I am still grateful to C.E.

Gates for giving me that break in life. I continued with studying Latin when I went to Victoria Institution and in the examination in 1937 I came out top in Latin for that class!

In 1938 I sat for the Queen's Scholarship Examination but was unsuccessful. The winner that year was the late Dr Yap Pow Meng who studied Medicine in Cambridge. Later, he qualified in Pyschiatry and was appointed to the Chair of Psychiatry in Hong Kong University. Although I did not get the Queen's Scholarship, I was awarded a Scholarship to the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore.

On looking back at our school days, my brothers and sisters and I must be thankful to the Lord that our parents sent us to school. They could easily have kept us at home to help in the unending household work – the back breaking chores at the farm. They could have insisted that we become rubber tappers to augment their income. I think it was the influence of mother who insisted that we should be sent to school, especially the girls. Her brothers and sisters all had been to school but she was the only one (out of two) left at home to do the chores. She often said she was "blind" for she could not read or write in the true sense of the word. She must have resented that injustice deeply. Later when the time came for her children to go to school, she made great sacrifices to get them educated. She used to prepare *nasi bungkus* for us to take to school instead of money for we did not have any. Another reason for our being sent to school was her faith in God. As Christians, mother taught us to pray at night and when we were young she taught us Bible stories. Of course in Cheras we did not have tuition of any. There were no such teachers around and in any case we could not afford any tuition. As I grew older, I helped my younger brothers and sisters, but on the whole, they studied on their own. Compare this situation and condition

with the need for private tuition that is the prevailing practice today.

CHAPTER 4

TRAGEDY

LATER IN THE YEAR 1932 there occurred a tragedy in my life and I am revealing it for the first time. One evening the three Tan brothers were playing with a rubber tapping knife. Those who are familiar with a tapping knife know that it has a very sharp cutting edge. I was holding the knife and trying to carve my name David on a rubber tree. I was trying to cut the straight limb of the alphabet D. I must have exerted too much force over the letter and the next I knew was that I had pushed the knife into my left eye. The next day I cycled to school and the school clerk, Mr J.S. Thambirajah sent me to the District Hospital. The resident doctor was Dr J.S. Seevaratnam who sent me to Tanglin Hospital. There I was seen by Dr C.V.J. Umeaux who referred me to see Dr Visvalingam, an Ophthalmologist. I was treated by him for about three months and when I did not improve I was sent down to Singapore to see Dr Tan Soo Hock, an Ophthalmologist. Off and on for more than a year under his care he told me that the injury in the left eye might give cross infection to the right eye. Then my parents decided that it was better to have the left eye eviscerated for soon after the injury I had lost my vision in the left eye. Thereupon I had the left eye eviscerated and a prosthesis inserted. Before the accident I do not remember having to wear glasses but after the operation I had to wear glasses. In my family both my brothers and my two sisters did not wear spectacles till they were much older. Looking back on that fatal evening I could have punctured the cornea as well as the lens in the anterior chamber. Could my eye have been saved? More than half a century after the event with

today's technology, I think it could have been saved. The wound could have been stitched and the lens replaced. But in those far off days I do not think the eye could have been saved at all. Dr S.H. Tan, however, told me that if I had seen him soon after the accident he might have saved my eye. Nearly a decade later after I had been admitted to the College of Medicine, my application was rejected because of my handicap. It was a shock to me. All at once the world around me crumbled. I was shocked by this news. I told Mr C.E. Gates that I had discussed this matter with Dr S.H. Tan, the Eye Surgeon who had treated me and he had assured me that I would be able to get through the medical course. Thereupon Gates rang up Dr G.V. Allen and asked for a reconsideration of my application. Gates told Allen that Dr S.H. Tan had said that my accident would not be a hindrance to my completion of the medical course. Later on, Dr S.H. Tan told me that when Allen rang him up, he assured Allen that I would be able to complete the medical course. I was then given permission to be admitted to the King Edward VII College of Medicine and I am happy that I made it. Thank God. Subsequently another student also by the surname of Tan with a similar handicap was also admitted and I believe that he too got through his medical studies.

The only difficulty I had was with Bacteriology. I had some difficulty with identifying the bacteria under the microscope.

After I qualified as a doctor in 1949, the loss of an eye has not been a handicap. I am an avid reader especially of military history and of military intelligence and this sometimes tire my good eye. I admire the late General Moshe Dayan who was shot in the right eye and has throughout his adult years worn an eye patch. His left eye must have

been good for I have not seen him wear spectacles. He might have won contact lens though.

I hope the story of my accident will warn all parents not to allow their children to play with pointed instruments. Literally there is no point crying over spilt milk. Prevention is always better than cure.

CHAPTER 5

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

FROM MY YOUNGER days I was fascinated by the little "doctoring" that mother did for the villagers around us. Then later when I was taken to Oo Peh, the sinseh at the 9th mile, I was deeply impressed by his humanity to the poor and the deprived. When I met with the accident I had to see one doctor after another. I was impressed by the need to work hard at my studies so that I might become a doctor. In order to achieve that, I decided I would try for the Queen's Scholarship. When Mr C.E. Gates gave me the opportunity to write on what I intended to do after I left school, I poured my heart into that essay and as fate would have it, it touched the heartstrings of C.E. Gates although I was not one of his favourites. I did not play games but my essay which revealed the innermost thoughts of my heart to become a doctor must have struck a responding note in his heart. I have already written of how I passed Latin, had an attempt in the Queen's Scholarship and then arrived at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore. In addition to a scholarship from the College of Medicine I was awarded a Victoria Scholarship by the Victoria Institution. It was worth \$25 a month so that altogether I received a total of \$75 a month which was just enough to pay for my expenses in the College of Medicine. I received very little money from home. Years later I donated \$20,000 to the Victoria Scholarship Fund out of gratitude for what I had received from that fund.

I believe that it was early in July 1939 that I took the night train to Singapore. Little did I know that in that same train there were a number of medical students, both seniors

and freshies. Soon after we left Gemas there was a train crash and the train driver, one Mr Frederick died on the spot. It so happened that a younger brother, Harry Frederick, a medical student, was in the same train. The next day when we were lined up for inspection by the seniors, I stood beside Harry Frederick. We were asked to face a wall and had our trousers rolled up to the knees and we had to go on talking. Harry was from St. John's Institution and after we had finished the housemanship, he joined the Health Department of the Kuala Lumpur Municipality. Later he left the Municipality and went into private practice where he found successive locum jobs. At that time ragging was in vogue and I can say that for my batch of students all of us enjoyed it. It was great fun for us freshies mainly, to get to know the seniors. Many of us made friends with the seniors and that friendship has lasted to this day. At that time ragging was conducted mainly in the quadrangle of the FMS Hostel. Those of us who came from the Federation lived in the FMS Hostel. The girls lived in Holne Chase in Grange Road. One of the exercises that the freshies had to carry out was an Air Raid. This consisted of the male freshies stripping naked and trying to creep in the drain of the quadrangle. We had to remain in the drain at the pleasure of the seniors. Now looking back at these photographs taken at College, over a space of nearly fifty years, a smile comes to my face even at the age of three score and ten. I soon got to recall many in my batch. They included Lim Khoon Huat, later Municipal Health Doctor in Penang and Dr Lim Boon Par, General Practitioner of Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Dr Keshmahinder Singh, an Ophthalmologist in private practice, Datuk Dr Abdul Wahab Ariff, Deputy Director-General and later Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in UKM, etc.

The practice of ragging was carried on for many years and when I was president of the MCU, Medical College Union, I was called up by the Principal, Dr G.V. Allen and was told that he would allow ragging to go on, but that I would be responsible for any mishap that occurred. This placed a great responsibility on me and I did not sleep well for the whole month when ragging took place. At one stage of the ragging, one of the freshies reported some palpitation from a congenital heart and I quickly sent him to rest. I was much relieved that the ragging was over!! Half a century later I am still in favour of ragging only if it is strictly supervised by the seniors and the extremism on the part of the seniors should be stopped. Recently we have seen how ragging has caused the death of a student in Cheras Technical School. I do not recall such tragedies occurring in the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore.

INTER-COLLEGE GAMES

There were inter-college games between the Medical College Union and the Raffles College Union. During my time our rivals at Bukit Timah generally had the upper hand. But in athletics for the Kay Muat Cup we won after a hard fight. We went around the graduate doctors and dental surgeons in town to collect money for the great celebration which was held at the end of the games. The Kay Muat Cup was a big cup about two feet diameter and 1 foot deep and we filled it with whisky, brandy, champagne, etc. and all of us drank from it till late into the night. Many of us were drowsy the next day. I was nearly drunk and I quickly staggered to my room at well past midnight. The next day I woke up at the crack of dawn I was not drunk but had rashes which erupted all over my body. I needed anti-histamines and ointments for the next few days. After that experience I

swore that I would not touch any alcoholic drinks and I have not done so since that night.

As a medical student I have been average passing all my examinations except that of anatomy. I came a cropper during this examination. During the second year of our course in Singapore, storm clouds were gathering in the Far East. The Japanese had decided to move to the south to the oil-fields of Sumatra instead of moving north against the Russians. This did not suit Hitler who in mid-1941 launched Operation Barbarossa and was soon knocking at the gates of Moscow. The Siberian troops were sent to the rescue of Moscow. This respite caused Japan to move into Indo-China and on 8th December, 1941 Pearl Harbour was attacked. Kota Bharu was attacked by the Japanese the night before but the British were caught unprepared when the Japanese attacked Singapore at about 4 a.m. in the morning of 8th December, 1941. I was in the FMS Hostel on the morning of the attack. Singapore was totally unprepared for the attack but fortunately the damage done was not great. All of us medical students had joined the MAS, Medical Auxiliary Service; the more senior students had helped in the wards and the operation theatres. The campaign in Malaya was fortunately a short one. Despite that I returned to Kuala Lumpur by train and returned to Singapore within a few days.

About three days before the surrender of Singapore, 13 medical and dental students were killed on the bombing of Singapore. I shall relate the story of the death of these students in the next chapter. When the water supply was running out in the theatres in the General Hospital it was evident to the doctors that the British had to give up the fight before long. Soon after the start of the battle in Singapore the British had lost two warships, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* off the coast of Kuantan. Just before the fall

of Singapore the *Empress of Britain* was sunk in the harbour. The casualties were brought to the hospital for treatment. The fall of Singapore was probably the worst disaster of Britain during the whole of World War II. Singapore had been proclaimed as the Gibraltar of the East and was said to be invulnerable. The British had strengthened the defences to prepare for the invasion by the Japanese who came by land while the British had expected the attack from the sea. But most of the men and material had been siphoned off to the Middle East which was under attack by the Germans under Field Marshal Rommel. Thus in less than two-and-a-half months the Japanese conquered Malaya and Singapore as well. At the time of the surrender of Singapore the British had more than 100,000 troops while the Japanese had half that number. General Yamashita had about two-and-a-half divisions throughout the Malayan campaign. The Fall of Singapore was described by Winston Churchill as the greatest military disaster in British history. At the end of the war the medical students were left to fend for themselves. There were stories of atrocities especially against the Chinese. A few of us from the mainland prepared to leave for home on bicycles. We obtained an exit permit from a Japanese officer and three days after the surrender we started off for home. The journey across the island was fraught with danger especially at Newton Circus where the Japanese guards took potshots at us. Fortunately none of us was killed. We cycled on along Bukit Timah and soon we reached the Causeway. Here we dismounted and walked as the Causeway was crowded with military trucks. When we reached Johore, we had to be extra careful as the Japanese were repairing the causeway which had been partially blown up by the British. The Japanese stopped us to question us. We were allowed to go through and we passed a deserted Johore Bahru. We took the main trunk road to

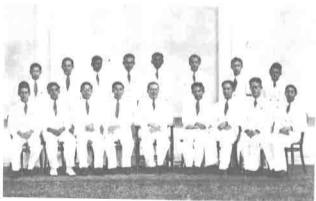
Tampoi. The sun was hot in the evening and we stopped at a stream where we made our first mistake. The water was polluted and the next day when we reached Segamat, most of us were down with diarrhoea. A few years ago I had cycled along this road the reverse direction. We stopped in Segamat for about 2 days to recover from dysentery after which we continued on our journey and stopped at Gemas and Tampin. The next day we travelled at a leisurely pace and reached Kuala Lumpur. Our party was made up of the following:- Dr Seow Li Jin, now an ENT surgeon, Dr S. Parampalam, the late Dr Yong Khee Keong, Tay Teck Leong and I. We were not the only Malaysians who made our way home on our own steam. I heard that another small party consisting mainly of Penang students made their way to Penang by train. In various ways we Malaysians made our way home and most of us survived the war. Practically all of us returned to Singapore to resume our medical studies. We lost four years because of the war and we graduated in our early thirties which is old by present day standards. During the Japanese Occupation, I did not work under the Japanese. I became a broker and as soon as I pushed through a big deal I would take things easy and read most of the books on World War I, that were in the Kuala Lumpur Book Club. That was where I really cultivated my love for Military History. Friends of mine who had been more enterprising, did very well during the Japanese Occupation. Take the case of Dr Chong Chun Hian. He has a Chinese educational background. He studied Malay in Sarawak. During the Japanese Occupation, he was trilingual. With the Chinese background he learnt Japanese easily and very soon he became proficient in Japanese. Because of this he managed to sell and buy properties. I believe he had a hand in preserving the property of the Catholics in Pulau Tikus in Penang. Years later the Catholics sent him on



*The marriage photograph of Dr Tan Chee Khoon and
Liew Fong Ying (1944) Kuala Lumpur.*



As President of the Medical College, Singapore.



*The author and the Prefect Board of Victoria Institution in 1938.
(Author is second from right in the front row.)*



Room 48 - FMS Hostel.



Anatomy room.



The Study Table.



The 8 x 8 ft room.





First child, Tan Kee Keong, 1945.

a postgraduate course to the United States. Today Dr Chong Chun Hian, lives in quiet retirement in Kuching.

With the surrender of the Japanese, the rehabilitation of the King Edward VII College of Medicine began and in 1947 the students were back to resume their courses. For many of us it was not an easy task as some of us had married towards the end of the war. In my own case I had not only married but was saddled with a son. Fortunately the British Government assumed the financial responsibility of looking after the welfare of the students. In my case I was given a small allowance for myself, my wife and son. Before the war I was a scholarship student. This was a generous settlement and as one of the fortunate recipients, I must thank the British Government for their generosity.

When I was in Kajang High School I used to take part in school debates but did not play games mainly because of my accident. In Victoria Institution, I took a prominent part in debates and was made a school prefect. In College I was elected Treasurer in 1947, Vice-President in 1948 and finally President in 1949. This meant hard work and it occupied a great deal of my time. I chaired a small committee to draw up a constitution for the new students' union of the new University of Malaya. We spent many hours in drawing up that constitution and I had to consult people like Mr John Eber, a prominent Singapore lawyer and Mr Gerald Hawkins who was later a prominent government official in Malaya. Then when the document was ready it had to be rectified by the student body. All this was time consuming and I could not afford to spend time on it as my final examination was drawing nearer. I can still remember the midnight meetings which took place in Raffles College when we were held up by a few Arts students who had just joined the College and had no examinations in the offing.

The most prominent amongst them was James Puthuchear, then a student of Economics but now a prominent lawyer in private practice. Then came the final hurdle – the finals where we would be examined in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics and Gynaecology. This to most students is the toughest examination in the life of a medical student. I myself was quite confident of surgery, not because of my brilliance in surgery but because I got to know the external examiner, a Brigadier in the army, and an internal examiner, Mr D.E.C. Mekie. A few of us would attend the ward rounds of the Brigadier and answer all the questions and thereby we created a good impression with him. As for Mr Mekie, I had created a good impression with him when I was the President of the Medical College Union. In fact just before the examination, in a ward round I discussed with him the merits and demerits of the British Health Service then being introduced by Bevan in Great Britain. As for the examination itself I did not experience any great difficulty especially Surgery. In Medicine I was struggling with my practical when the Professor of Medicine Dr S.A. Ransome came to talk with me and then walked away. He must have been pleased with my work in the ward rounds. Later on I found that I was a borderline case in Obstetrics and Gynaecology! When the pass list was posted up a few days later I found my name in it. I had passed! That night I did not paint the town red as I had not the means to do it. I made preparation to return home as early as possible!

RACIALISM – THEN AND NOW

Racialism today is a fact of life and anything that I write now is incomplete if I do not touch on racialism in my school days and compare it with the situation today. When I was a school boy in the early thirties the Malay boys in the

lower primary Classes went to the Special Malay Classes SMC and then only joined the mainstream after Standard III. Looking back to those early days more than half a century ago I can honestly say that we did not think of ourselves as being Malay, Chinese or Indian. Race did not enter our minds as students then and we were very friendly as human beings. I do not remember having racial quarrels. One reason we did not have racial differences was that we were all treated alike. Today for the secondary schools there are "asrama" reserved only for Malay students. This is one of the forms of helping the deprived classes in our society and is praiseworthy but why for the Malays only? Is it postulated that there are no Non-Malay students in the rural areas who can benefit from this affirmative action?

THE MIXING OF NON-MALAYS

At this stage of the life of our nation when the government is pushing ahead to establish a non-racial society, the mixing up of students at an early age must hasten that event and break down the barriers of racialism. I remember at school some of my best friends were Ali of Sungei Jelok and Tajuddin B Ahmad, the sportsman. When I was at University, and if I remember correctly, just before the outbreak of World War II, there was very little incident of racialism amongst the students. Some students from Kedah preferred to mix amongst themselves but not those from Kuala Lumpur and Penang. But today polarisation amongst students is getting worse with the passage of years. One cause for this is the selection of students to the Universities. It is so bad that some of the non-Malays, both the students and their parents do not trust it, with the result that they send their children overseas for their tertiary education. If a census is taken as to why Malaysians emigrate, the main cause is to safeguard the education of

their children. This quota system of the admission of affirmative action to our universities arose out of the policy of helping the Bumiputras and the post May 13 Era. It was decided quite rightly that the Bumiputras should be given a weightage in the admission of students to our universities. It was difficult for the non-Malays to accept such a policy but I for one was prepared to accept it. However, this system of quota in favour of Bumiputras should be modified with the passage of time. As the number of Bumiputras among the professionals exceeds, the quota should be reduced. The government should be prepared to reduce the quota in favour of the Bumiputras until a favourable proportion is arrived at; to perpetuate the present system of 75:25% in favour of the Bumiputras is to discriminate against the non-Bumiputras in this country. Another cause of polarization in our universities is the provision of the books for certain students in certain disciplines. This causes bad blood among the various communities in the universities. If the Bumiputras have access to such books on the basis of need, then the non-Malay students who are poor should also be provided with such books on the same basis.

CHINESE LANGUAGE SOCIETY

Another festering wound in the University of Malaya is the Chinese Language Society. In the aftermath of May 13 all the language societies were banned but when the conditions in the universities returned to normal, one after another the language societies were returned, all except the Chinese Language Society. For more than a decade the Chinese Language Society was refused registration. Questions were asked in Parliament and in the Council of the University of Malaya but to no avail, until the issue threatened to break out into the open. It was only then that

the Council of the University of Malaya agreed to register the Chinese Language Society. The time taken for the approval of the registration shows how difficult it is to solve racial problems in this country.

CHAPTER 6

TRAGEDY JUST BEFORE THE SURRENDER

JUST BEFORE the surrender of Singapore, on 15th, February 1942, tragedy struck the students of the College of Medicine. I remember in the middle of 1941 when we were at Changi, the pride of the British navy, *The Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* sailed majestically by, but alas soon after the outbreak of the War in the Far East, both warships were sunk by the Japanese off the coast of Kuantan. When the war in the Far East broke out I was in Singapore. In the morning of 8th December, 1941 at about 4.30 am. Singapore was bombed by the Japanese bombers based in Saigon. Singapore was caught unaware with the city bathed in bright lights despite the fact that Kota Bharu had been attacked 3 hours earlier and Pearl Harbour had been bombed hours before. We, medical students were fast asleep in the FMS Hostel. When we first heard the bombing we originally thought that it was due to an air raid exercise. But when we got out of our rooms we found that Singapore had been bombed and that bombs had been dropped in Tiong Baru and in Chinatown. Singapore was deemed to be invincible but in less than two-and-a-half months the Japanese were at the gates of Singapore which they conquered within one week of fierce fighting. On the west coast of Singapore it was the Australians and the Malay Regiment that put up the main resistance. The Japanese landed in Singgora and later at Kota Bharu and a week later they moved into Penang after which they 'strolled' down the whole of Malaya along the west coast where the communications were better. They captured Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur with

ease. In South Perak, at Kampar they encountered some resistance and then in southern Johore and in the west coast at Parit Sulong near Batu Pahat they met with more resistance. Near Gemas they met the 8th Australian Division and their triumphant march was halted for a short while. At the end of January they had reached Johore Bahru where they spent the following week preparing for the crossing of the Straits of Johore and then to mount the assault on Singapore. We Malaysians who were caught in Singapore by the war were stranded on the Island. Towards Christmas when the Japanese were in Ipoh I made a quick trip to my home town, Kuala Lumpur. I spent about 3 days at home. With great confidence in the strength and power of the British, I returned to Singapore. The British had expected the Japanese to land on the north-east of Singapore but they landed in the west in the swamps of the Kranji River. These defences were manned by the Australian and the Malay Regiment both of whom put up a valiant fight. Prior to the fighting, the British too blew up a small bit of the Causeway about 20 yards of it. This meant that the bulk of the water supply of Singapore was cut off and it also meant that there could be no prolonged resistance by the British. But in any case the causeway was soon repaired by the Japanese and by the time of the attack on Singapore the Japanese tanks and troops entered the island with ease. Changi and Seletar air-fields and the Naval Base too fell to the Japanese with little fighting. On the west coast, the Australians were driven inland and the Japanese were soon in Bukit Timah and the Alexandra British Military Hospital. When the Japanese captured Pierce reservoir the end was in sight. The Japanese promptly cut the water supply to the city and to the hospitals. The British did not bother to dig wells and the city surrendered to the Japanese without any serious fighting. The Japanese were in control of the air, land and sea. In

any case the British surrendered on 15th February, 1942. On the day before the surrender 11 medical students lost their lives. When the war broke out almost all the medical students enrolled in the Medical Auxiliary Service (MAS). Those who were in the clinical years, from the fourth to the final years, helped in the theatres and in the wards. Those in first, second and third year helped in dressing the casualties and in carrying patients. All of us worked very hard. One day as I was walking through the rows of wounded patients I came across an old classmate of mine, Captain Zainal Hitam. I had not met him for more than a decade. He had joined the Malay Regiment in Port Dickson. He was one of the early batches who had joined as an ordinary soldier and slowly worked his way up and became an officer. He saw action at Pasir Panjang. He was shot at by the enemy but fortunately the bullet hit the whistle which he kept in his left shirt pocket. If it had moved a little inner it would have hit his heart and that would have been the end of Zainal Hitam. The bullet had whistled past and he survived the war. He rejoined the Malay Regiment and ended his career as a major. Malaysians are proud of these early pioneers who had served the country well. Towards the end of the siege of Singapore, the Japanese bombed the island frequently and on the morning of the 14th February one bomb hit the Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) where six of the medical students were stationed. One 4th year medical student was hit by a shrapnel which pierced through his liver. It was decided to ship the patient to the General Hospital at the Sepoy lines and in the end all the medical students were evacuated back to the FMS Hostel where they had lived before the war. At the General Hospital, Yong Tatt Sin was immediately operated by Mr Monro, Professor of Surgery and senior surgeon at the General Hospital. He was in a bad shape and soon after the opera-

tion he passed away. By then it was about noon and it was decided to bury him in the field just outside the College Building. At about that time the College Building and several buildings nearby had been bombed. In addition there were Japanese bombers flying over the College on their way to bomb the city and the harbour. At the same time when we were at the trenches which had already been dug we observed that there were balloons high up to the north of the city observing what was going on below. However, the bombers flying to and fro over the College must have radioed information to the military headquarters. All these did not deter us from carrying out our mission which was to bury Yong Tatt Sin. I must say that there were about 21 students or more who wanted to be at the burial site to pay their last respects to Yong Tatt Sin for he was a popular student, being the Secretary-General of the Medical College Union. I was one of the students who was at the burial ground and I must confess that at that point of time we were not aware of the danger we were exposed to. Suddenly artillery fire rained upon us and the students with presence of mind ran back to the College Building. Others (and I was one of them) were paralysed by fright for that was the first time I was under gunfire and we were rooted to the ground. Then, during a lull in the firing I felt my head to see if it was still attached to the body and finding that I was not hit I ran up the slope to take shelter under a tree. As suddenly as it had started the artillery fire ceased and we looked around to see who had been wounded and who had been killed. On examining myself I found that I had a small shrapnel wound in my left calf and to this day I carry that small wound as evidence of my close brush with death. Two other medical students S. Parampalam and Abdul Wahab B Ariff were together close by and they too escaped. They had been close to Chen Kok Kuang who had his head blown off

and these two had a very close encounter with death. What had happened was that the Japanese had seen us digging the trenches and had surmised that we were digging trenches for the defence of the hospital. The result was that ten medical students lost their lives – eight on the spot and two died later in the general hospital from their injuries. Thus, in all, eleven students lost their lives two days before the surrender.

The first casualty was Yong Tatt Sin. As I have mentioned before he had been General Secretary of the Medical College Union and had been popular with the students when he passed away because of the wound in his liver, the students were greatly aggrieved. They turned up in force for his burial. He hailed from Malacca and at the time of his death he was in his fourth year.

Those who succumbed to the incident were:

EMILE BAPTIST

He too was in the 4th year at the outbreak of the war in the Far East. He hailed from Penang and on the morning of 14th February he had been injured in the head at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. When he came to the General Hospital, despite his injury he insisted on attending the funeral of Yong Tatt Sin. By the evening he had become one of the victims of the Japanese.

LING DING SEE

The elder brother of Dr Ling Ding Sing. He was then in the fourth year at the outbreak of the war. He was a devout Methodist and I remember him as a jovial, short, young man who played a good game of rugby as a scrum half.

MABEL LUTHER

I believe she was born in Kedah and her father was a doctor. She was probably in the 5th year and she too joined us at the burial and was killed not at the scene of the burial but she died from the wounds she received at the burial.

CHEN KOK KUANG

He was from Raffles Institution. He was reputed to have topped the Senior Cambridge Examination in 1938. He was a College Scholar and we joined the College together in 1939. At the outbreak of the war in the Far East we were in the 3rd year. He was a bright student and had he survived the war he would have been a good doctor to serve his fellowmen. It was a pity that he was snatched away from us at the prime of life.

ABDUL HAMID

He was a dental student and was one of the few Malays to take up dentistry. He hailed from Telok Anson and was a good sportsman and played a good game of football and hockey. Perhaps he spent too much time on games and as a result he did not get through the first year examination. I was close to him and so used to talk of what we would do after we graduated when the war was over. He was the captain of the hockey team.

HERA SINGH BULL

I had known him while we were in Victoria Institution together. He was a good sportsman excelling in cricket and hockey. He used to play for the Federated Malay States while in College. At that time that would be equivalent to an international player today. Because of the time he had spent in games he did not get through the first year examination. He had an older brother in the Singapore

Municipality and his parents stayed with his elder brother. I used to meet the family of Hera Singh Bull in my early days in College. Hera Singh also had another elder brother, Gorbex Singh who used to represent the FMS in cricket and hockey. The war has robbed this country of a very good sportsman who would have represented this country in cricket and hockey had he survived the war.

CHAN KOK LOON

He was from Penang and joined in the same year as I did in 1939. He looked like a "Chinaman" in his teens and it was a pity he was killed in the evening of 14th February.

TEOH TEOW TATT

He hailed from Penang and has a younger brother who is a doctor practising in Klang. He was in the first year at the outbreak of the War in the Far East.

N.P. SARATHEE

He hailed from Kedah and was in the first year of the outbreak of the war in the Far East. He was not killed at the burial site of Yong Tatt Sin but died of wounds received at the burial.

HENRY ORJITHAM

He came from a prominent family in Penang. He was in the first year at the outbreak of the War in the Far East. He is survived by a brother Dr Philomen Orjitham who has since passed away. He also has another brother Victor Orjitham, an official of the AIA in Kuala Lumpur. Henry Orjitham was with the burial party at the Medical College Building and was killed on the spot.

After the war there was a commemoration of the students who died on 14th February, 1942 and a plaque containing their names hangs on a wall in Harrover Hall.

DEUS VOBISCUM — PAX VOBISCUM

God be with them and Peace be with them. We who survived these eleven students will always remember those who died in the defence of Singapore.

CHAPTER 7

THE CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

THE FIRST TRACES of Christianity in Malaysia appears to be related to Malacca and the Portuguese, Alfonso de Albuquerque came there in 1511AD and with his coming, brought the Christian religion to these shores. However, Methodism came to this country via Singapore at the end of the last century. The missionaries were mainly from India although one must remember that when the Portuguese and later the Dutch captured Malacca, the two colonizers introduced Roman Catholicism to Malacca. But it was when the British came to Malaya that the Church of England made its impact in Malaya. The Methodist Church came to Singapore at the end of the last century. This year (1989) the Wesley Methodist Church in K.L. celebrates its 90th Anniversary. One must remember that Christianity is a minority religion in Malaysia even today. Officially the Christians number about 3% of the population. However the leaders of the churches report their membership as 8%. Sabah has 28% and Sarawak at least 32%. In Singapore it has reached 18% of the population. Until very recently the Christians have been a very divided lot. In 1984 the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) was formed in Kuala Lumpur and some form of unity was introduced amongst the Christians. Currently the CFM is trying to make known its views to the National Economic Consultative Council (NECC).

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Article 3(1) of the Malaysian Constitution of 1957 stipulates that "Islam is the religion of the Federation but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation." The Reid Commission as a majority view (the minority view was presented by the Pakistan member) had recommended in 1957 that Islam should not be designated the official religion of the Federation. It had argued that there was universal agreement, including amongst those who sought to make Islam the official religion, that if such a provision was included in the constitution it must be made clear that it could in no way affect the rights of the non-Muslims. The Alliance Party, representing UMNO, Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) did state in its memorandum to the Reid Commission that "... the religion of Malaysia shall be Islam. The observance of this principle shall not impose any instability on non-Muslim nationals professing and practising their religions and shall not imply that the State is not a secular State". The 1957 Constitution of Malaya, to further assure the non-Muslims that they would enjoy full religious freedom, included several provisions in the section on "Fundamental Liberties." Article 11 provided the following:-

1. Every person has the right to profess and practise his religion and, subject to Clause (4), to propagate it.
2. No person shall be compelled to pay any tax, the proceeds of which are specially allocated in whole or in part for the purpose of a religion other than his own.
3. Every religious group has the right -
 - a. to manage its own religious affairs;

- b. to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and
 - c. to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with the law.
4. State law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the Muslim religion.

Article 12 further guaranteed:

2. Every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for the education of children and provide therein instruction in its own religion, and there shall be no discrimination on the ground only of religion in any law relating to such institutions or in the administration of any such law; but federal law may provide for special financial aid for the establishment or maintenance of Muslim institutions or the instruction in the Muslim religion of persons professing that religion.
3. No person shall be required to receive instruction in or to take part in any ceremony or act of worship of a religion other than his own.

In recent times there has been a rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and this has given rise to concern amongst the non-Muslims. In this connection I interviewed the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed in August 1982. I reproduce below the interview.

Dr Tan: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, there is a genuine fear among non-Muslims of all religions in this country that religious freedom in our country is slowly and surely being curtailed, for example,

1. the ban on the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia now partially lifted;
2. restrictions on the building of non-Muslim places of worship;
3. detention of shipment of Bibles in Bahasa Indonesia by the Special Branch (since then this shipment has been released).

Can you assure the non-Muslims of Malaysia that the Barisan Nasional Government will guarantee freedom of worship, including the right to buy, sell and use the Alkitab in Bahasa Malaysia and the alienation of land to the non-Muslims to build their own places of worship?

Dr Mahathir: There is certainly no intention to curb freedom of worship in this country. Now that publication of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia has created a little bit of uneasiness among Muslims because they feel that this is an attempt to try and convert Muslims. Now we, as the Government have got to tell them that this is not so but it is up to the people who are using the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia to confine it to Christians or to other non-Muslims. If you try to distribute it among Muslims then you are going to create problems because the law provides that no non-Muslim missionary may carry out activities among Muslims. That is the law. That is why there is the fear about the Alkitab. Now we have allowed the Bible in Bahasa Indonesia to come in. It is the duty of the

people concerned to see that these do not get into the hands of Muslims or that there is no deliberate attempt made to try and teach Muslims the contents of the Bible because that would be wrong according to our present Constitution. That is why this thing has happened, not so much to suppress Christianity as to protect Muslims.

Dr Tan: ... because of the success of the Government's drive in propagating Bahasa Malaysia, the present and future generations are only conversant in Bahasa Malaysia so how do we communicate with them? You can't communicate with them in English, you can't communicate with them in Mandarin or Tamil, so we have to use the language they understand.

Dr Mahathir: I know, but this problem is not just because the Bible is in Bahasa Malaysia. Advertisements with regard to liquor in Bahasa Malaysia have been objected to by Malays, by Muslims, because they say this is trying to propagate the use of liquor amongst Malays. We are facing a problem here.

Dr Tan: I agree. In this country the non-Muslims of whatever religion have accepted what is in the Constitution of Malaysia. They accept that there is a *cordon sanitaire* around the Muslims and they would not try to propagate their religion among the Muslims except, you know, in every society you have some cranks. It's for the Government to deal with these people. The difficulty of the non-Mus-

lims, particularly the Christians, is that you can only communicate with the future generations in Bahasa Malaysia and hence this use of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia. You see this ban was lifted only partially. They can use the Bibles and that's all that is in the gazette notification. They still cannot buy and sell them. If you cannot buy and sell, how can you say it's not a restriction on religious freedom?

Dr Mahathir: Because we have to have some form of control, but what you are saying is that it is a restriction on you. It is not a restriction on you. It is not because it does not stop the religious freedom in this country.

Dr Tan: If I cannot buy and sell the Bible, in Bahasa Malaysia, then it is a restriction.

Dr Mahathir: But certainly there are other mechanisms by which you can distribute the Bible. The church can do that for example.

Dr Tan: But you cannot. The ban says very clearly that you cannot buy and sell.

Dr Mahathir: But it is done by certified bodies, I think it would be legal.

Dr Tan: No, I have gone and consulted our lawyers. I do hope you will look into that.

Dr Mahathir: Well we can look into that but as to restrictions on the building of non-Muslim places of worship, this is not true. We have to have some control over the building of the places of worship simply because as you know, in

Hinduism for example, you find a big tree; you begin with a small altar there and before you know it, there is a big temple in somebody's compound. This is our problem.

Dr Tan: I agree with you but you know ever since Shah Alam has been built, no other religious body has been able to get a piece of land there to build a place of worship except the Muslims.

Dr Mahathir: I don't know about Shah Alam, but I know in Petaling Jaya there are so many new churches and Siamese temples as well.

Dr Tan: Petaling Jaya, as you know, was founded in Templer's time. At that time there was no restriction whatsoever. Now in Shah Alam, they won't say they won't give land but they keep telling you that it is under consideration. It is things like that ...

Dr Mahathir: But certainly that is not the Federal Government's policy nor the nation's policy.

Dr Tan: From time to time you have conferences with the Menteri Besar and we hope that you will pass the word around that they should approve applications for land. Shah Alam is a good example. We had applied for land even before Shah Alam came up, but we still can't get land. I give you another example. In Subang Jaya, there was land that was allocated by the developer for a church, the moment the State Government found out they took over the land. So you see, that does tell

us that there is some form of restriction on the building of non-Muslim places of worship.

Recently there has been more and more erosion on Religious Freedom as guaranteed under Article 3(1). Bibles in Bahasa Indonesia have been stopped by the Special Branch. I have already pointed out this fact in my interview with the Prime Minister. There were obstacles to the building of churches especially by minor bureaucrats. Recently under Operation Lallang, some church people have been detained under the ISA. If these Christians or even non-Christians have offended the law they should be brought to the court of law and not roped in under the ISA. It is then an abuse of ISA. Until recently only a few States have built a 'cordon sanitaire' over the Muslim but now the new law has been extended to almost all the states. This has been a cause of concern to Christians in this country. Despite all those acts, the number of Christians according to the census is on the increase and this goes to show that repression holds no terrors to genuine Christians in this country.

I came from a Christian background. My father was a Methodist from Fukien in China and his parents too were Methodists. My mother was from an Anglican family in Amoy, in Fukien Province. With such a Christian background it is but natural that my life must have been guided by the teachings of Christ. All the children of our parents are baptised Christians and all our children too are Christians. Thus we are four generations of Christians. But I must confess that I am not a 'good' Christian. True I go to church regularly. I attend the evening service where most of the elder church members attend. I studied the new Testament in school but since then I have not studied the Bible. The reason is that I have confined my reading to the History of England, History of World War I & II, espionage, military

intelligence, biography, etc. My children know the Bible well and they have often urged me to spend my time on the Bible. They attend Bible classes and can be said to be 'committed' Christians. My thirst for reading lies in other directions. I took an active part in Kuala Lumpur Wesley ever since I returned to Kuala Lumpur after my graduation. I have been active in church since 1951 until I was forced to give up all my offices which I held in 1976. In that year I was a delegate to the First Quadrennial General Conference representing the Trinity Annual Conference (TRAC). Unfortunately before the Conference began I was stricken down by a stroke and I was replaced. I had continuously represented TRAC to the Quadrennial General Conference since 1968 till 1976. During that period I was elected to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church of USA held in Dallas, Texas. There were more than 2,000 delegates from the Methodist Church in the USA and many of them were hoping to try for their local episcopacy. A good performance at this conference will enhance their chances back home. Hence many of them tried to get the floor. Being Asian and not a Caucasian it was difficult for me to get the floor. However I did manage to get the floor and I lambasted the American presence in Vietnam. I spoke at a very rapid rate and was almost incoherent. However I did manage to get the attention of the local press and I did manage to rate a few lines in the Newsweek Magazine. The ministerial delegate to that Conference was Dr Yap Kim Hao. He too was a progressive like me and both of us joined many of the causes connected to help the cause of the black Americans. I had a hilarious time when I could speak out loud and bold without fear or favour.



Interview with Prime Minister Dato Seri Mahathir Mohamad (1980) in P.M.'s Office.



*The author and
Mrs Tan at the
Genting
Highlands*



*The Author and
Mrs Tan -
overseas.*

BEGINNING

I first attracted the attention of the members of the Kuala Lumpur Wesley when I attended a meeting of the LCEC, i.e., Local Church Executive Committee. The pastor Rev. Caster, an American had spent more than two hundred dollars on a P.A. System for the Church. He had been proud of the new amenity. But the trouble was that the Church had no money to pay the bill! The pastor who was new to the Church had not taken the trouble to consult some of the elder members of the Church regarding the finance that was available but went on setting up the P.A. system. At the meeting I censured him and quoted Nicholas Nicolby of Charles Dickens who had written that when the expenditure was 19 shillings and money available was 20, the result was Happiness but when the expenditure was 21 shillings and the money available was 20 shilling, the result was misery. I then proposed that no official of the church was to spend any money in excess of \$100 without the authority of the LCEC. By the end of the meeting I was elected the Chairman of the Finance and Stewardship Committee and I held that post for more than two decades until I was stricken down by a stroke in 1976. During my chairmanship of the Finance Committee the finances of the Church grew steadily and there was no mismanagement. The members of the Finance & Stewardship Committee met once every month at the home of a member. Dinner was provided by the host and we had an enjoyable time.

If a member of this committee was a bachelor, I would volunteer to host the meeting. At each meeting we would examine the finances of the Church, in particular the income and we would not sanction any expenditure when there was no money in the kitty. The summary of the income and expenditure was published in the Church Bulletin and in this way all the members of the Church were

able to know how their pledges and contributions to the Church were spent. I am glad and proud to say that during the period I was the Chairman there was no complaint against the way in which the finances of the Church was managed. At the end of each year we drew up the budget for the next year and then got it approved by the LCEC. I am glad that the Finance and Stewardship Committee always met all the legitimate requests of the Church. Of course we had to cut some of the more extravagant requests. Over the two decades that I had been Chairman we had many dedicated church members who served in it. Amongst those who served were the late Lee Kong Beng, Toh Kheng Teik, Tan Sri and Puan Sri Chong Hon Nyan, Mrs Helen Tan, Mr & Mrs Tung Kam Seng, Mr Loh Hung Loon etc. The pastors who served included Dr Yap Kim Hao and Dr Denis Dutton. Both went on to become bishops of the Methodist Church. In this connection I wish to relate what Bishop Denis Dutton said at the dinner given in his honour by the members of Wesley Church. When he first came to Kuala Lumpur Wesley he had been told that he had to see two people in K.L. Wesley, one was Toh Kheng Teik and the other was Dr Tan Chee Khoon.

He had been warned that I was the tight-fisted chairman of the Finance and Stewardship Committee with no smile on my face and added that I have a perpetual scowl. I must confess I do not have a friendly face that is scowling. However, he added that I do have a heart of gold for most people, particularly to the underprivileged. During the years of my chairmanship of the Finance and Stewardship Committee there were many improvements made to the Church and all of them were financed by the Church. Now I see that there is a massive project, the Menara Wesley and let us hope it will be fully supported and paid up by the members and friends of the Kuala Lumpur Wesley soon.

In the mid fifties I was sent to the Singapore Malaya Annual Conference in Ipoh as a delegate of the Kuala Lumpur Wesley. It was held at the Anglo-Chinese School, Ipoh. One issue that cropped up was the restriction placed on non-Muslims from proselyting amongst Muslims. I spoke against the motion and taunted the "establishment" on their being afraid of the government. I reminded the elders of the Church that at the beginning of the Christian Era, Christians were thrown to the lions and had no fear of death. But we in Malaya were in no danger of being thrown to the lions. We carried the day. That night there was turmoil in the ranks of the leadership of the Church. A small delegation came to my room to try to persuade me to change my stand on this issue. They pointed out that the Church would be going against the law if it tried to proselyte among the Muslims. I was finally persuaded to withdraw my motion. Since that conference I have represented Kuala Lumpur Wesley at meetings of Singapore-Malaysia Annual Conference (SMAC) until 1976 when Singapore-Malaya Annual Conference (SMAC) was dissolved.

In the Dewan Rakyat I was known as a Christian and in the Muslim dominated chamber I made it a point to spice my speeches with quotations from the Bible. As I have mentioned before I am not particularly well read in the Bible. Whenever I had the chance I would quote from the Bible. At a budget session in the late sixties, I remember in one of his budget speeches, the late Tun Tan Siew Sin cut the perks of the civil servants. When I opened the debate for the Opposition, I accused the Minister of Finance for being cruel to the civil servants; and I quoted that; when they asked for a fish he had given them a stone. I wish to stress that I am not a biblical scholar neither am I well versed in the Bible but whenever I had the opportunity in my speeches in Parlia-

ment, I would always quote sayings from the Bible and this gave me an undeserved reputation that I am a very religious person. Thus in Parliament the Tunku had to call me a preacher. In fact at that time I was regarded as a biblical ignoramus by my children, particularly my eldest daughter Ms Tan Poh Ling. Most of my children I am glad to say, study the Bible as they attend Bible classes. I confess that I have not attended any Bible class and this has caused some "susah" in the family. I am not making any excuses but I wish to plead on my own behalf that in my active days I had very little spare time even for my own reading. I usually had a very full day often far into the night. And when it was time to retire I would be so tired that I would fall asleep like a log of wood. When I was a small boy in Cheras, my mother used to tell us Bible stories and of course she would lead us in prayers before retiring for the night. But when I had children of my own, unfortunately, neither I nor my wife would lead them in prayers at night nor did we read to them Bible stories. One reason was that we were not well read in the Bible and another was that I would often come home late at night when the children had long gone to bed. I admit that I left this area of training entirely to Mrs Tan and she did it well.

Kuala Lumpur Wesley is proud that two of our pastors have gone on to be bishops of the Methodist Church. The first was Dr Yap Kim Hao who was educated in Anglo-Chinese School, Ipoh, and then went on to the USA where he received a Bachelor of Science degree and then a Bachelor of Divinity degree. He was posted to Wesley Church in Klang to be the first Asian pastor there, after his return from USA. Then he served in Wesley Church Singapore. He again returned to USA to read for his Doctor of Theology degree and served in Wesley Church Kuala Lumpur after his return. Here he was popular with the con-

gregation. In 1968 he was elected as the first Malaysian to be Bishop of the Singapore-Malaysia Methodist Church. In 1972 he was re-elected Bishop and did not serve his full term as he accepted the position of Secretary-General of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). He served it for 12 years. He has now accepted a teaching appointment in USA. The next pastor of K.L. Wesley to be elected Bishop was Bishop Denis Dutton. He is a product of the Methodist Boys' School Kuala Lumpur and had his theological training in Trinity Theological College, Singapore. After that he served as assistant pastor in Wesley Church, Singapore. In 1961 he was sent to the US where he received two degrees – a BA and a Master of Divinity. On his return in 1965 he was appointed as Chaplain to students at the University of Singapore. He came to Kuala Lumpur Wesley as its pastor in October 1968. He had served as pastor of this Church 20 years before being elected Bishop in December 1988. Rev. Denis Dutton was in Sheffield for a short period and then returned to pastor our Church. He was allowed to do his research in K.L. and then periodically return to Sheffield to complete his course. In the early eighties he studied for his doctorate in Sheffield, England while serving full time as a pastor in Kuala Lumpur Wesley. I find that both these pastors have two qualities in common – they both have loud and fine voices and they sing very well. This quality is essential as the pastor is expected to lead the congregation in the singing of hymns. I find that the present pastor of Kuala Lumpur Wesley, Rev. Yu Chee Huat has a fine and loud voice too.

After I had the stroke in 1976 I resigned from practically all the offices I held and nearly five years ago I joined the Senior Citizens Fellowship of Kuala Lumpur Wesley. We have visited Lake Toba and also made several trips to various parts of Malaysia. I was fortunate to chronicle these

trips and got them published in the Star. This group of experienced and dedicated workers have contributed much to the life of Kuala Lumpur Wesley Church.

The Senior Citizens of Kuala Lumpur Wesley are a group of senior members of the church and they are all above 55 years old. They include Loh Hung Loon who is an octogenarian. He started life as a teacher in the Anglo-Chinese School in Malacca and ended his career as Headmaster. He was appointed a Member of the Public Services Commission besides being active in the Boys' Scout Movement and the YMCA. His wife was also a teacher who also became a Headmistress. Before World War II he had cancer of the lung and was operated on in Singapore. That was more than four decades ago and he is proud that he has lived with one lung since then. More than that, in his seventies, he was a member of the Committee on Finance and Stewardship. After he retired he came to Kuala Lumpur and was appointed a member of the Public Services Commission. Despite his age (86) he drives a car about in Kuala Lumpur.

WONG LAI YUEN

Another member of this group is Wong Lai Yuen. He is about the same age as I am. He was the headmaster of the Methodist Boys' Primary School. He has been an active member of the church and also the director of the choir which staged several musicals for the church. He has been on several committees of the church including the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC).

MRS CHEW SOOI CHIN

Yet another is Mrs Chew Sooi Chin. She was a headmistress and later an organizer of Primary Schools Selangor. She

headed a few church committees and is currently the President of the Senior Citizens' Fellowship.

THE EVERGREEN — LIM EWE HOE

He is the lifewire of the Senior Citizens' Fellowship. He has been a stalwart of the church and has been lay leader of the LCEC. He is the Programme Director of the Senior Fellowship. The success of the activities was due to his good planning and capabilities.

POH SIN BIN

He has been a senior official of the Survey Department and after his retirement has set up his own office. As a long time senior civil servant he has a good fund of stories and jokes which made him a lifewire of the Senior Citizens' Fellowship. His wife, Swee Tin too has been a headmistress, a senior inspector of schools and a very active member of the church. She is the hardworking and efficient Secretary of the Senior Fellowship.

TOH KHENG TEIK AND GAIK NEO

Kheng Teik has been a long time lecturer of the Technical Teachers' Training College and after his retirement, he has taught English to tertiary students. He is a person who is very useful with his hands and has passed on his knowledge to the members of the church. His wife Chua Gek Neo was a staff nurse when I served as a medical officer in the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, nearly four decades ago. She ended her service as a Nursing Sister and like her husband she has served the church in various capacities.

The Senior Citizens are possibly the most active group of the church. It holds one or two functions every month and they are well attended. These functions serve as train-

ing and preparations for those members of the church who are about to retire. Hence, they too can join the Senior Citizens' Fellowship.

CHAPTER 8

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

IN THE MID-FIFTIES when I was relatively new to Kuala Lumpur I received an invitation from the Kuala Lumpur Division of the University of Malaya inviting me to serve on the Council of that Division. The invitation was a complete surprise, for as I had said before, I was new to K.L. and I had just returned to K.L. after my studies in Singapore. I had served two years in the General Hospital, K.L. after which I had gone out into private practice. Although I had been active in medical circles I had not known many people to attract the notice of the University Authorities. It could be that in my later years in the University of Singapore I had been the president of the Medical College Union and possibly this had drawn the attention of the University Authorities. They had by now shifted to K.L. Following the visit by Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders in 1948 the University of Malaya was established in Singapore. Originally it was supposed to be built in Johore Bahru and in fact a plot of land had been acquired for that purpose. Later on it was decided not to shift to Johore Bahru but to site the expanded university in Bukit Timah at the site of the old Raffles College. With the advent of independence in Malaya in 1957, it was obvious that the Malayan Government would want to have a university of its own and hence the formation of the K.L. Division of the University of Malaya. Later on it was sited at Pantai Valley. It became the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. Originally the Kuala Lumpur Division of the University of Malaya was housed in the Technical College in Jalan Gurney while the new campus was being built in Pantai Valley. The first chairman of the council was Tan

Sri Mustapha Albakri, the former Menteri Besar of Perak. There was another graduate besides me, namely Dr S.G. Rajahram. He was one of the graduates of the early thirties and had been the first president of the Malaysian Medical Association. He was a tower of strength in the Council of the University of Malaya, fighting the battles of the local graduates, presenting the Malaysian point of view. It must be remembered that the expatriates out-numbered the local members in the council. They were the members with experience in university affairs while the local members were new to the game. But we learnt fast and very soon we learnt the game so that the expatriates could not pull a fast one on us. Other local representatives were Dato Abdul Karim B Nawabdin, Director of Dental Surgery and Mr G.K. Rama Iyer of the Treasury. There was the late Tan Sri Y.C. Foo a tin miner from Ipoh, an Oxford graduate. He was a successful tin miner and was elected to be head of the Finance Committee, a very important committee in any university. An off-shoot of the Finance Committee was the Tender Board which was also headed by Tan Sri Y.C. Foo. Both Dr S.G. Rajahram and I served in the Finance Committee and the Tender Board, and as you can well guess, we gave our full support to the late Tan Sri Y.C. Foo. This was important as in the early days of the University, millions of dollars were spent for the development of the University. I am glad to say that there has been no scandal attached to the University of Malaya and we have given the lead to the universities which were developed later on. I still remember one incident which threatened to mar this happy situation. On one occasion the Finance Committee met with the Tender Board to consider a tender worth more than a million dollars. We met for several hours and could not come to a decision. Some members of the committee opted for the second lowest tender while a few others favoured the

lowest tender. The meeting was postponed till the next week. The tender was for the science building. In the interval I found out that the member who had advocated the second lowest tender had a direct interest in the tender. He had advocated his own tender in the Tender Board as well. As soon as I found this out I told the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Oppenheim that he should ask this member to withdraw his advocacy of the tender. If he continued to advocate acceptance of the second lowest tender I would bring the whole affair to the Dewan Rakyat and that would mean not only trouble to the Chairman of the University Council but to the University itself. Fortunately, he dropped his advocacy of the second lowest tender and the Finance Committee chose the lowest tender. Later on, the member concerned resigned from the Tender Board and I was voted to replace him. In the construction of the University Hospital, the Finance Committee and the Tender Board had to work overtime spending long hours far into the night. The members of these committees had to work hard often meeting two or three times in a week and this in addition to the other meetings that I had in the University, meant that I had to devote much of my spare time in the service of the University. One appointment in which I participated was the selection of the Professor of Economics. This was a prize appointment and attracted a number of good applicants like Prof. Silcock from the University of Singapore, Ungku Aziz, etc. There was a great deal of lobbying and I was involved in it as I was a member of the Selection Board. It was clear that the two main contenders were Silcock and Ungku Aziz who had been a student in Singapore. Silcock was well past his prime and yet aspired to be the new professor in Kuala Lumpur. Ungku Aziz was young and did not have much experience. In the Selection Board, Silcock had a good deal of backing mainly from the expatriates. But Tan

Sri Dr Mohamed Said, Dr Chua Sin Kah and I, the three local members of the Board put up a strong fight for Ungku Aziz and I am glad that we won the day. Nevertheless we had to give in to the conditions on the appointment that had been proposed. This was that Ungku Aziz was to be on probation for one year and he would be confirmed in his appointment after one year. Of course he was confirmed in his appointment without any difficulty and later on he was appointed Vice-Chancellor, a post which he had held for about twenty years. In addition he has the distinction of being appointed "Royal" Professor of Economics by the Chancellor who at that time was the Sultanah of Kedah.

Another appointment I was connected with was the selection of Dr Thong Saw Pak, as Professor of Physics. That selection attracted a number of candidates. Some of them were expatriates. In the Selection Board was Prof Gray, the Professor of Engineering and he favoured an expatriate candidate, while I was for Dr Thong Saw Pak and in the end it was a neck to neck fight between an expatriate and Dr Thong Saw Pak. Then Prof. Gray brought out the fact that Dr Thong Saw Pak might be a security risk as he had worked in Beijing. Dr Thong Saw Pak had been a weightlifter of international repute and I had known that on his return from China he had worked for the Special Branch. When I brought out this fact to the Selection Board the opposition to Dr Thong Saw Pak on security ground collapsed. Dr Thong Saw Pak was appointed to the Chair of Physics and later he was selected to be Head of TAR, i.e. Tunku Abdul Rahman College. This story shows to what length the expatriates would go to get an *orang puteh* to be selected.

In the early days of the Medical Faculty one of the main problems of the team was the lack of trained medical staff. There were few trained local doctors around who could

teach. They had to be trained. These young doctors were mainly in the government service and most of them were under some bond or other. Fortunately Dr T.J. Danaraj and the Director-General of Health, Tan Sri Mohamed Din had been contemporaries in College in Singapore and they were on very friendly terms. That eased the way for doctors in the Government Service to join the University and further more, if any, to be transferred to the University of Malaya. The Academic Staff Training Scheme (ASTS) enabled large numbers of young doctors to be sent to the United Kingdom for training and come back after they had been trained. Both Dr S.G. Rajahram and I were on several of the selection boards helping to pick the young trainees. Many of these young trainees after their training returned to serve the University of Malaya. Many of them later went on to be selected for professional jobs in the Faculty of Medicine. There were only a few Malays doctors then and Tan Sri T.J. Danaraj went out of his way to select young Malay doctors for training under the ASTS. He was conscious too in the early days of the Faculty of Medicine of the need to train Malay doctors as teachers in the Faculty of Medicine. I remember one young Malay doctor whom we had picked to do dermatology. He was not the best of those who appeared for interview but nevertheless we picked him for training. He went to England, passed his examination and returned as a lecturer in dermatology. Alas, after a few years as a lecturer in dermatology he was drowned off Kuala Trengganu. Later in his service in the University, Tan Sri Danaraj was accused of being anti-Malay and not doing enough for the Malays in the Medical Faculty. That was an ungracious act on the part of the detractors of Tan Sri T.J. Danaraj. He had gone out of his way to pick Malay students for training as doctors but he would not lower the standard too much. If the schools did not produce students with the

requisite standards why blame the Dean of Medicine? He was assisted in the selection of students by his wife Prof. Winnie Danaraj, Prof. of Social and Preventive Medicine. She was reported to be the brains of the combination. She was a brilliant student in the King Edward VII College of Medicine, had a sharp mind and was very helpful to Medical Students. I remember when my second son was a medical student in Pantai Valley, Prof. Winnie Danaraj helped him through a difficult period. Alas she was stricken with cancer of the breast and she succumbed to that illness soon after. After that Tan Sri Prof Danaraj married Prof. Wong Hee Ong, Prof. of Medicine now in private practice.

DEAN OF MEDICINE

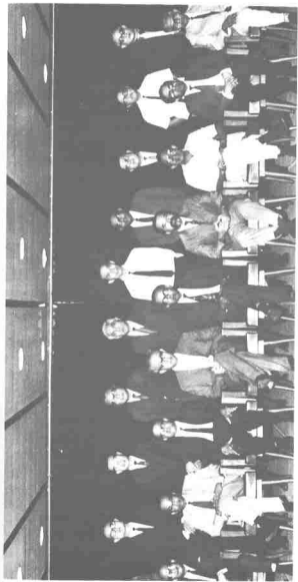
When the decision was made to establish the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Malaya the search was made for the Foundation Dean. The post was advertised in most of the academic journals in the Commonwealth but the response was poor. The few who had applied were of poor material and not worthy of consideration. We also made private inquiries through friends of the University but the response too was poor. After nearly two years of fruitless search I approached the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Alexander Oppenheim and told him not to waste our time looking for a superman who did not exist. We should look for some of our local talent who would be willing and able to be Dean of Medicine. I told him that Dr T.J. Danaraj of the University of Singapore who, if approached by the right people might be willing to come up to Kuala Lumpur. He had been Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Singapore and at that time was Senior Lecturer in Medicine. I said that Dr T.J. Danaraj was eminently suitable to be the Dean. He agreed and the Council selected Dr T.J. Danaraj to be the Prof. of Medicine after which he was appointed Foundation Dean of Medicine. He

came to Pantai Valley and had to start virtually *de novo*. There was no hospital for teaching and no faculty but he had a loyal band of helpers including Tan Sri Mohamed Din B Ahmad, Dr S.G. Rajahram and Tan Sri Chin Fung Kee, then Professor of Engineering. Prof. Chin Fung Kee was of great help in giving out technical advice in the construction of the teaching hospital. For nearly two years Prof. T.J. Danaraj worked day and night at the construction site. He was the 'architect' and also acted as clerk of works, engineer, etc. At the end of it all, he was recognized as an expert in hospitals and I believe his work was recognized by the Alliance Government by his being made a Tan Sri – an honour well deserved. After the teaching hospital was opened, patients were admitted and students taken in, Tan Sri Danaraj faced another set of problems. This was mainly in connection with the admission of Bumiputras to the Faculty. Later on when these students did not do well he was blamed for it. I remember early in the seventies the result for biochemistry was particularly bad for Bumiputra students. The matter came up to the Council where some members of the Council blamed the Dean for the poor results of the Bumiputra students. At one stage of the discussion I bluntly told the Council: "Does Tan Sri A.M. Ismail want to have a resolution passed? If in one year 100 bumiputra students enter, and at the end of six years, are the same 100 bumiputra students required to pass? If that is so, we should tell the Dean so that the teaching staff will know how to act accordingly." Years later while on a visit to Australia I met one of the lecturers who told me of his experience in that particular examination. He had been told by a high personage in the administration to revise upwards the marks of the biochemistry paper. When this lecturer pointed out that if he did so, it would mean that there would be a large number of students who would get dis-

tinctions and that too would cause problems. He was told that the upward revision was meant for Bumiputra students only. This sort of selective affirmative action was not acceptable to a large number of lecturers and many of them left the service of the University rather than be forced to do a thing that was unethical to say the least. I am all for affirmative action to help the Bumiputra students but I cannot agree to such a selective discrimination. I have always told University lecturers not to prostitute themselves by raising the marks of one set of students. But I do know that some of the lecturers in other faculties were under the same pressure as in the University of Malaya.

Prof. T.J. Danaraj was the Foundation Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. At the end of his term of office he was re-elected without any difficulty. At the end of his second term of office there was intense competition for that office and the other candidate was Dr Yong Nen Kiong, Prof. of Surgery. The competition became very intense with *surat layang* flying all over the faculty. In the end, the Ministry of Education stepped in and stopped this election on the ground that the contest had become too personal. If it had become too personal should it be the reason for the contest to be stopped? What if the contest in an UMNO election should become also personal with *surat layang* flying all over the country? When Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj stepped down as dean he was invited to Saudi Arabia to help in the medical faculty in Riyadh. Today although he is well past three score and ten years, he still teaches in the University Hospital as a voluntary teacher. It is difficult to find a more dedicated teacher than Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj.

At the meeting of the Council when the retirement of Prof T.J. Danaraj was accepted, a few of us, mainly Dr M.K. Rajakumar and I felt that Danaraj should be rewarded by the University of Malaya. He had been the Foundation



Council of the University of Malaya.



M. M. A. COUNCIL 1968 - 1969

MMA Council 1968-1969, in Penang.

Dean and had made the Medical Faculty of the University of Malaya well known throughout the medical world. After that particular meeting, both Rajakumar and I tackled Dr Alhady at the car park on the subject of Danaraj. Alhady was then the Chairman of the Council and he agreed to bring up the subject of a Royal Professor for Danaraj. At the next meeting of Council it was unanimously agreed that Prof. T.J. Danaraj should be honoured with the Royal Professorship. It was then proposed by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ungku Aziz that the subject should not be minuted but that he would approach the Chancellor, namely the Queen on the subject and request her to agree. At the next meeting he reported the failure of his mission. In this manner a loyal servant of the University of Malaya had been denied what was rightfully due to him.

INQUIRY INTO THE MEDICAL CENTRE

The work of Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj is now acknowledged by most Malaysians but during his term of office he was under fire most of the time. His detractors were dissatisfied with the poor number of Malay students taken into the Medical Faculty and the poor number of Malays taken on to be the staff of the Faculty of Medicine. This was particularly so towards the end of his term of service.

These detractors were influential people who were Council Members of the University of Malaya. In the end the Council appointed a Committee of Inquiry into the affairs of the Medical Centre. It was headed by Tun Suffian Hashim, the Pro-Chancellor and Lord President. I proposed that Dr M.K. Rajakumar should be a member of the Committee and my proposal was accepted. The Committee spent a long time into the allegations made against Prof. T.J. Danaraj. In the end it came out with the report that there was no substance in the allegations made against Tan

Sri Prof. T.J. Danaraj. In this manner his work for the University of Malaya has been vindicated.

PORK INQUIRY

In the aftermath of the May 13 Riots the Council of the University of Malaya formed a Committee to enquire into the matter of students affairs in the University. It was headed by Tan Sri A.M. Ismail, then the Director-General of Health and a member of the Council. If I remember correctly Dr M.K. Rajakumar too was a member of that Committee and it came out with a recommendation that there should be no restriction with the use of pork by the non-Muslim students. When the recommendations of the Tan Sri A.M. Ismail Inquiry came up to the Council for discussion, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ungku Aziz objected to the use of pork by non-Muslim students. However, he said that he would provide "Pork Bars" for non-Muslim students to ensure that they would not be denied the use of pork. It seem a sensible compromise but alas since that date, pork has been banned from the University of Malaya. It would seem that the Islamic Fundamentalists had their say in this matter.

HARUN REPORT

The Harun Report recommended that those who served on quasi-government committee should be paid an allowance for attending meetings. Many members of the Council had not thought of making such a claim although we had served for many years. I remember a member of the Council, an accountant who at his first meeting made enquiries about being paid for his attendance and was told that no one was paid for his attendance. He was also a member of the Finance Committee and there too he made enquiries about being paid for his attendance. He was told that none of us was paid for our attendance. That was too much for

him. The next meeting he did not attend – that was his last meeting for he resigned after that! Many of us have served many years in the Council of the University of Malaya and we have not thought of making a financial claim. We have deemed it an honour to serve the University. Yet there were others who at the first meeting had enquired about being paid for their attendance and on being told that no one was paid an allowance they had promptly left.

STANDARDS

It goes without saying that as long as Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj was Dean the standard of the Medical Faculty was high and the University of Malaya had no difficulty when the General Medical Council team from Britain visited Kuala Lumpur. Right from the foundation of the faculty Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj sought recognition of our M.B.B.S. by the GMC. Most doctors did care for recognition by the GMC but there were others who said that Malaysia got nothing by the GMC recognition. When our degree was recognised by the GMC it denoted that at least we have achieved a certain level of competence. After Tan Sri Prof T.J. Danaraj left the Medical Faculty, the standard in the faculty dropped and in one visit the GMC was unhappy with what they saw and they made it clear that if we did not pull up our socks we could lose our recognition. They expressed their dissatisfaction on two counts. One was the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the language of instruction and of examination. This had nothing to do with the internal politics of this country. The visitors visited the Medical Library in the University Hospital and found that there were hardly any medical books in Malay. This was the situation more than ten years ago and the situation has not changed today more than ten years later. The visitors were not satisfied with the standard of the pre-medical students.

Their standard was not the same as the HSC (Higher School Certificate) students. When these students entered year one of the medical course, the casualty rate amongst them was great and there was a hue and cry against the teachers. In this chapter I have already related the outcry against the failure of the biochemistry students. The standard of the pre-medical students has not improved much after more than a decade. The standard in our seven universities has dropped a little since the late sixties. Then there was only one university, the University of Malaya, but today there are seven universities and as a result the standard is bound to suffer. Successive Ministers of Education have warned against the falling standards in our universities but the honest critic must agree that our standards have fallen, especially in English. Today most employers are appalled by the standard of English of our graduates.

BLACK LIST

It is not generally known outside the portals of the University that each university keeps a black list to keep out unwelcome staff. I found this out when Encik Kassim Ahmad failed to get picked as a staff of the University of Malaya. He had taught in the London School of Economics, England and yet when he applied for a job with the University of Malaya he was rejected! When his application reached the Council I asked for his application to be reconsidered a second time. He appeared before the Selection Board a second time and the result was the same! When this case before the Council failed a second time I found that he had been black listed by the almighty Special Branch! To be fair to the Special Branch it has used this special power very sparingly.

MUSA HITAM

When Encik Musa Hitam was in the political wilderness he applied for the post of a lecturer in political science. When his case came before the Council, quite a few of the members of the Council were in a quandary. These were the government representatives. Should they support the application or oppose it? Their instructions for once had not reached them. There was no such hesitation in the case of the independent members, mainly the representatives of the Guild of Graduates who all supported the application. Our stand was that the application should stand on its own merit. If he was deemed to be able to do the job and had the time, he should be appointed. A decision was postponed to the next meeting. At the next meeting, orders had come down to support the application. Apparently he had become *persona grata* by them. But it was too late as Encik Musa Hitam had been appointed the head of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) and so he could not accept the post even if he was appointed. This incident showed that the representatives of the Guild of Graduates were impartial and had no axe to grind while those representing the government had to toe the government line.

LL.D (HON)

Owing to the new legislation, the Council of the University of Malaya was dissolved and fresh elections took place. The new Council was loaded with government representatives but nevertheless I took part in the election and lost. I was asked not to contest the election and as a reward would be given the post of Deputy Chairman but I was never one to withdraw from an election and although I lost I had made a point. When I stepped down from the Chairmanship of the Council I was given an LL.D (Hon), Doctor of Law and I was glad that my service to the Council had been recog-

nized by my colleagues. In 1976 I had a stroke but I carried on in the council till my term ended in 1978 after serving the Council of the University of Malaya for nearly two decades.

I had enjoyed my service in the Council of the University of Malaya. I had served as Chairman of the Council for one year — the only non-Malay to have held that post.

CHAPTER 9

KING EDWARD VII COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

I NOW COME to the King Edward VII College of Medicine and the Alumni Association. The College of Medicine was founded in 1905 which makes it the oldest institution of higher education in Singapore and Malaysia. The first attempt to start a medical school was made by Dr Max Simon, the Principal Civil Medical Officer, Singapore. That was in 1889 and the medical school was scheduled to have been started in 1890 but unfortunately no candidate could pass the preliminary entrance examination in that year. In the succeeding year only two candidates passed and as it was not feasible to start a medical school with two students the project was abandoned and the young men continued to be sent to the Madras medical College where they were trained as Assistant Surgeons. At the end of the 19th century the British were not that keen to start an institution of higher learning in Singapore. It was the Chinese who were keen on this project. In September 1904 a second and successful attempt was made by the Chinese and the non-European communities led by Mr Tan Jiak Kim petitioned the Governor of the Straits Settlement for the establishment of a medical school. Sufficient funds were raised for the purchase of the old Female Lunatic Asylum at Sepoylines and converted into classrooms and offices. The biggest contribution was TAN JIAK KIM. I was fortunate that when I entered the anatomy department in 1940 one of his descendants, Dr Tan was a lecturer in anatomy.

The Medical School was founded in 1905 and it is named the Straits and Federated Malay States Government Medical School. In 1912 it received a large donation from the King Edward VII Memorial Fund and in 1913 the name of the school was changed to King Edward VII Medical School and in 1921 the name was finally changed to King Edward VII College of Medicine.

The first pioneering class of five students included Chen Su Lan and that class became the first Licentiates of the Straits and Federated Malay State Government Medical School in 1910. Dr Chen Su Lan became the doyen of the medical fraternity in Singapore after World War II. He was the leading private practitioner, he mounted a campaign against opium smoking then legalised by the colonial masters and he was appointed a member of the Singapore Legislated Council soon after World War II. Two of his sons, Chen Chi Nan and Chen Chi Wei graduated from the University of Malaya in the fifties. Dr Chen Su Lan was the leading figure of the Alumni Association when it was formed.

In 1911 the Tan Teck Guan building was added to the Medical School. When I joined the King Edward VII College of Medicine in 1939, the Tan Teck Guan Building was used as the Department of Anatomy. It was built from funds donated by Mr Tan Chay Yan in memory of his father. This building served as the administrative block consisting of the Principal's and clerks offices, library and a pathology museum.

In 1920 approval was given to build a new college building and in 1923 the foundation stone was laid. In February 1926 the brand new building was officially opened by the Governor of the Straits Settlement, Sir Lawrence Nunns Gulleamad. The need for higher education had not been satisfied and in 1929 the School of Dentistry

was opened in the College and in 1935 the School of Pharmacy was added.

After World War II the pressure for higher education in Singapore and Malaysia became greater and the Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders's Commission visited Singapore and Malaya and the College of Medicine and Raffles College as well. I was in the final year of the College of Medicine at that time and the Carr-Saunders's Commission met both the graduates and the students of both the Colleges. The talk then was to start a University College and get it affiliated to establish a university like the London University. I suppose the Carr-Saunders's Commission was impressed by what they saw and the King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College formed the University of Malaya to be sited in Johore Bahru. The King Edward VII College of Medicine was to become the Faculty of Medicine of the new University of Malaya. In 1962 it became the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Singapore which in 1982 became the National University of Singapore.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The Association was the only body to represent the interest of the local doctors. There was the Singapore Branch of the British Medical Association but it mainly looked after the interest of the orang puteh. The giants of those days included Dr V. Moothutamby, a State Assemblyman of Johore and he was practising in Johore Bahru, Dr C.J. Paglan, Dr V. Thambipillai, one-time lecturer in the Department of Anatomy, Dr Ang Swee Hian, Dr William Heng, Tan Sri Dr Tay Teck Eng, doyen of the local graduates in Singapore, Dr B.R. Sreenivasan, a prominent practitioner of Vice-Chancellor, University of Malaya, Dr Loh Poon Lip, Tan Sri Dr T.J. Danaraj etc. Then there were some of the giants of the Alumni Association when I entered the King Edward VII

College of Medicine in 1939. In those days before the outbreak of World War II in the East we the junior students were invited to the clinical meeting run by the Alumni Association. The weekly meetings were mainly organised by Tan Sri T.J. Danaraj with Dr B.R. Sreenivasan as the head of the Alumni Association. I can still remember that Tan Sri Dr T.J. Danaraj was the secretary of the association and the live-wire of the weekly clinical meetings. It was he who invited and cajoled the clinical students to join these clinical meetings and looking back I must confess that I have benefited from the clinical meetings.

CLUB-HOUSE

After the war in the Far East it was felt that there was a need for a club-house to cater for the needs of the new graduates to hold meetings and to socialise. In 1952 an application was made to the Government for the lease of a site in the General Hospital compound. The application was approved and a 99 year lease granted on No. 4A, College Road. For the next few years nothing much was done to repair and renovate the building. The official opening of the centre was made in 1955 and the building was underused and in early 1960 the Alumni Association woke up and decided to go on a financial campaign to renovate the Centre. A two man committee consisting of Prof. A.A. Sandoshan and Dr Chee Phui Hing, alias Agong went on a money collecting trail squeezing money from the rich doctors from Singapore to Perlis. They were royally and loyally received and entertained. Donation was freely given and these included Dr Chen Su Lan of Singapore, Dr Liew Foo San of Batu Pahat, Dr Chong Ah Khoon, Muar, Dr V. Sreeneratnam from Seremban, Dr Soo Kim Lan, Kuala Lumpur, Dr W. Moreira and Dr Kanganappan of Ipoh, Dr Tan Cheng Leng and Dr Markandu of Taiping, Dr Lee Keng

Soon and Tan Seng Yeow of Penang, Dr Mahathir Mohamed of Alor Star and Dr Abdul Aziz B. Omar, Dr Ezanee Merican and Dr Chiam Chong Woo from Kota Bahru.

After the renovation the Centre began to be used more and more by the graduates mainly in Singapore. *Pari Passu* more professional bodies began to have offices in the Centre. These included the Academy of Medicine, the Singapore Dental Association, the Pharmaceutical Association of Singapore and the Singapore Medical and Dental Offices. The Alumni Association annual reunions were held and with the passage of years they became more and more popular. This was the era when the Alumni was mainly run by the post World War II graduates. There were some who were of the pre-World Era. These included Dr W. Moreira, Dr B. R. Sreenevisan, Tan Sri Dr Tay Teck Eng, Dr Tan Chik Chua, Dr Kanagasingam, Dr V. Thambipillai, Dr C.G. Foo etc. These were the senior doctors who guided my contemporaries who included Dr R.S. Ratnam, Dr Gwee Ah Leng, Dr Wong Poh Lam, the impartable Agong, Dr Chee Phui Hing, Dr Seah Cheng Seng, Dr Seow Lin Jin, Dr Salmah of Kedah, Dr Mohamed Abdul Kadir also from Kedah etc. In the fifties and the sixties I had a small hand in the activities of the Alumni in Kuala Lumpur and I remember in one year I was the President of the Alumni Association, I could not take a more active part as I was at the same time involved in politics and was a member of the Council of the University of Malaya. Also in the midst of those activities the first Alumni Medical Centre had to be demolished in July 1986 for the central expressway. The hunt for a new medical centre began and the Alumni Association was fortunate in that in the person of its own Alumnus, Dr Kwa Soon Bee, at that time Permanent Secretary (Health) and Director of Medical Services, Sin-

gapore came to the rescue. It was he who gave the new premises at No. 2, College Road to be the Second Alumni Association Medical Centre. The new generation of graduates, mainly those living in Singapore, rallied to the call of the Alumni Association and got the new centre in time for the official opening of the Alumni Medical Centre on 21st July 1990. It was officially opened by Dr Kwa Soon Bee, and since then the new Alumni Centre has grown from strength to strength.

CHAPTER 10

SENTOSA MEDICAL CENTRE

EARLIER IN MY CAREER as a general practitioner, I was frustrated when some of the patients whom I sent for admission at the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur had been refused admission. Then as now, hospital beds were difficult to come by. I understood this problem as I had worked in the out-patient department but ill patients from experienced doctors in private practice should not be refused admission without due care. On many occasions some patients passed away in the hospital itself while being refused admission. Earlier on as a young general practitioner I decided that years later when I had saved up enough money I would build a hospital and then there would be no problem of admission. In the late fifties I bought two plots of land opposite my dispensary in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman but a few years later when I thought of building on it I found that the land had no road access and so I could not build on it! I was in a quandary. I looked at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and I found that there was a piece of land next to the old Nanking Hotel. On investigation I found that it belonged to the state and had not been alienated. No doubt there must have been a number of people eyeing this valuable piece of land. I decided to try my luck and went to see the Menteri Besar, Datuk Harun Idris. He told me that there were many people eyeing this piece of land, amongst them UMNO and MCA bigwigs. Nevertheless I was brash enough to tell him that I too had hoped to press my claim for the land to build a hospital which can be of service not only for the residents of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman but also of Kampong Baru as well.

At that time I was a State Assemblyman for Kepong in the Selangor State Assembly and was the principal opponent of Datuk Harun Idris in the Selangor State Assembly. But that did not affect my application. Quite properly Datuk Harun Idris treated me like any other applicant on par with any of the other members of the Alliance Party who too had an eye on that piece of land. During the long months that took place during the negotiations for the land, never at any moment did he attempt to entice me over the Alliance Party. He was absolutely correct, if anything he helped me to get that piece of land I have not thanked him in the past and I take this opportunity to say a big Thank You to Datuk Harun B Idris, a thing that I should have done long long ago. After long negotiations the land was alienated to me with a few conditions. The lease was to last 99 years. It was granted on 13th February, 1967 and would terminate in 2067. It was to be used for medical purposes, eg. a hospital. In 1987 I had the second condition removed and changed to a commercial purpose. The reason was that a hospital might not be always viable and as such I would like the building to be used for another purpose. That change was approved by the City Hall.

Before I go further let me relate how I started as a private practitioner. I graduated in December 1949 and after working with a ophthalmologist, Dr S.H. Tan in Singapore for a short spell, I came up to Kuala Lumpur and joined the Government Service. I served in the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur. I had no intention to work long in the government service. I graduated at the age of 30 and I could not afford to spend time to work for a post-graduate qualification. I was content to remain a general practitioner. To that end I needed to gain experience and widen my circle of friends. This I did by seeing my patients in the night and talking to them. At the same time, I took the opportunity to

learn Tamil and Punjabi and practised it on my patients. After work I would go back in the night and talk to my Tamil patients in Tamil. This way I would kill two birds with one stone. I would learn a language and make friends. In this way I made a reputation of being a caring doctor and it helped me when I opened my own dispensary in May 1952. When I was in the service I would also answer calls from friends in the Hwee Ann Association. This friendship was of great help when I opened my dispensary.

I had not intended to work long in the Government Service. As soon as I found a suitable place in Batu Road I made haste to get ready the place for a medical practice. The snag was that it cost about \$50,000 to open the practice. The owner of the building in Batu Road wanted \$50,000 to vacate the building. It had been used as a tyre retreading shop and he wanted \$50,000 only as goodwill. It was an enormous sum for me but fortunately one machine that he left behind could be sold for about \$20,000. Nevertheless the balance of \$30,000 was an enormous sum to me. I tried to borrow money from a few of my medical friends but none could spare me any cash. Finally I borrowed some money from my father's friends and after the next few years I managed to pay off the loan.

Then came Merdeka and the chettiar landlords in Batu Road got very jittery and wanted to sell out. Earlier they had the experience of being forced out of Burma and they did not want the same experience in Kuala Lumpur. I then managed to buy the building for \$50,000 and the building is today used as a dispensary by my second son, Dr Ron Tan Kee Kwong. At that time too I was offered a few other buildings in Batu Road but I was foolish not to buy them on the cheap at that time.

Opening shop is always a chancy business and I could fail in practice and many have failed. I was fairly confident

that I would not fail but all the same I could not be too confident. Thus above my head was the staircase going upstairs. On the underside of the staircase I had posted a piece of paper with 30 circles indicating the amount that I owed my friends. As soon as I saved up a thousand dollars I would fill up a circle. In this way in a few years I would fill up the 30 circles and Thank God I managed to pay off my debt without too much difficulty. On the first day I saw about 40 patients which was a good start and from that day onwards I had not looked backwards. Soon I got an assistant Dr P.T. Arasu, an old friend from Kajang High School, and the College of Medicine in Singapore. We got on well together but unfortunately I had no experience in dealing with partners. I did not offer him a partnership and at the end of one year he left me and opened his own practice in Ipoh Road. Today we are still good friends but looking back over a span of 37 years I regret I did not try to make him stay back with me. If we had done so I am sure he would have made the partnership succeed. Later on I had one assistant after another and I enlarged the practice with a obstetrician and gynaecologist and later a surgeon till today we have a Medical Centre and I hope we will enlarge the practice still further.

After the land had been alienated to me I found that the battle had only just began. The first thing to do was where to find the funds to build the hospital which might run into millions. First I had to appoint an architect. That was not too difficult a task. We appointed Messrs Ho & Tham & Co as our architects. Drawing up the plans took up the better part of a year. I had no experience in this field and in actual fact there were not many architects at that time who had experience of planning a hospital. Fortunately I managed to get the help of Dr S. Parampalam who had served as Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Selangor. In that post he



Tun Tan Siew Sin visiting Sentosa Medical Centre – 1973.



Visit by Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn while Author was in Hospital (University Hospital) – 1976.



Prize-giving at Batu Road Boys' School.



Concert given by the school children at Batu Road Boys' School.

had helped to build some small hospitals in Selangor and he helped me to plan the Sentosa Medical Centre, originally we called it Rumah Perawatan Sentosa, or in English Sentosa Nursing Home. The most difficult part to plan was the surgical suite on which we spent a great deal of time drawing and redrawing. We consulted surgeons, administrators and finally came up with a three room suite which we felt was just right for a hospital of about 100 beds. Another problem was the number of beds we had to provide. We did not want it to be too big for that would mean that we would have to go up too high and besides too big a hospital would cause too many administrative problems and would be too unwieldy. There is always the difficulty to get the required height for the new building. Along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman at that time the highest building could go up was four storeys. I went to see the planning officer and managed to get a building of five storeys plus a mezzanine floor, virtually a building of six storeys. We wanted to provide for a hospital of 100 beds but in an emergency we could squeeze in 10 beds extra. As I had stated before the biggest problem was to find money to build the hospital. One day I went to see the Managing Director of the OCBC Group, Mr Lim Jo Yan, a patient of mine and while we were talking, Tan Sri Tan Chin Tuan walked in, the head of OCBC in Singapore and Malaysia. He had been at one time a Singapore Municipal Councillor and was also a Singapore State Assemblyman. I took the opportunity to press my claim for a loan from OCBC to build the hospital. He told me how he admired my work for the poor and needy of the country and for the good work I had done in Parliament. As a businessman he could not help in my political work but my hospital was a commercial venture and as a businessman he would help me. He would lend me the loan that I needed and he would lend me the loan at a prime rate, i.e. the

lowest interest possible. I thanked him for his generous offer. He had taken a big load off my head. It meant that I could go ahead with the project. By the time I had sorted out these problems and had my plans passed by City Hall it was mid-1969. Then came the May 13 Riots and everything stopped. An emergency was declared and everything in Kuala Lumpur came to a standstill. The upshot of the catastrophe was that Malaysians rushed to the embassies in Kuala Lumpur to try and get visas to foreign countries and many did leave this country. As for me I did nothing of that sort. My faith in this country had not wavered and I made plans to start building Sentosa Medical Centre. I tried to get my other partners to buy a stake in the hospital but none of them agreed to do so. Either they had no faith in this country or at that time a hospital did not seem attractive. Years later when the hospital had succeeded there were some doctors who thought of buying a stake in the building but I was not willing to take a partner for the building. The building of the hospital started at the end of 1969 and it was completed at the beginning of 1972. It is not easy to build a hospital as there are so many technical details that one has to attend to. One was with regard to the plumbing for every ward or room one had to have basin often with hot and cold water and there must be a bathroom with toilet attached. The maize of piping that had to be provided is enough to make a hospital administrator go giddy. Then when the hospital was completed, it has to be equipped and provided with beds, air-conditioners, chairs, tables, etc. There are enough to make one's head swim.

We wanted the Hospital to be opened by the Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak. The problem of how this was to be done without attracting the attention of the press and so get us all in trouble. The problem was solved by asking the Personal Assistant to Tun Abdul Razak that we did not want

any publicity in connection with the visit of the Prime Minister. This meant that we did not want any cameramen and the press to be present. The result was that the Hospital did not have any record of that visit! When he arrived I introduced him to the senior staff and took him around. The next day not a word of that visit appeared in the press. The same happened when I invited the Minister of Finance, Tun Tan Siew Sin. Contrast this with the opening of Subang Medical Centre and the Tawakal Medical Centre which were splashed in the pages of the newspapers.

EXTENSION

The Hospital is now nearly two decades old and I am now thinking of extending it. Next door to Sentosa Medical Centre to our left is an unoccupied building, the old Nanking Hotel. In 1969 it was owned by a gentleman property owner who owned many other properties in Kuala Lumpur at that time. I did not think that he would sell that property. The events of May 13 must have made him change his mind for he sold it to the owners of Nanking Hotel. Later I found that the hotel was sold to one Yeo Ah Tee of Malacca. It was then that I tried to buy the land from Yeo Ah Tee but he would not sell. For nearly 15 years he would not sell that piece of land. He had intended to put up a building but there was objection from the family. But now (early in 1989) he had decided to sell and I have obtained his permission to sell it to me. Now there is objection from my family mainly from my wife and practically from all my sons and daughters, principally from Dr Tan Kee Kwong, Tan Poh Lai, Dr Tan Kee Keong and Tan Poh Ling. They say that I am too old to embark on such a venture as I am already three score and ten. Besides I have no money! They also doubt the viability of the project. I have intended to put up an eight-storey building but now to be contented with

the present building of six storeys. The building had been done to carry a load of eight storeys. The extra space would provide for extra beds and more first class beds. We will also provide for more operating theatres as well as more space for more consultants. At the moment Sentosa has 6 consultants with about 10 visiting consultants. With more space we can have more consultants and provide more space for consultants. We can also provide for a proper office, space for a physiotherapist, etc. Right now we have barely touched all the specialities that are available in Kuala Lumpur. With more space and facilities and a dedicated staff we can turn Sentosa Medical Centre into a centre of which we can be proud of.

CHAPTER 11

AWARDS

I AM ONE OF THOSE who have no high regard for those who receive high awards in this country. When the new awards were debated in Parliament in the late sixties, I derided the awards and told the Government that the citizens of this country already had too many awards and to give them more awards would be a burden on them as well as a burden on the treasury of the country. In this country and in other countries there is also the sale of awards. Added to which some citizens have been given so many awards that there is no place to pin the awards on their coats!

In some countries when a VIP goes on a trip overseas, some of these awardees are required to accompany the VIP and that means that they may have to contribute the cost of the trip! Being given an award means that there are duties that go with the awards! And it can be a costly trip at times!

After I had a stroke on 5th November, 1976 I had to give up politics and this was not a big sacrifice as by 1974 I had thought of retiring from politics but was forced by circumstance to stand for election on a Pekemas ticket in 1974 in Kepong. I also stood for the Selangor State Assembly Election. The result was that I lost the Gombak Election but won the Kepong seat. I was the only Pekemas candidate to win a federal seat. I did not slow down but foolishly went on and on. The result was that in the morning of 5th November, 1976, I was paralysed in the left side and when I left the University Hospital I found that I could not go back to work immediately and had time hanging on my hands. It was then that I thought of writing for the press. After a good deal of negotiations I came to an agreement to write for a

Chinese Newspaper. However, a week later the chief-editor rang me up to tell me to hold on and they would tell me later when they could start. I took the broad hint that I was not yet respectable or acceptable to them. Because of my political past they were afraid that if I wrote anything controversial that might offend the Ministry of Home Affairs and their licence could be at risk.

TAN SRI

Then early in 1980 I received from the Ketua Setiausaha Negara (KSN) Tan Sri Abdullah Ayub informing me that the Government had intended to confer the award of Tan Sri, Panglima Setia Mahkota (PSM) on me. This news came like a bolt from the blue to me. Never in my life had I ever thought of getting an award from the Government. After all I had strenuously opposed the Government and I had castigated the Alliance and Barisan Nasional in no uncertain terms. But all the time my criticism had been constructive and I had been prepared to give credit where credit was due. Years later when I reflected on this award it occurred to me that it was given in Tun Hussein's Administration and he had always been fair to the people of this country and that included the opposition. In that year two doctors were honoured, Dr R.P. Pillay, the Director-General of Health and I, an engineer and academician, Prof. Chin Fung Kee, and an Anglican Bishop, Bishop Saravamuthu. When I first read the letter I was surprised and I read it several times before the full impact of the letter sank in. My first reaction was to return the invitation. This was not out of disrespect to the government or to his Majesty the King. Because I had criticised the award in the past I felt that I could not accept the award. I then rang up some of my old friends especially those in the Labour Party. Some said that I should accept it while others urged me to reject it.

I consulted two old Labour Party members whose opinion I respected, namely Dr M.K. Rajakumar and Tan Kai Hee and both of them urged me to accept the award. I also consulted U.A., one of the very few whom I had known who had declined the award of Tan Sri and he advised that I should follow what my heart had indicated. Finally, I rang up Tun Mohd Suffian, he and his wife strongly advised me to accept the award. Whatever I might have done in the past, he stressed that the award was from the King and I should accept it. I duly presented myself at Parliament House for the Investiture Ceremony. At the ceremony His Majesty the King when he pinned the award on me, told me that he had seen me walking on the road in the morning. At that time he lived in Sabah House and I had gone for morning walks near that place. Soon after, the newspapers carried the news of the investiture, the Star approached me to write a weekly column for them. They had of course cleared my writing for the press with the Ministry of Home Affairs. As a result of this offer to write for the Star, I agreed to write a Weekly Column entitled Without Fear or Favour. At the beginning all went well with my articles; they were published weekly and were well received by the reading public. But as time went on the authorities did not like the tone of my articles and applied pressure on the Star and they in turn began to emasculate my articles and occasionally did not publish them as no newspaper likes to antagonize the all powerful Ministry of Home Affairs. When more and more of my articles did not see the light of day I felt it was not worth my while to write for the press and I decided to write my memoirs instead.

As soon as I was awarded the Panglima Setia Mahkota (PSM), one Chinese press came back to me and invited me to write for them. I had become respectable in their eyes! But the same fate befell me in the Nanyang Siang Pau. In the

beginning all my articles were printed but as the years went by some of them were not published and in the end I stopped writing for them. I began writing for the *Sin Chew Jit Poh* but that stopped when I started writing my memoirs.

Writing for the press in Malaysia is a calculated risk. The law is loaded against the writer. If he makes a serious mistake he may be brought to court and the newspapers as well. The writer has to see that what he writes is palatable to the editor but he also has to take care of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Whenever I write on the government or on the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) or any of the major parties in this country I invariably have my article vetted by a veteran politician and a lawyer as well to see that I do not fall foul of the law or the government. As I have said before, writing for the press is a very chancy business that may well lead the writer to prison or be fined. When I originally wrote for the *Star* and *Nanyang Siang Pau* I wrote under the caption of *Without Fear or Favour* and I made it clear that I was not beholden to the MCA although the MCA is the main shareholder of the *Star*. I was prepared to praise the MCA when praise was due but I was not prepared to praise it when praise was not due. I must be allowed to write freely without *Fear or Favour*. To be fair, the Chief Editor at that time agreed to my terms. But later when more and more of my articles were not published or were emasculated, my youngest daughter, Ms Tan Poh Lai, a government employee, remarked that my articles had lost their favour and should be captioned with *Fear and Without Flavour!!*

DARJAH PADUKA MAHKOTA SELANGOR (DPMS)

Soon after the death of my mother in 1973, when I was doing a ward round in the morning in Sentosa Medical Centre, I received a telephone call from Datuk Harun B

Idris. I was surprised as I had not received many telephone calls from government leaders. Datuk Harun B Idris conveyed his condolence on my mother's demise and then he surprised me by telling me that the Selangor State Government had considered recommending my name to His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Selangor that I be made a Datuk. It was a pleasant surprise and I thanked the Mentri Besar for the honour but regretted that I could not accept it for the same reason when I was awarded the PSM eight years later.

At that time I was still active in politics and acceptance of the award might give rise to complications with my party. More than a decade later I received a letter from the State Government informing me that the Selangor State Government had intended to recommend me for the award of DPMS. By that time (1985) I had already accepted the award of Tan Sri (PSM) from the Federal Government and so it was easier for me to come to a decision. Nevertheless, I rang up a few of my old political friends and this time most of them suggested I should accept it and I did. I accepted it. This time the Mentri Besar was Datuk Razali B Ali. I have not been particularly friendly with His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Selangor. This was because I would often criticise the State Government's expenditure but when they involved the expenditure on royalty I had to be extra careful. There is a law against public criticism of Royalty. During one budget session in the late sixties I was surprised to see an item costing about \$120,000 for the purchase of a Roll Royce for the Royal Family. I made enquiries from the agents and I found that the cost of a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud cost \$67,000. There might have been some rake off by a civil servant. When the budget came up for debate I asked the Mentri Besar, Datuk Harun B Idris, what kind of golden plated car that the state government had intended to buy

for His Royal Highness? Datuk Harun quickly replied that the government had made a mistake and that the actual figure was much lower than the \$120,000 stated. One result of my query that Royalty in Selangor was more careful of its expenditure and it might be questioned in the State Assembly by Dr Tan Chee Khoo! Now on 8th March, 1985 I was awarded the Darjah Paduka Mahkota Selangor by His Royal Highness, the Sultan of Selangor. Since I would have difficulty in climbing up the flight of stairs, His Royal Highness kindly gave me the award in a private ceremony after the main ceremony was over. It was a strenuous day for me as it included an official dinner in the night.

DOCTOR OF LAWS LL.D (Hon)

After I had served the Council of the University of Malaya for more than 12 years and had ceased to be the Chairman of the Council in 1971 the University of Malaya decided to award me with a Doctor of Laws. Needless to say I was glad for it that my work for the University of Malaya since 1959 had been recognized. At that convocation two others who had rendered outstanding service to the University of Malaya had also been awarded honorary degrees. They were Tun Suffian Hashim LL Letters who had served the University of Malaya as Pro-Chancellor and Tan Sri Mohamed Din B Ahmad MD (Doctor of Medicine) who had served as Council member and as Director-General of Health. He had rendered years of service to the infant Faculty of Medicine of the University. Tun Suffian was of course a distinguished Lord President who is now in retirement. He had served as Pro-Chancellor for about a quarter of a century. The citation for me was read by Prof. Fatimah Don and it read as follow:

"Ampun Tuanku,

Tahun 1919 – tamatnya Perang Dunia I merupakan satu rahmat – tetapi bagi satu keluarga Tan di Kampong Cheras, Selangor, rahmat ini merupakan kelahiran seorang cahaya mata yang diberi nama Chee Khoon. Masa berlalu - bayi Tan kian hari bertambah besar, hingga pada hari ini kelihatan di khalayak masyarakat tanahair seorang dewasa yang berambut putih, tinggi dan renjong, yang tidak kurangnya bijak dan pintar. Sebagai pemimpin politik, tabib perubatan dan pejuang pelajaran tinggi di Malaysia, warganegara Tan Chee Khoon memang tidak asing lagi.

Chee Khoon mendapat didikan formalnya di sekolah-sekolah tempatan. Mulai di Pudu Girls' School, Kuala Lumpur, High School Kajang, Victoria Institution, beliau terus ke King Edward VII College of Medicine pada tahun 1939. Sebagai mahasiswa yang cemerlang, beliau berjaya merebut biasiswa kolej itu. Memang sudah adat hidup di dunia, manusia terpaksa menemui berbagai cabaran dan rintangan - Perang Dunia II meletus - pelajaran dan cita-cita Chee Khoon hendak menjadi seorang doktor telah tergendala. Namun demikian manusia tidak mudah berputus asa. Selepas perang beliau teruskan pelajaran hingga lulus ijazah LMS pada tahun 1949. Setelah bertugas sebentar sebagai Pegawai Perubatan Kerajaan, beliau bertukar berkhidmat sebagai seorang pengamal perubatan am swasta.

Bakat kepimpinan Chee Khoon kelihatan sejak di kolej dahulu. Dari bendahari Persatuan Kolej Perubatan, beliau meningkat maju menjadi Naib Presiden dan akhirnya menjadi Presiden Persatuan itu. Dalam ikhtisas pemilihannya beliau tidak juga ketinggalan berperanan sebagai pemimpin. Beliau pernah menjadi Pengerusi Medical Alumni, Pengerusi Cawangan Pusat Persatuan Perubatan Tanah Melayu, Pengerusi Bahagian Pengamal Perubatan Am Swasta,

Selangor, dan Ahli Majlis Perubatan Malaysia. Jadi bukanlah sahaja beliau mengubati pesakit-pesakit, malah beliau juga mengambil berat tentang kedudukan dan kesempurnaan ikhtisasnya, lebih-lebih lagi di kalangan swasta yang perlukan jagaan dan telitian. Dari tahun 1967, beliau menyumbangi tenaga dalam Jawatankuasa "Medic Alert" dan dalam tahun 1971 beliau berkhidmat dalam Jawatankuasa Jemaah Menteri Nik Kamil untuk membuat perakuan mengenai undang-undang Perubatan di Malaysia. Beliau telah mengambil bahagian yang giat dalam perundingan-perundingan Jawatankuasa itu hinggalah terbentuknya Penyata Nik Kamil.

Di kalangan politik, beliau pernah memimpin Pantai Buruh selama 12 tahun dan mengasaskan Partai Gerakan Rakyat. Pada tahun 1971 beliau meneroka jalan bagi satu lagi parti politik iaitu Partai Keadilan Masyarakat atau PEKEMAS yang memilih beliau sebagai Presiden Pertama. Kejayaan beliau dalam lapangan politik terbukti dengan terpilihnya beliau menjadi wakil Dewan Rakyat bagi Kawasan Batu sejak tahun 1964 hingga tahun 1974 dan ahli Dewan Perundangan negeri Selangor wakil Kawasan Kepong bagi jangkamasa yang sama. Boleh dikatakan kedua-dua Dewan itu agak kesunyian tanpa kehadiran ahli pembangkang Tan Chee Khoo.

Tetapi, hadirin yang mulia, keistimewaan dan kecemerlangan Tan Chee Khoo yang sepatutnya mendapat penghormatan ialah kegiatan-kegiatannya dalam lembaga-lembaga dan badan-badan pendidikan dan pelajaran tinggi. Majlis Universiti ini dan Tan Chee Khoo tidaklah mudah hendak dipisahkan. Beliau telah menduduki Majlis Universiti lebih 12 tahun lamanya sebagai wakil Badan Siswazah dan pada kala-kalanya bertugas sebagai Pengerusi Majlis tersebut. Mungkin sekali, berdasarkan kepada

pengalaman dan kekuasaanya dalam Majlis itu, beliau baru-baru ini dilantik semula ke Majlis sebagai wakil Jemaah Universiti Malaya. Sebagai salah seorang ahli Majlis yang tertua, beliau masih ingat masa-masa awal universiti ini waktu mana anggota-anggota Majlis dan Jawatankuasa ad hocnya terdiri dan ditakluki oleh expatriate-expatriate, dan beliau adalah suara kecuali yang tunggal dalam beberapa perkara. Aspek penting sumbangan tenaga Tan Chee Khoo ialah membimbing Majlis dalam masa peralihannya hingga terlaksana peruntukan Akta Universiti-Universiti dan Kolej-Kolej Universiti 1971, terutamanya memberi corak baru kepada Majlis Universiti. Peranan Chee Khoo dalam memajukan pelajaran tinggi sudah pun diakui oleh Kementerian Pelajaran yang baru-baru ini memilihnya untuk menganggotai Majlis Penasihat Pelajaran Tinggi di Malaysia.

Ampun Tuanku,

Dalam bidang pendidikan am beliau tidak ketinggalan menyumbangkan tenaga bakti. Beliau meluangkan masa untuk menjadi pengerusi lembaga pengurus beberapa buah sekolah rendah dan menengah. Bak resmi padi, makin berisi makin tunduk, Tan Chee Khoo insaf dan sedar akan kesusahan murid-murid "tersekat-budaya". Kepada mereka beliau memberi galakan yang sewajarnya. Beliau telah menubuhkan biasiswa-biasiswa dan hadiah-hadiah seperti Pingat Gates dan Biasiswa Tan Chin Ghee di High School Kajang dan Biasiswa Tay Kim Siew di Fakulti Perubatan, Universiti ini.

Hadirin yang terhormat, Khidmat dan bakti Tan Chee Khoo kepada Universiti dan Negara Malaysia sudah pun dapat diakui. Wajarlah masanya untuk nama Tan Chee Khoo ditambahkan seri oleh Majlis Konvokesyen hari ini.

Ampun Tuanku,



The Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan of Pahang, conferring the PSM on the Author (1980).



The Sultan of Selangor conferring the DPMS on the Author.

Patik mempersilakan Tuanku Canselor menganugerahkan kepada Tan Chee Khoon Ijazah Kehormat Doktor Undang-Undang.

Amongst the three honorary graduans I was appointed by Tun Suffian Hashim, then a Pro-Chancellor of the University of Malaya to make the speech on behalf of the honorary graduans. My speech read as follows:

UCAPAN OLEH LULUSAN KEHORMAT

Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agong, juga Canselor Universiti Malaya, Yang Berhormat Menteri-Menteri, Tuan-tuan Yang Terutama, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan:

Berucap sebagai seorang siswazah kehormat dan sebagai seorang yang mempunyai hubungan dengan Universiti Malaya sejak dari ia ditubuhkan, patik ingin menyembahkan bahawa Universiti ini amat bertuah dan menjunjungkan yang tak terhingga atas limpah perkenan Duli Tuanku menjadi Canselornya.

Di bawah naungan dan pimpinan Duli Tuanku patik tidak syak Universiti ini akan bertambah-tambah maju jaya lagi.

Ampun Tuanku,

Dalam suasana yang penuh istiadat dan bersejarah ini, perkenankanlah patik menyatakan penghargaan kepada Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-haj bekas Perdana Menteri iaitu canselor yang Duli Tuanku gantikan serta yang patik pacal sekalian kenal mesra dengan panggilan Tunku, sama ada dalam sifat beliau sebagai Perdana Menteri mahupun sebagai Canselor Universiti ini. Tidak dapat disangkal bahawa di bawah pimpinan bijaksana beliau lah Universiti ini telah sampai kepada peringkat kemajuan yang dicapainya setakat ini. Kepada beliau patik ingin berkata: "Tuanku,

patik sekalian berterima kasih terhadap segala apa yang telah Tuanku laksanakan bagi Universiti ini. Mudah-mudahan Allah akan mencurahkan rahmatnya kepada Tunku”.

Ampun Tuanku,

Pada kesempatan ini patik ingin mengucapkan terima kasih kepada pemedato umum kerana kata-kata sanjungannya terhadap diri patik dan patik juga ingin berkata bahawa patik berasa amat berbahagia dapat berucap bagi pihak siswazah-siswazah kehormat, rakan patik.

Patik suka hendak bercerita darihal tiga orang anak kampung yang dilahirkan pada abad kedua dalam kurun ini.

Yang Sulung lahir di sebuah kampung di negeri Perak dan mendapat hadiah biasiswa ke Kolej Perubatan King Edward Ketujuh di Singapura serta memuncak mencapai kerjanya yang cemerlang menjadi Ketua Pengarah Perubatan pertama, Malaysia. Beliau ialah siswazah kehormat rakan patik Tan Sri Mohamed Din bin Ahmad.

Yang seorang lagi telah juga lahir di sebuah kampung di tebing Sungai Perak, memenangi Biasiswa Queen, menuntut di Cambridge dan sekarang menjadi hakim terkemuka Mahkamah Rayuan Persekutuan dan pengarang Laporan Suffian. Umumnya beliau bukan seorang pengarang yang laris di negara ini tetapi sekiranya beliau meninggalkan mahkamah dan menceburkan diri dalam bidang kesusasteraan nescayalah ia akan menjadi pengarang yang terlaris dan dapat mengumpulkan wang dengan banyak dalam bank. Walau bagaimanapun beliau telah ditakdirkan untuk memegang jawatan undang-undang yang paling tinggi di negara ini.

Siswazah kehormat yang ketiga telah juga dilahirkan di sebuah kampung sebelas batu di selatan

Kuala Lumpur berjaya mendapat biasiswa ke Kolej Perubatan King Edward Ketujuh, kemudian berkhidmat selama dua tahun sebagai kakitangan yang setia kepada Kerajaan dan selepas itu mengadabkan diri sebagai pengamal perubatan swasta.

Ketiga-tiga siswazah kehormat hari ini mempunyai beberapa perwatakan yang sama. Tiada seorang pun dilahirkan dalam keadaan mewah. Semuanya lahir di kampung-kampung dan mereka tidak mensia-siakan peluang yang mereka perolehi.

Ampun Tuanku,

Beliau dan penuntut hari ini mempunyai lebih banyak peluang daripada generasi patik pada masa perang dahulu bagi mendapat pelajaran tinggi dan harapan untuk menerima hadiah biasiswa atau dermasiswa.

Umum tidak menyedari bahawa semakin besar dari pendapatan negara telah digunakan untuk membiayai pelajaran, teristimewa pelajaran tinggi. Demikian juga, umum tidak mengetahui bahawa kos untuk pelajaran tinggi, khususnya di bidang perubatan dan sains terlalu mahal.

Semua universiti kita adalah dibiayai sepenuhnya dari wang orang ramai dan patik tidak nampak apa-apa perubahan. Patik tidak melihat orang perseorangan mahupun perbadanan swasta memberi sumbangan terhadap kos bagi mengendalikan universiti-universiti kita.

Oleh itu patik merayu dengan sesungguhnya kepada yayasan-yayasan, firma-firma perniagaan besar dan para dermawan supaya menubuhkan biasiswa-biasiswa dan Kumpulan Wang Pinjaman Mahasiswa untuk menolong penuntut-penuntut, yang, meskipun telah diberi tempat di universiti-universiti kita tetapi sukar hendak mendapat wang bagi memasuki universiti-universiti itu. Penuntut yang

cemerlang yang memperoleh empat atau lima distinction dalam Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan tidaklah susah mendapat biasiswa tetapi kebanyakan penuntut dari keluarga miskin sangat sukar hendak mendapat bantuan kewangan untuk memasuki universiti-universiti kita.

Patik mengetahui beberapa firma perniagaan telah pun memberi biasiswa kepada Universiti ini, tetapi biasiswa-basiswa itu tidak mencukupi tambahan pula hanya penuntut-penuntut yang cemerlang sahaja boleh berharap memenangi biasiswa-basiswa tersebut. Patik juga maklum bahawa di negara ini ada dua buah Yayasan, iaitu Yayasan Lee dan Yayasan Shaw. Yayasan yang tersebut dahulu itu telah sangat banyak memberi bantuan kepada universiti-universiti kita. Patik merayu kepada ahli-ahli perniagaan yang cukup maju yang memperoleh kekayaan di negara ini supaya menubuhkan yayasan-yayasan terutama untuk pelajaran, istimewa sekali pelajaran tinggi.

Di samping itu, perniagaan yang besar-besar boleh memberi sumbangan kepada Kumpulan Wang Pinjaman Mahasiswa bagi menolong penuntut-penuntut miskin yang patik sebut tadi.

Ahli-ahli perniagaan yang cukup maju yang telah memperoleh kekayaan dari titik peluh dan tenaga golongan pekerja di negara ini haruslah mempunyai kesedaran sosial dan tampil menubuhkan Kumpulan Wang Pinjaman Mahasiswa untuk menolong anak-anak pekerja di negara ini yang telah dapat masuk ke universiti-universiti kita.

Akhirnya, para siswazah kita, terutama mereka dari Kolej Perubatan King Edward Ketujuh, Raffles Kolej dan Universiti Malaya di Singapura dahulu hendaklah menjalankan usaha dengan mula menubuhkan Kumpulanwang Pinjaman Mahasiswa dan dengan demikian membayar balik kepada masyarakat apa

yang telah mereka terima begitu banyak daripadanya semasa mereka menuntut di universiti.

Dengan cara ini kita harap tiada seorang pun mahasiswa yang telah mendapat tempat di universiti-universiti kita perlu menarik diri semata-mata kerana ia tidak dapat mencari wang untuk meneruskan pelajaran di universiti.

Ampun Tuanku,

Setiap tahun apabila keputusan pemilihan masuk ke universiti-universiti kita telah diumumkan kerap kali terdengar rungutan dan rasa tidak puashati di kalangan mereka yang tidak mendapat tempat. Ini adalah disebabkan oleh sistem pemilihan masuk ke universiti-universiti kita. Patik bukan hendak mengkritik Unit Pusat Kemasukan - unit ini sesungguhnya telah menjalankan kerja dengan baik. Hiruk-piruk ini terdengar sebaik sahaja keputusan pemilihan itu telah diketahui.

Bagi meredakan hangat yang terbit dari persoalan sensitif ini patik ingin mencadangkan supaya satu kuota ditetapkan bagi Bumiputera dan bukan Bumiputera. Kuota ini sedapat mungkin haruslah mencerminkan rakyat negara yang berbilang bangsa. Ini adalah selaras dengan dasar Kerajaan hendak menyusun semula masyarakat Malaysia bagi memperbaiki keadaan tidak seimbang yang wujud dalam bidang pelajaran antara rakyat Bumiputra dan bukan Bumiputera. Kuota ini hendaklah dipakai sama rata kepada ke empat-empat universiti kita, iaitu, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Institut Teknologi Kebangsaan dan Universiti Pertanian apabila ia ditubuhkan kelak.

Seperti yang telah patik katakan tadi, kuota ini hendaklah dipakai sama rata kepada universiti-universiti yang patik sebutkan hingga kepada tiap-tiap fakulti.

Apabila kuota ini telah disetujui, maka terpulanglah kepada tiap-tiap fakulti untuk mematuhiinya. Jika didapati tidak cukup pemohon-pemohon daripada sesuatu kumpulan dalam mana-mana fakulti untuk mengisi kuota ini maka kekosongan itu hendaklah diberikan kepada lain-lain kumpulan.

Bagi mana-mana kumpulan itu, pertimbangan hendaklah diberi kepada calon-calon yang datang dari sekolah-sekolah desa atau dari sekolah-sekolah yang lemah. Selain dari pertimbangan ini, semua tempat lain hendaklah diberikan atas dasar kelayakan.

Patik sedar bahawa apa yang patik cadangkan itu tidak sempurna tetapi ia adalah lebih berfaedah daripada sistem kemasukan yang dipakai sekarang. Ini juga akan dapat menghapuskan kehangatan dan rasa tidak puashati yang mengekori setiap eksekutif pemilihan.

Mereka yang tidak mendapat tempat haruslah diberitahu dengan tegas bahawa mereka hendaklah memohon masuk ke maktab-maktab teknik untuk meneruskan pelajaran.

Ampun Tuanku,

Adalah jelas bahawa kita tidak boleh mengeluarkan bilangan siswazah yang semakin bertambah tanpa memikirkan apakah ada pekerjaan yang akan diberi kepada mereka apabila lulus kelak. Kumpulan siswazah yang menganggur merupakan bom yang menunggu masa meletusnya dan tidak boleh diabaikan oleh mana-mana kerajaan. Sebaliknya terdapat kekurangan besar siswazah-siswazah teknik peringkat rendah iaitu mereka yang mempunyai diploma dari maktab-maktab teknik dan pemohon-pemohon yang berlebihan dari universiti-universiti kita hendaklah disalurkan masuk ke maktab-maktab ini.

Patik kemukakan cadangan-cadangan ini kepada pihak-pihak berkuasa dengan harapan supaya mereka

boleh menyelesaikan masalah-masalah pelajaran tinggi di negara ini.

Dengan menculnya lebeh banyak universiti baru, hampir-hampir sebuah setahun, nyatalah bahawa masalah pelajaran tinggi akan semakin bertambah pula. Yang demikian, patik sukacita bahawa Yang Berhormat Menteri Pelajaran, Encik Hussein Onn telah membentuk Majlis Penasihat Pelajaran Tinggi untuk menasihatkan beliau mengenai pelajaran tinggi di negara ini. Patik juga berasa sukacita kerana seorang siswazah kehormat hari ini, iaitu Tuan Hakim Tan Sri Suffian telah dilantik mengetuai Majlis ini. Patik berasa bangga dapat berkhidmat bersama beliau dalam Majlis tersebut. Patik berharap Majlis itu akan hanya merupakan langkah sementara sahaja dan pada masa akan datang Majlis Pelajaran Tinggi ini akan digantikan oleh Suruhanjaya Pemberian Universiti.

Suruhanjaya seperti terdapat banyak di beberapa negara dan dengan pengalaman yang lebeh banyak dan lebeh ramai bekas Naib Canselor, kita akan dapat kakitangan yang cukup untuk menganggotai Suruhanjaya Pemberian Universiti tersebut. Ini seharusnya menjadi pembangunan yang logik terhadap pelajaran tinggi di negara kita.

Ampuan Tuanku,

Sebagai penutup, patik, bagi pihak siswazah-siswazah rakan patik, mengucapkan sekali lagi jujung kasih Kebawah Duli Tuanku kerana berkenan mengurniakan ijazah kehormat kepada patik pacal bertugas pada pagi ini."

ALIRAN AWARD

I have always been close to Aliran, a society for Justice, Freedom and Solidarity although I am not a member of Aliran. At times I have contributed articles to Aliran. Aliran

nominated me for the award of Outstanding Malaysian Award of 1984 and my wife and I went up to Penang where at the dinner I received the award from Dr Chandra Muzaffar, the President of Aliran, I am particularly proud of this award as a group of Malaysians has judged me to be deserving of this award. The citation for this award reads as follows:

If a government finds it necessary to continually add to the arsenal of laws that govern expression of alternative views, it would indeed take a brave and committed citizen to come forward publicly to point out the injustices and wrongs perpetrated in the society. For this reason, Aliran decided that the Outstanding Malaysian Award for 1984 should be bestowed on Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoo for his concern and courage. He has not failed to speak out against unjust policies and actions that had caused untold pain and suffering to the Malaysian people.

Though now far removed from the days when his father, a poor estate labourer was struggling to feed five hungry children, Dr Tan has not forgotten the misery and desperation experienced by the poor. In fact the days, when his family's staple diet was salted coconut and rice, tapioca and yam, had engraved in his heart a burning desire to do something for the poor. Unlike many other socially mobile professionals, Dr Tan considers it his bounded duty as an intellectual to contribute to the upliftment of those who are oppressed and in need.

Indeed, during the course of his political career, Dr Tan had many a time found it necessary to stick his neck out, so to speak, to publicly expose certain unjust actions in order that a wrong could be redressed. When many others around him were cowed or had remained

indifferently silent as their interests were not affected or because by speaking up they would lose favour with the rich and the powerful. Dr Tan Chee Khoo had the integrity and courage to point out that an unjust act had been committed. A case in point is the issue of the female *guru agama* which was brought up for debate in the Selangor State Assembly in the late 1960s. Where the Wanita UMNO had remained conspicuously silent while the Pemuda UMNO was not in the least interested, Dr Tan had spoken out against the cheap monthly allowance of \$60 - \$70 paid to these teachers.

It is Dr Tan's belief that Malaysians should take a wider view. Lessons from our own recent history often show that to be selfishly unconcerned about public issue is to adopt a short-sighted view in life. For if we speak out only when someone close to us suffers the consequences of certain unjust policies, it would be too late. The recent arrest of three PAS members under the ISA is a stark contrast of tragic irony. When the issue of the ISA was discussed in Parliament in 1960, assuming that the Act will never be used against PAS, the Islamic Party voted in favour of the Act. Today, they believe differently. But alas, it is too late for expressions of regret. The Sarawak National Party (SNAP) similarly went along with the majority and only when Datuk James Wong was arrested under the ISA, which his own Party had previously condoned, did SNAP come out strongly against it.

To remain silent and know that a wrong has been committed is as much a sin as abetting that act of injustice. But to speak out in the face of stony silence takes a lot of nerve, integrity and commitment. These are precisely the qualities we admire in Dr Tan, qualities manifested in his many years of service to the nation. Malaysians should be proud we have in this fine man, one who is courageous and unstintingly concerned; one

who is bothered enough to take pains to write a weekly column that has served to educate and publicise issues of social concern. Although this incurs the rancour of the powerful and unscrupulous and jeopardises his own comfortable position, he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has done right.

Malaysians should therefore take courage and know that what today appears to be so wrong and yet so strong and powerful will one day be destroyed and weakened. Truth and progress can be hindered or hampered out only temporarily; their victory is inevitable. The question is whether man himself is prepared to fight for truth. People like Dr Tan, because they are not afraid to stand up against existing power structures, have earned for themselves a noble role in the march of civilization.

If the attendance at the Aliran Merdeka dinner is anything to go by, then there is indeed a stirring in the consciousness of Malaysians towards what is happening in our society.

Over 950 people came to the Merdeka dinner at the Fortuna Restaurant on 1st September, 1984. They were appreciative, attentive and interested guests. It was a multi-racial gathering of people from a cross-section of our society.

Dr Tan Chee Khoo, the Guest of Honour arrived at 8.00 pm. There was an applause as he slowly made his way up to his seat. Saudari Mariam Zamani read the citation for the Outstanding Malaysian Award which went to Dr Tan.

Aliran bestowed this honour on Dr Tan for his concern and courage, his unmitigated fight against unjust policies and actions. Aliran admires Dr Tan's qualities of courage, integrity and commitment that are manifested in his many years of service to the nation.

Dr Tan in his acceptance speech stressed the indispensability of dissent to parliamentary democracy. He traced the gradual erosion of the democratic process since Merdeka. It is therefore important that the people of this country be willing to voice their dissent against the wrong doings of the government. He urged Malaysians 'to speak out on the burning issue that face the nation instead of keeping silent and be forever damned by future generations'.

In my acceptance speech I spoke as follows:

"Dissent is part and parcel of any parliamentary democracy. I will go further and say that it is *sine qua non*, i.e. indispensable to parliamentary democracy.

This country has seen three lawyers as our prime ministers and now we have a medical doctor as the head of the Executive. Under the benevolent and amiable Tunku, our first prime minister, we had the Emergency Regulations which had been used by the British Raj to stifle dissent, but when the Emergency was deemed to have been over, the benevolent Tunku replaced the Emergency Regulations with the draconian Internal Security Act.

The safeguards provided under the Emergency Regulations were swept away and all the loopholes plugged up. Thus, the Emergency Regulations had to be renewed annually and that meant that they had to be approved by Parliament annually.

The ISA need not be approved by Parliament annually. It is in the Statute book *ad infinitum*.

Previously, the Advisory Board under the Emergency Regulations had the power to order the release of a detainee but under the ISA the recommendations of the Advisory Board had to be approved by the Yang DiPertuan Agong before the

detainee could be released. In effect it means that the government of the day has a veto over the recommendations of the Advisory Board. The Agong being a constitutional monarch has to abide by the advice of the government of the day.

Then, in the mid-seventies when the students in our universities protested at the poverty of the peasants, particularly those of Baling, the then Minister of Education, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed introduced the Universities and University Colleges Act which effectively stifled dissent not only amongst the students but also sealed the lips of the academic staff as well.

Then, under the third Prime Minister, with a reputation for being fair and just, the government struck another blow at liberty and dissent by pushing through the Societies Amendment Act, 1981 through Parliament. This Act aroused the opposition of almost all sections of our society and the government had to bring substantial amendments later.

Now, when the 2Ms took office in July 1981, they gave great hope to the people of this country. They almost promised an era of liberalism where the Rule of Law would be respected. But the euphoria turned sour when the licence for Nadi Insan was withdrawn. The Printing Press Amendment 1984 was passed and the arrest of opposition members under the ISA was resumed.

It is important that there must be people in this country who are willing to voice their dissent against the wrongdoings of the government. Here I must praise and congratulate Aliran having a dedicated body of leaders and members who are willing to speak out loud and bold against what they think are the wrongdoings of our government.

I must have contributed my small share in voicing dissent against what I think is wrong with the government. However, that does not mean that I am always criticising the ruling part for their shortcomings. I am prepared and indeed I have given credit where credit is due to the government. But I do hope that more Malaysians will speak out on the burning issues that face the nation instead of keeping silent and be forever damned by future generations..."

MMA 29TH AGM

On 28th March, 1989, the Malaysian Medical Association held its 29th Annual General Meeting at the Royal Casuarina Hotel, Ipoh. I was presented with a plaque by the President of the MMA, Datuk R.P. Lingam. It reads as follows:-

"In appreciation of your service to the MMA from the President and Council Members of the MMA."

At the same time I was made an Honorary Member of the MMA. I wish to thank the MMA for the honour it has bestowed on me. I was one of the founder members of the MMA and was elected its President in 1967. I have attended most of the Annual General Meetings of the MMA and have played an active part in the affairs of the association since its foundation in 1959. In the evening of my career, I am thankful to have been honoured by the association. Thank you MMA.

CHAPTER 12

STROKE & LETTERS

I NOW COME TO the sad part of my story. On 5th November, 1976, I had a Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA), or in layman's language, a stroke. There is a history of strokes in my family. My father had a stroke at the age of seventy. He had no medical history that predisposes to a stroke. It was known that he had a very hard life. From his mid-teens till he was three score and ten he had toiled almost every day and night with hardly any day off. And as far as I know, he hardly took a day off to take a rest. As for sick leave he hardly took any and although he was a hunch back for most of his adult life he lived a very hard life. Life in Cheras did not leave him with time to moan and worry. There were not many pressures to trouble him. As such one Sunday evening in 1950 we were surprised to find father carried on the back of a bicycle from Cheras. What happened was that on that Sunday evening instead of cycling home he took a bus. When he got down from the bus at Cheras Village, he fell down and had to be carried to a coffee shop. Then he was placed on a bicycle and carried home. We were shocked to see that he had a stroke. He had no history of high blood pressure and his life had been a placid one not subject to the pressures of life. It was true he had to work hard physically. He worked from the crack of dawn into the late of night. After a few months he learnt to walk and then he fell down in the bathroom and broke the neck of the left femur. From then on he went downhill and he passed away on the morning of 8th December 1954. With such a history I should have been extra careful about my own health. After I started work as a private practitioner in May 1952 I

pushed myself very hard. After I had worked for nearly a decade I took my first holiday in 1961 when my wife and I visited Egypt, Israel and Europe particularly London. Dr Wang Gung-Wu met us at the airport and helped us to visit the city. After that short holiday I plunged back into work and worse still I got involved in politics and was elected to Parliament in 1964. Thereafter the pace of my life increased and unfortunately I did not heed the clear signals that were given to me by my body. First when I was in forties my heart began to miss a beat what we doctors call extra systoles. I got over that after a few years. Then when I was fifty I started getting mild hypertension and I consulted Prof T.J. Danaraj. He put me on Chlorothiazide. Because I had only mild hypertension I did not take the illness seriously and I did not take the chlorothiazide tablets as regularly as I should have done. Meanwhile I had developed another complication – Type II Diabetes, i.e. maturity onset diabetes. Because of a high renal threshold for sugar it meant that sugar does not appear in my urine unless the level of sugar was very high. But when I saw ants crowding round my urine it meant that I had diabetes mellitus. My mother too had maturity onset Type II diabetes but not my father. Of my five brothers and sisters only my eldest brother is free of diabetes. The other four children all had maturity onset Type II Diabetes Mellitus. So there is a history of Diabetes in the family and this complication in treatment of hypertension or High Blood Pressure. But the clearest warning signal too was ignored by me. In the morning of the debate on the Budget I had a terrific headache which lasted almost the whole day. Nevertheless I carried on with my speech. My headache was almost unbearable by the evening after I had spoken in the Dewan Rakyat. I should have taken leave for the rest of the week but instead I carried on as usual. I worked in the dispensary

and attended the debates in Parliament. On Thursday 5th November 1976 I visited my *dusun* in Batang Kali and in the night I entertained a few friends at home. That night I felt a little weak and I did not sleep well. The next day I walked to the gate to fetch the morning papers and as I walked up the stairs I missed a step. That was the last warning to me but still I did not take heed. I felt a little numb in the left side of the body but still I went to Sentosa Medical Centre and I did my usual round. I went home early and rested. In the evening my second son, Dr. Tan Kee Kwong came to see me and insisted on sending me to the University Hospital where I was seen by Prof. T. J. Danaraj. I rested quite well the rest of the day and night. The next day after I had brushed my teeth I went to lie down. I must have dozed off for when I woke up I found that the left side of my body was paralysed. That was when I first realized that I had been stricken by a stroke. I accepted that fact calmly and without any emotion and Prof Danaraj sent me for physiotherapy without any delay. I have been on physiotherapy almost continuously since 1976. I have been treated at the University Hospital, the Hospital Besar Kuala Lumpur and by private physiotherapists both at home and abroad. I have benefited from some of them but some did not do me any good. I have tried acupuncture but most doctors are agreed that acupuncture does not benefit the hemiplegic patient much. Certainly I have not benefited although I have been treated by some of them. A few days after I was stricken down by the stroke I was examined by a London consultant. He saw my flaccid paralysis and that I would not recover the use of the left upper limb but that I would recover much of the use of the left leg. Today thirteen years after he had seen me I have not recovered much of the use of my left upper limb but I am able to use my left lower limb fairly well.

The severe headache was the clearest warning signal but unfortunately I ignored it. What I should have done was to have complete rest and then I might have averted the stroke that occurred on the morning of 6th November 1976. Other warning signs are sudden and temporary weakness or numbness in an arm or leg, or one may have temporary loss or slurring of speech. Temporary dizziness or fainting is quite common. Or one may get a sudden blackout in an eye or a temporary dimness of sight. Numbness or paralysis on one side of the face is common. These are some of the most common signs experienced by patients before the onset of a stroke.

COMMON CAUSES OF STROKE

1. THROMBOSIS — In my own case the cause of my stroke was thrombosis of the left external cerebral artery. This was due to the formation of blood clots which blocked the artery.
2. EMBOLISM — A blood clot or embolus formed another part of the body can lodge in one artery blocking the blood supply to the brain.
3. HAEMORRHAGE — Bleeding from a ruptured cerebral artery causes blood to escape into the surrounding tissues of the brain and thus damage the brain cells. It is obvious that if the bleeding is extensive death usually follows but patients have survived from cerebral haemorrhage.
4. SPASM OF CEREBRAL VESSELS — Instead of a haemorrhage, spasm of a blood vessel can take place. If this happens the reduction of blood supply to the brain is temporary and there is a transient loss of blood supply to the brain and the stroke is temporary. A living example is

President Botha of South Africa who has had a mild stroke.

SPASTICITY

Perhaps the greatest disability that the hemiplegic has to put up with is spasticity. Immediately after the stroke the affected limb becomes flaccid, it loses some of its power. In some patients the affected limb loses all its power and the limb is completely paralysed. With proper exercise the limb slowly recovers its power and the limb can regain most of its power and the hemiplegic can almost walk like a normal person. Then by about the 4th month the affected limb becomes spastic. Normally the spasticity reaches a plateau and then tails off and the patient can walk fairly well. In some patients spasticity does not tail off but seem to climb up all the time or if it does plateau it stays at a high level all the time.

Unfortunately I am one such case. My spasticity has not tailed off. I have tried all the known medicine but my spasticity has not tailed off and for more than a decade I walked like a drunkard although I do not touch any liquor. Spasticity has affected my gait and made me unsteady when I walk.

One of the things that I learnt was that I should walk. At the gymnasium at the University Hospital I found that I had to learn how to crawl. At first I could not adjust to the situation, i.e. the need to learn how to crawl. Here I was an adult with grey hair and learning how to walk and being taught by a physiotherapist less than half my age. It was humiliating to me but I bit my lips and carried out the instruction of the physiotherapist. As the years went by I learnt to carry out the exercises with a grin and I can honestly say that I have been a model patient. I go for my physiotherapy sessions faithfully, week after week and

year after year. After learning how to walk for about half a year, I found that I could walk about a mile every morning. Before I had the stroke I used to get up at about 5.30 am and go for morning walks. My fault was that I did not do so regularly. If I had done so I might have avoided the stroke. At the beginning before the onset of spasticity I could walk fairly well but with the onset of spasticity I could not walk well and became unsteady on my legs. They become weaker and weaker till today I am able to walk less than a quarter of a mile.

SHOCK

When I woke up on Saturday 6th November 1976 at the University Hospital with the left side of my body paralysed, the whole world around me had crumbled. Two days ago I was hale and hearty, able to walk anywhere but now the left side of my body was paralysed and I was unable to walk. I quickly adjusted myself to my new situation and as I told myself 'downstairs I may be weak but upstairs I had not been weakened'. Many neurologists have examined me but have not found too many neurological deficits with me. I told myself that I must pull myself together and try to live a normal if handicapped life. Many a doctor had been stricken with a stroke and had lived a useful life. I was encouraged by the life story of Ms Patricia O'Neal who had been paralysed by a stroke but had recovered to the extent that she could talk and walk. She was paralysed on the right side and could not speak as well.

Fortunately for me the blockage to my cerebral artery had occurred on the right side of my brain and the speech centre on the left side escaped injury. If it had been affected my rehabilitation would have been much more difficult. As in the case of Ms Patricia O'Neal she had to learn how to speak all over again. It was a long and tedious task but in

the end she learnt how to speak. Right from the start the patient has to learn how to do things the correct way. One must remember that the extensor muscles on the left side are paralysed while the flexor muscles, though weakened, are still active. When lying down one must keep all the limbs stretched. The left upper limb must be stretched out straight and kept at right angles to the body. One can sleep either on the right or left side of the body but should keep the left upper limb straight. One must learn how to use all the limbs that have been paralysed. I remember when the occupational therapist taught me how to button my shirt with my weakened left hand but I did not do so. Instead I used my right hand. It was easier to use my right hand instead of fumbling about with my left hand. A few years later when I lost the use of my left hand and tried to learn how to use it, I found to my sorrow, it was too late. Then I wished I had learnt how to use the left hand right from the start. If I had done so I might have learnt how to recover some use of the left hand. Now more than ten years after the stroke it is too late to try to rehabilitate the left hand. But more important than the left hand is the use of the left lower limb.

One must learn the use of the left leg. Without the use of the left leg one cannot walk well. The hemiplegic must at all cost be able to walk and walk well. Hence one the day after I had the stroke I was taken to the gymnasium and forced to walk between the parallel bars. I had no alternative but to walk although I had to drag my paralysed left leg along. Soon after I fell ill, a former medical classmate of mine Dr. Gwee Ah Leng, a neurologist visited me and he told me the blunt truth that I should take care that I walk well and if I do so all would be well. As I have already related earlier how at the beginning I have walked well but later my walking has been affected by spasticity. Nevertheless I am still able to

walk although I am not steady. I am grateful to God that I am able to walk and that spasticity has not prevented me from walking.

DISABILITIES

Suddenly the patient is disabled. In the first place mentally he is affected. He is confused, has loss of memory and he is unable to reason. Fortunately, in my case I have been spared these disabilities. Then there are emotional problems. The patient may laugh or cry for no apparent reason. Depression is a major problem and so is the feeling of inadequacy. Fortunately too I have been spared these disabilities. Thank God I have not been affected by depression. It is true that on very few occasions I have asked God why I should be afflicted with a stroke. Then I console myself that I might have been stricken by a worse disease like cancer. If the thrombosis is on the left side of the brain then the speech centre is affected and there may be total loss of speech. If this happens the patient may be unable to express himself or he may be unable to understand what others are saying to him. Or he may have total loss of speech. My thrombosis is on the right side of my brain and as I have said before I do not have any impairment with my speech.

TREATMENT

As the population grows older, there will be more and more stroke patients. The family will then have to take care of its more elderly members. In the case of a minor stroke with no loss of consciousness and minimal loss of function, the patient can be nursed at home. If left alone he will be up and about in a few days. Very few are fortunate to have only a transient stroke. In the more acute patient he should be sent to a hospital where the process of rehabilitation can be started straightaway. Ideally, it is a team effort with the

physician, nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, medical, social worker and psychologist all working together.

The Physician seeks to prevent further strokes. The nurse prevents bed sores, chest infections and contractures. These will occur soon if the limbs are not exercised regularly almost every day.

The Physiotherapist maintains joint mobility and reduces the risk of contractures. She seeks to overcome abnormal muscle tone or restore normal function.

The Occupational Therapist prepares the patient to use his limbs, e.g., use of his fingers to use chopstick, fork and spoon, etc. and self care. I made the mistake of not listening to the Occupational therapist and now I have lost the use of my left hand.

The Speech therapist aims to restore normal speech to the patient and it may be a long and laborious process.

The Social Worker can provide supportive services to the patient and help him cope with his problems.

In some cases, it needs this team of six to work closely together to rehabilitate the patient.

VISIT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

When I was admitted to the University Hospital in the evening of 5th November, 1976, I did not inform any close friends and relatives. Hence it was a great surprise that towards noon on the 19th November there was a bustle in the ward. When I enquired about the reason for it, I was told that they were expecting a visit from a Prime Minister, Datuk Hussein Onn and he was expected to pay me a visit! I was greatly honoured that he was going to pay me a visit and I had not informed him of my illness. But it transpired that the Saturday before, he had been informed of my illness and he was the first to have sent a bouquet of flowers to

me. When he arrived I was having my lunch and my wife and youngest daughter, Tan Poh Lai were with me. I had a few other visitors at that time. I told the Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn that the healthy person does not know the value of good health until he has lost it. At that time I did not quite realize the high honour that Datuk Hussein Onn had accorded to me. Now after a lapse of more than 12 years I realized how fortunate I was that the Prime Minister had paid me a visit. But it was typical of the humanity of Datuk Hussein Onn that as soon as he heard of my illness he would send me a bouquet of flowers and that he himself would visit me in hospital. Looking back I am indeed thankful to Datuk Hussein Onn for his visit. The next day the newspapers carried pictures and the story of that visit and the whole country knew of my illness. All my friends and relatives knew of my illness and then more telegrams and flowers arrived at my room in the hospital. At the same time I began to have a steady stream of visitors. These included the late Tun Tan Siew Sin, the late Tan Sri Manickavasagam, Tan Sri Lee Siok Yew, Datuk Lew Sip Hon, Datuk Sulaiman, Datuk Stephen Yong, Datuk Richard Ho, Tan Sri Mohamed B Yacoob, Dr. Chong Chun Hian, Dr. M.K. Rajakumar, Dr. Syed Mahmood, Dr. S.G. Rajahram, Dr. R.S. McCoy, Dr. Joseph Eravally, Dr. Ng Chuan Wai, Dr. Yong Wee Chin, etc.

Many of my fellow doctors too visited me and of course many of my patients came to see me. I am indeed grateful for their visit and I also wish to thank all those who sent telegrams to me. I also wish to thank Datuk Hussein Onn in another respect for it was he as head of the government who honoured me with the Tan Sri in 1980.

TELEGRAMS AND LETTERS

While in the University Hospital, I received several telegrams and letters from my friends, well wishers and relatives. Here is a sample of the telegram that I received.

WISH YOU A SPEEDY RECOVERY. HOPE TO SEE YOU ON YOUR FEET AGAIN — R. B. MENON.

MY PRAYERS FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY. WITH ALL BEST WISHES — DEVAN NAIR.

SPEEDY RECOVERY AND WARMEST REGARDS — T.C. CHOONG.

WISHING YOU A SPEEDY RECOVERY. MRS TAN, YOUR FAITH AND LOVE WILL PULL HIM THROUGH. BEST REGARDS — DR & MRS CHOONG YEW CHONG.

ATTEMPTED MANY TIMES. UNABLE TO OBTAIN PASS. WE PRAY FOR ALMIGHTY FOR SPEEDY RECOVERY — M. NADARAJA.

Then there are some of the letters that I received during my illness:

11.11.1976.

Dear Dr. Tan,

Wishing you in good health soon!

Lee Kuo Ming

12.11.1976.

Tuan,

Dalam persidangan Majlis kelmarin, ahli-ahli mendapat tahu tentang keudzuran tuan dan, dengan perasaan yang amat sedih, mereka meminta supaya saya menyampaikan salam dan harapan agar tuan lekas sembuh kembali. Kami semua berharap

dan berdoa semoga tuan akan segera dapat bersama-sama kami semula tidak lama lagi.

*Prof. Yip Yat Hoong,
Pemangku Naib Canselor.*

12.11.1976.

Dear Dr Tan,

From the Newspaper we learned that you are not well. We are sorry to hear of your condition.

Please be assured of our prayers and good wishes for your early recovery. The important sessions of the General Conference and the Annual Conferences will be held soon. The church and the nation need your loyal and dedicated services.

May God grant you renewed health and strength.

C.N. Fang.

14.12.1976.

Dear Dr & Mrs Tan,

On behalf of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, I convey our warmest thanks to you for your presence at the consecration Service for the bishop of the Methodist Church in the Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur, on 5th Dec. 1976. We pray that God will strengthen you until your health is completely restored so that you may continue to serve our church and our nation in the years ahead.

*C.N. Fang,
Bishop Gereja Methodist
Malaysia.*

17.11.1976.

Dear Dr Tan,

I read about your unfortunate illness in today's newspaper (NST). I hope that you get well soon.

Borun Ghosh, I, Solok MAS. Penang.

15.11.1976.

Dr. Tan Chee Khoon,

How are you? I am sorry to read from the Wesley Church bulletin that you are not well. I pray that God will grant you good health again so that you may be able to enjoy your work and life itself. Best regards from me and my friend, Richard Ho

I write in my own personal capacity.

Monica Yeoh.

18.11.1976.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon, M.P.,

As your ardent admirer and supporter, I send you my best wishes for your speedy recovery. Have faith and confidence in your fellowman Doc and may God bless you.

With good sleep and food and more rest at home after leaving the hospital bed, you will be a tower of strength way before long.

Sim, Penang.

18.11.1976.

Dear David,

I was surprised and distressed to read that you have suffered a stroke and are in hospital. I was however relieved to read that the stroke is not a bad one and that you are improving and will be home soon. I pray that all goes well and you will make a rapid and full recovery. We look forward to seeing you back in circulation again.

Kind regards and all good wishes.

Dr Keshmahinder Singh.

18.11.1976.

Dear Chee Khoon,

I just read the New Nation today which had a few lines reporting that you are recovering from a heart attack/stroke. This is the first indication I have that you had been ill for the past fortnight. I am extremely sorry to hear about it and I am glad that you are recovering.

Your condition can serve as a clear warning sign about the level in which you have to function and that you will need to watch your health as well. I hope that you will conserve your resources and use them at the point of maximum impact in the days ahead. We need your wise leadership and we hope that we can benefit from your participation many more years. Our thoughts are with you and your family and I pray for God's blessings and help upon you all in this time of need.

With our prayers for God's healing presence in your life.

Yap Kim Hao.

Christian Conference of Asia.

18.11.1976.

Dear Mdm Tan,

The news about the illness reported in today's Straits Times has shocked me. During the Methodist Conference from 25th November to the 8th December, Divine Will, I shall try to visit him.

Rev N. G. Manickam, Taiping.

18.11.1976.

My dear Y.B. Dr. Tan,

My wife, son and I were so sad to read the news of your illness in today's Straits Times. We thank Allah for the rapid progress you are making and the care, very encouraging care from Mrs Tan and family.

Kami berdoa Kehadrat Allah supaya Y.B. Dr. akan segera sembuh. Cheer up! We are always mindful of you.

Datuk Paduka (Dr) Abdul Wahab.

18.11.1976.

Dear David,

Today, the New Nation which is the equivalent of the Malay Mail reported that you are recovering well and so I hope that you will improve from day to day.

As you know, we shall always remember you in our prayers. Only our respect for your need of wanting to be private and quiet about your illness prevented me from mentioning your name aloud when I led the 10 am service on 7/11/76 during the Pastoral Prayer. I am hoping for the day when I can visit you in person.

All the best and hope to see you soon.

Helen Tan, Singapore.

19.11.1976.

Dear Chee Khoon,

I was shocked to read of your stroke. It is my greatest hope that you will make a complete recovery. Sorry that I could not write earlier.

Get well soon. My best wishes for your whole family.

Dr Chan Kam Chuen, Ipoh.

19.11.1976.

Dear Brother David,

The Chinese press, the English press and all my close friends and relatives are deeply concerned about your health. I am not making excuses for myself but my present circumstances prevent me from going to K.L. for the time being. We are praying for you.

Wee Teow Kee, Singapore.

24.11.1976.

Dear David,

Sorry to read about your illness in the papers, I hope by the time this reaches you, you will be fast on the way to recovery. My wife and I pray for your early return to health, and may you have strength and comfort during your convalescence.

Dr Gwee Ah Leng, Singapore.

11.1.1977.

Dear David,

Just to say how much I enjoyed the weekend which not only took me from my routine, but gave me an opportunity to renew a very old friendship, and to meet your family. You have a very loving wife and a family of five children. Many of your children are serious minded and right now facing the perplexities of life where they will find that idealism and realities are often in apparent conflict. It is a time when a father is of great importance.

Hence, your present physical mishap would in fact permit you a rare chance to sit down and rediscover your family – something which you would not be able to when you were deeply committed politically, socially and professionally. I have always wondered at the energies of the concept of a kind and merciful God with the presence of illness and suffering – why should be there a place for the latter in the scheme of an omnipotence of mercy and love?

I have been fortunate that I have never had serious illness except in my childhood, but in the last 10 years, my wife and children had their turns of some serious illness. Those episodes have enabled me to appreciate how through illness, a family can rediscover itself. Once a long period of togetherness, one can lose awareness of one's blessings.

One can be in a family and yet unthink, I was shocked into such awareness when illnesses struck, and learned to see the wisdom of the poetic belief of "sweat are the uses of adversity."

Physically, I am happy to find that you have good voluntary toe and ankle action, and that in my experience means you are going to walk quite well, certainly better than what you are doing now. Walking is an experience best learned through practice than training, and daily, regular, adequate walk will do more to you than any physiotherapy. All the same, you and I have arrived at the final part of our life span when we should consolidate rather

than expand, and I think you should count yourself less, and learn to live life more.

Thank you again for the weekend, and best wishes to Mrs Tan, your children, who have all tried to make my stay a pleasant and relaxing one.

Dr Gwee Ah Leng, Singapore.

9.11.1976.

Dear Foong Ying,

Just a few lines to let you know that all of you are in my thoughts and prayers. I shall not cease in my prayers for David.

Except between 15th Nov and 19th Nov, I shall be in Kuala Lumpur. If there is anything I can do to help, please don't fail to phone me. My Ipoh phone No. is Ipoh 05-73177.

Choong Keat and Chee Lee will away in Sydney and I think the children will like me to be with them.

So long.

Lee Moong Yang.

20.11.1976.

Dear Chee Khoon,

We were very sorry to hear that you suffered a stroke recently. When we heard the news, our friend Mori had just returned from Japan after further treatment for the same complaint. He is now much better and able to walk unaided. He has been advised to do his daily exercises conscientiously, but he has admitted in his humorous way, that he is "often lazy."

I am sure that the Almighty will grant you a speedy recovery so as to continue your good work, though perhaps at a slower pace because our machines are getting old.

With best wishes to you and Mrs Tan.

Thio Chan Bee.

21.11.1976.

Dear Tan,

It shocked me to hear of your recent breakdown in health. Your deeds in politics greatly help balance the democracy. The late Mr Gerald Hawkness had great praises for you and always reminded me to support your deed.

But the time limit has reached the point for your retirement. You had done a great service to the nation and Tunku Abdul Rahman too respected your political career. Please retire and you can continue your contribution and advice to the younger generation of the opposition group.

Please recuperate in London and have a good rest. No more politics. Take care of your health. The nation still needs you and your advice.

May God bless you.

*Ooi Chong Kian,
Johore Bahru.*

22.11.1976.

Dear Dr,

I am very upset to learn from the local newspapers that you are unwell and pray that God will bless you with a speedy recovery.

You will recall that about 18 months ago I had seek your assistance regarding my son Lim Chee Kheong at the Tengku Abdul Rahman College. We had so far managed to pull through and he will be sitting for his HSC this month. Thank you very much for all that you had done for us, and we pray to the Lord to bless you with all his might and hope to see you on the early road to recovery.

*Lim Cheng Khuan,
Singapore.*

25.11.1976.

Dear Dr.,

News of your recent illness came as a shock to your many friends and well-wishers – much relieved by the of your progress and your own optimism.

May I join all the others in wishing you a speedy recovery and many more years of dedicated services to the public good.

Best wishes and do not bother to acknowledge.

?, Petaling Jaya.

27.11.1976.

Dear Foong Ying,

The first I heard of doctor's illness was in the newspaper last week. He was still in hospital.

This is to wish him a speedy recovery and good health and good cheer.

I hope he is home now. Just being in one's own environment is a tonic.

I am sure you have been through a period of anxiety and worry.

We have thought of you. Patrick sends his special regards and good wishes to both of you.

The are coming to stay with us next February.

Bless you.

Bani.

29.11.1976

Dear Comrade,

I got a terrible shock to hear that you have suffered sickness.

I feel very sad to hear terrible news but I will be very happy if you recover. God bless you for early recovery to normal life again.

I wish you good luck and long long life.

Low Kuan Yit,
Kajang.

1.12.1976.

Dear Dr Tan,

Exiled here and only reading the Straits Times sporadically, I have only been told yesterday by Michael Bong that you suffered a stroke recently.

I am relieved to hear that it is only a mild one and that you would be back in harness again soon.

I wish you with all my heart a speedy and complete recovery. I will pray for you.

With warmest regards.

Dato K.M. James Wong,
Kuching, Sarawak.

3.12.1976.

Dear Dr Tan Chee Khoon,

Sorry that I was away in Germany and I am now in Penang. I will drop in to see you as soon as I am back in Kuala Lumpur.

Wishing you a speedy recovery.

Dr. Goh Cheng Teik.

4.12.1976.

Dear Chee Khoon,

Glad to find that you are up and about. Sorry had not been able to visit you earlier.

I pray for your speedy recovery.

Best wishes and God bless.

???

8.12.1976.

Dear Dr Tan,

I am very sorry to hear that you have not been feeling well and I sincerely hope that this letter will find you in better health.

You have done so much good to so many less fortunate people and I am sure that the Almighty God up there will reward and take special care in helping you stand on your feet again, soon.

My family and I join your many many friends in Malaysia in praying for your speedy recovery.

You might be interested to know that I am back working with the Australian Commission here in Hong Kong, doing Consular work and issuing passports. Guess I am just not cut for hanging around doing nothing or passing the days playing mahjong like the average typical Hong Kong tai tai.

Get well soon Doctor.

*Mrs Siew Kim White,
Hong Kong.*

20.12.1976.

Dear Chee Khoon,

I do hope that you are making good progress and that 1977 will see you fully recovered.

You will be anxious to return to your duties and public service, but try to take things slowly to begin with.

With warmest wishes for your good health and happiness.

*Tan Chin Tuan,
Singapore.*

6.1.1977.

Dear Chee Khoon,

Your sister Catherine Hu brought the cheerful news that you are back in your home – with loved ones and under the careful and tender care of a wife.

May the gracious Lord restore your former vigour so as to enable you gradually to resume active participation in church and national affairs.

Mrs Lau joins me in extending our heartiest good wishes for 1977 to you and your life.

*Rev. E.S. Lau,
Singapore.*

I am indeed grateful for all these letters and telegrams. At a time when I was down they have comforted me. I wish to convey my grateful thanks to all of them. Alas, at the time of my writing some of them have gone to meet the Maker.

BOARDS OF MANAGERS / GOVERNORS

BEFORE WORLD WAR II education in this country was the business of the colonial power and the people of Malaya had no say in our own education. The British taught what was good for the subjects and did not encourage school children of my generation to think for themselves. After World War II when the British returned they must have realised that they could not maintain the *status quo ad infinitum*. Then in 1958, after achieving Independence in 1957, the Ministry of Education introduced a system of school boards which gave parents and old boys of the schools some say in the running of the schools. The Boards of Managers were first introduced for Primary Schools in 1958 and later a Board of Governors for Secondary Schools. In the beginning, the Board consisted of representatives of the Old Boys' Association, the Parents Teachers' Association and in the case of Mission Schools representatives of the Church. The Board then had fairly extensive powers e.g. it could appoint headmasters when a vacancy occurred and it had disciplinary powers. Later abuses appeared especially in the appointment of headmasters and teachers as well. This was so especially in the rural schools where the quality of leadership in the board left much to be desired. The result was that the Ministry of Education cut off some of the powers of school boards. Thus school heads were no longer appointed by school boards although there was some consultation with the church authorities in some cases. Then the rules were changed in the early seventies. The power of school boards was diluted and power was

once again concentrated in the hands of the government officials. This was unfortunate as in some cases the members of most boards were doing a great job for the school at no expense to the government.

BATU ROAD SCHOOL BOARD OF MANAGERS

I was appointed to the Batu Road School (BRS) Board of Managers and when I attended the first meeting, I received a shock because when it came to the election of the chairman, I was proposed by Chegu Said, a strong UMNO member. There was Cik Enchom, a strong UMNO Wanita member. I saw that quite a number of those present were members of the Alliance Party and I was prepared to serve under them. Instead I was unanimously elected as Chairman and it was surprising indeed. One reason for my election was that my dispensary was very close to the school and I knew most of the members of the board. Anyway I served as chairman of the board for about a quarter of a century until my advancing age and physical disability forced me to resign. I was succeeded by Mr Surjeet Singh, a textile merchant. At that time BRS was one school but as the enrolment kept increasing, the school was split into two, BRS I and II and there was a double session, morning and afternoon. This made things more difficult for the teachers and more so for the students. The afternoon session made it harder for the students as they found it difficult to concentrate and they often fell asleep in the class! Unfortunately in Kuala Lumpur quite a number of big schools were split into two, morning and afternoon due to lack of schools and increasing student population. This had its drawbacks as I have already said. The government should stop this doubling of sessions for our students. The first headmaster of the BRS was Hoh Chup Mee and he was followed by a succession of headmasters, most of them had been teachers in

the premier school in Kuala Lumpur, namely the Victoria Institution (VI). There was one headmaster, Encik Ghani, who had been a teacher in Kajang High School when I was there and he too had been a student in Victoria Institution. I remember I brought Sir Prof. Alexander Oppenheim to the Prize Giving Ceremony at the BRS. This visit encouraged both teachers and students. I had also managed to get some of my friends to serve in the Boards of BRS I and II. These included the late Liew Khoo Harn, Encik Abdul Majid of the Forest Department, etc. In the fifties and sixties, BRS I & II served as the primary schools for entrance to Victoria Institution. Those who came out top at the entrance examination would get into VI (BRS I & II and Pasar Road School which formed the bulk of the entrants to VI) The successful students who gained entrance into VI mainly came from BRS I & II and Pasar Road School I & II. After 1971 when the medium of instruction was switched to Bahasa Malaysia the enrolment of BRS I & II dropped drastically till today, it has about 700 students in each school. This is barely enough to keep our schools going. The parents staying in Jalan Tiong Nam preferred to send their children to Chinese Schools and the residents around that area moved to the suburbs causing a further drop in the enrolment.

SEKOLAH MENENGAH METHODIST

I am not an old boy of Methodist Boys' School yet I have been invited to serve on the boards of both the Secondary and Primary schools. I was nominated to serve in both the school boards by the Methodist Church of Malaysia. The chairman of the Board of Governors when we first formed was the late Dr Ho Seng Ong. He was probably the first Malayan to get a doctorate in Education from London. After he retired as headmaster of Methodist Boys Secondary School Kuala Lumpur, he was appointed Education

Secretary on the Methodist Board of Education. He had written the history of the Methodist School in Singapore and Malaysia and served as Chairman of the Board of Governors till 1963. His two sons, the late Dr Robert Ho, the elder of the two had been Professor of Geography in the University of Malaya and the younger of the two, the late Dr Eddie Ho Guan Lim had been the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Health, Singapore, before going on as Singapore's Ambassador in Moscow. His only daughter, Miss Ruth Ho, became head of several Methodist Girls' Secondary Schools. Dr Ho Seng Ong was succeeded by Dr Thio Chan Bee in 1964. Dr Thio had been Principal of the Anglo-Chinese School in Singapore and had been a Member of Parliament in Singapore. When he passed away in 1970 I succeeded him as Chairman of the Board of Governors Methodist Boys' Secondary School in 1970. I have served as Chairman for nearly two decades and during that time the school has had a succession of headmasters, namely the late T. Mori who was succeeded by Mr Tan Hee Heng and when he retired the new headmaster was Mr Yong Chee Seng. When Mr Yong Chee Seng left to be the Deputy Education Secretary of the Methodist Board of Education, he was succeeded by Mr Loh Kung Sing who during his term of office has produced 2 students with 5As at STPM level in 1987 and last year two students had 4As and one B at STPM as well. In the past, MBS had been well known for its prowess at football and produced good athletics but of late the school has achieved more and more successes in the academic field. For the Prize Giving Day I succeeded in getting successive Ministers of Education to be our guests of honour, namely, Datuk Tun Hussein Onn, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, Datuk Musa Hitam, Datuk Abdullah Badawi and Encik Anwar Ibrahim. I am also the Chairman of the Board of Managers of the Primary School at the same

time. In 1958 when the Board of Managers was started the headmaster for the Primary School was Mr Gan Cheong Chiah and he was succeeded by Mr Wong Lai Yuen who held that post for about 10 years. He was succeeded by Mr Wellington who stayed with the school for about two years and then left on promotion. The present head is Mr Tharumaseelan who will retire as headmaster in 1990. Judging by its success at the Standard V Examination, the school is doing well academically. Under Mr Wong Lai Yuen the school expanded and progressed well. Now the school cannot expand anymore due to lack of space and can only improve qualitatively and not quantitatively.

When the system of school board was first instituted for the Kajang High School, I was a member of the Board of Managers for the Primary and of the Board of Governors for the Secondary schools. I was then a representative of the Old Boys' Association of which I was the President for many years. The chairman of the first Boards for both the primary and secondary schools was the late Tun Abdul Aziz BMajid. He had been one of the earliest old boys of the school who had passed the Senior Cambridge Examination and then joined the government service. He was promoted to be District Officer and became State Secretary of Selangor later. After Independence he was appointed KSN, i.e., Ketua Setiausaha Negara, the Head of the Civil Service. Later he was appointed Governor of Malacca. He took a great interest in the affairs of the Kajang High School and was president of the Kajang High School Old Boys' Association for several years. When he passed away in 1973 he was succeeded by Tan Sri Kadir Shamsuddin, another distinguished old boy of the school. He too ended his service by being the Ketua Setiausaha Negara. On his retirement he became the chairman of Petronas. Unfortunately, he passed away in 1978 and I succeeded him as chairman of

the Board of Governors and I have served in that capacity till this day. Before World War II the school had a very good headmaster in the late C.E. Gates but of late no headmaster has remained longer than two or three years in that position. As such the results of the school have suffered, the SPM and STPM results have been ordinary except three years ago when a girl in Form VI achieved the excellent result of obtaining 5As for her STPM! Now the new Principal is Encik Aris B Hj. Abdul Moen and I have been assured that he will remain in that position for at least three years. The OBA and the Parents Teachers Association of the school have done a fair bit for the welfare of the school. The Board of Governors has been fortunate in having some members who have served in the board for more than a decade. They are Datuk Hj Rauf B Suki, a veteran of the Government Services and Mr E. Thirunamam, a long standing resident of Kajang. He had been a school mate of mine when he was in the Victoria Institution more than half a century ago. I have given him a Gates Medal for the top boy at the SPM Examination and the Tan Chin Ghee Scholarship for the top boy in Form IV and a medal for the top student at STPM Examination. Then I have given a Tay Kim Siew Medal to the student coming top in Form VI Examination.

I have also served on several school boards in Kepong, Jinjang North, Batu Village, etc. These schools take up a great deal of my spare time. As a result, I had to decline to serve on the Boards of these schools. Today, I am only connected with the Methodist Boys' School K.L. and the Kajang High School and soon because of advancing age I too have to retire from them as well. I have enjoyed being of service to the rising generation in our schools.

Since 1989, I have retired from the Methodist Boy's School and the Kajang High School and today I am free of any connection with any school.

CHAPTER 14

5TH TUN (DR) ISMAIL ORATION ON 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1983

ON 26TH MAY, 1973, I was appointed a member of the Academy of Medicine together with Tan Sri R.S. Sathiah. At the same time the Honorary Membership was conferred on Tun Dr Ismail B Abdul Rahman. The awards were made at a dinner at the Lake Club. I was of course glad to be honoured by the Academy of Medicine. Then on 8th September, 1983 I was further honoured by the Academy of Medicine and I was invited to deliver the Tun Dr Ismail Oration. The first oration was delivered by Tun Suffian B Hashim in 1974 and I was the fifth Orator to be so honoured. Before I delivered the oration the citation on me was read out by Datuk Dr G.A. Sreenevasan, Scribe of the Academy. The citation read as follows:

Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, Yang di-Pertua Congress Perubatan Malaysia-Singapore, Yang Berhormat En. Yeoh Poh San, Wakil Menteri Kesihatan, Master Perubatan Academy Malaysia, Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon, Yang di-Pertua Dewan Negara, Tuan-Tuan Yang Terutama, Duta-Duta Yang Berbahagia, Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato-Dato, Ahli-Ahli Yang Berhormat.

This is a unique and special occasion for the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia for two reasons. We have today conferred on our dynamic and indefatigable Prime Minister, who is a member of our profession, holding the highest political office in the land, the honorary membership of our Academy. Secondly, it is

also unique in that a distinguished former member of the opposition, who is also a member of our profession, is to deliver an oration to honour the memory of our former Minister of Home Affairs, Tun Dr Ismail bin Dato Haji Abdul Rahman.

It says a lot for the maturity of our country, our political system and our national leaders that such an event is possible.

Now about the Fifth Tun Dr Ismail Orator, Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon. How can I introduce a man who needs no introduction? I need not introduce him to the audience and you can find his name in the programme but our orator is too well-known for a formal introduction. And yet I have been given the singular honour to do just that by the Master and members of the Council of the Academy of Medicine.

Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon was born on the 4th of March 1919 in a farm at the 11th mile, Cheras Road, Kuala Lumpur. Like some of us, he started primary education at a girl's school, in his case the Pudu English Girls' School whence he proceeded to High School, Kajang and thence to the Victoria Institution. In the Victoria Institution he topped many examinations and won several prizes. In 1939 with scholarships from the King Edward VII College of Medicine and the Victoria Scholarship from the Victoria Institution, he entered the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore. The Japanese Occupation interrupted his studies and he finally graduated in 1949. As a medical student he was first Treasurer, then Vice President and finally in 1948 elected President of the Medical College Union. After working in the Government for two years he went into private practice in May 1952 in Kuala Lumpur and until today continues to see his own quota of patients.

With faith and foresight he developed his general practice into a medical centre which is today function-

ing as the Sentosa Medical Centre. Even with the vicissitudes of changing fortunes, which is a feature of politics and politicians, he was a Member of the Dewan Rakyat for the Constituency of Batu and of the Selangor State Assembly for the Constituency of Kepong from 1964 to 1978. During his political career he has untiringly spoken up for what he believed to be right and just, as a responsible member of His Majesty's opposition. In this way he has helped to nurture the growth of our democratic system.

As a member of the medical profession he has served in many capacities and was a Committee member of the Central Branch of the Alumni Association, King Edward VII College of Medicine from 1950 to 1960 and its Chairman in 1958. After serving as Central Branch Chairman of the Malayan Medical Association in 1964 he became the President of the Malayan Medical Association in 1967. He is the oldest serving member of the Malaysian Medical Council and has been on this Council from 1965 to date. The Guild of Graduates of the University of Malaya elected him in 1959 as its representative to serve on the Council of the University of Malaya. In 1967, he was elected Vice-Chairman of the University Council and in 1971 he became its Chairman. In September 1971, he was conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws by the Chancellor of the University of Malaya, Her Royal Highness, the Sultanah of Kedah.

The number of other Committees, educational institutions, Old Boys Associations and Public Bodies on which he has served and is still serving are too numerous to be enumerated.

David has been a quiet, modest man who has endeared himself to his professional colleagues and patients and I am sure also to his constituents whom he had served for years with dedication. He has an

inexhaustible memory for facts and anecdotes of our country's history. Throughout his life, David has combined his career in medicine, politics, university and church work with an enviable equanimity and ease and has never visibly displayed either the fruits of success or the pangs of defeat. He rarely reveals his emotions like that of a shrewd poker player. I am sure some of his old political opponents regarded him as the inscrutable oriental.

To those of us who practise the art of medicine and regard the honourable practice of this art as an ultimate test of our character, Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon by his example has brought out the best in this tradition and makes us proud he is one of us. In the Medical Council he has never hesitated to voice his anger against those who bring discredit to the profession.

As a lay leader of the Methodist Church, he has spoken on moral and ethical issues and taken part in many of the church's activities.

He is ever willing to use his influence in any way he can to help people of all races and in all walks of life. It is well known that he has a soft corner for the underdog. Without much flourish he has given scholarships and monetary gifts to needy students. His simplicity is disarming and one cannot help but be reminded of the famous words "Nothing is more simple than greatness; indeed, to be simple is to be great".

Above all, beyond what lesser mortals like us would regard a period of retirement, especially after being incapacitated with a stroke, David calmly and with grim determination launched himself unhesitatingly into a new area of public life as an incisive commentator on national affairs and a watch dog of public servants by writing in the weekly column under the title "Without Fear Or Favour" since September 1980. In June 1980, His

Majesty, The Yang di-Pertuan Agong conferred upon him the title of "Tan Sri".

David married in 1944 while still a medical student and his wife has been a tower of strength to him throughout his eventful life as a medical practitioner, politician and especially during days of his ill-health. We are happy to see her today.

Mr President, Mr Prime Minister, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is this man of many parts, a highly respected member of our profession, an astute politician with an innate sense of history, integrity and fairplay and above all a kind and sincere man that I present to you to deliver the Fifth Tun Dr Ismail Oration."

Saudara Pengerusi Majlis, YAB Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, Perdana Menteri, Malaysia dan isterinya Datin Seri Siti Hasmah, dif-dif terhormat, ahli-ahli Akademik Perubatan Malaysia dan Singapura, saudara-saudara dan saudari-saudari yang dihormati sekalian.

Terlebih dahulu izinkan saya mengucapkan setinggi terima kasih terhadap jemputan kepada saya memberi Oration Tun (Dr) Ismail yang kelima pada petang ini. I wish to reiterate in English what I said in Bahasa Malaysia a little while ago that I am greatly honoured to be invited to make the 5th Tun (Dr) Ismail Oration and I wish to thank the Academy of Medicine, Malaysia for their kind invitation and the high honour it has bestowed on me. I also wish to thank Datuk Dr G.A. Sreenevasan, a former Master of the Academy of Medicine, Malaysia for the kind words he has said about me.

TUN (DR) ISMAIL

Tun Mohamed Suffian in the first Tun (Dr) Ismail Oration which was delivered on 5th September, 1974 in

Kuala Lumpur said that he had known the late Tun Dr Ismail for 25 years before he passed away on the morning of 3rd August, 1973, 10 years ago. I first met the late Tun Dr Ismail in 1939 when I joined the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore as a freshie and he was already a third year senior. The freshies of those days held all the seniors in awe: ragging was in vogue in those pre-war days. I still remember the pipe smoking, serious senior of those days, 44 years ago. But all too soon the war in Europe spread to the Far East and Encik Ismail Abdul Rahman as he was then, was fortunate to escape to Australia where he completed his medical studies in Melbourne and I cycled back to Kuala Lumpur two days after the fall of Singapore on 15th February, 1942. Our paths did not cross again till 1964 when I entered the Dewan Rakyat. By then he had established himself as a veteran politician and a senior Alliance Minister. After the war he returned to Johore and joined the government service but did not like it, resigned and set up a practice in Johore Bahru where he was moderately successful. But those were the heady days of Malay Nationalism and living in the same town as Datuk Onn Jaffar it was but natural that the newly returned young doctor should be drawn into the ex-Mentri Besar's circle. He was nominated to the Johore State Council and soon became a member of the Ex-Co. Later he was elected to the Johore Bahru Town Council where in the company of the then Sardon Jubir, a practising lawyer in those far-off days, they both galvanised the staid and lethargic council into action. In 1952 he was appointed an unofficial member of the Federal Legislative Council and shortly after he joined the Member system of the government as Member for Lands and Mines. This meant uprooting himself from Johore Bahru and saying goodbye to medicine and he was not to return to it till 1967 when he resigned from

servant. I shall attempt to delineate it from the angle of a medical colleague and a political opponent.

1964

After 1941 Tun Dr Ismail and I parted and we did not meet until 1964 when I entered the Dewan Rakyat for the first time from the constituency of Batu. By then he was Minister of Home Affairs. At one time he held the portfolio of Justice as well. He was in charge of Law and Order and I belonged to the Labour Party of Malaya, a partner of the Socialist Front which at that time was the main opposition to the government. And so we tangled over the application of the ISA and the actions of the police. Basically Tun Dr Ismail knew that I too was for law and order and that I did not believe in racial politics of whatever kind. However, as my party was under fire from almost all quarters in the Dewan Rakyat, I had to defend both the Socialist Front and myself in the Dewan Rakyat. Here I found that Tun Dr Ismail was scrupulously fair and straight forward in his dealings with the opposition.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

One morning in the mid-sixties when I walked into the House I found a Constitutional Amendment Bill tabled for the first time that morning. After Question Time, Tun Dr Ismail stood up and told the Speaker that he wanted to take the Constitutional Amendment Bill through all three stages that very morning. I immediately jumped out and protested vigorously. I pointed out that the said Bill had only just been tabled that morning and the House had not been given adequate time to study it, the more so as it concerned an amendment to the Constitution. I threatened to lead a walkout of the opposition should the government persist in pushing through the

Bill that morning. To the credit of Tun Dr Ismail he admitted that he had not known that the Bill had been tabled that morning and he agreed that the House should be given adequate time to study any constitutional amendment before it was debated. He then withdrew the Bill. I believe it was debated a week later. The Alliance Party then as now had a large majority in the Dewan Rakyat and it would have been easy to ride roughshod over the opposition. But Tun Dr Ismail's innate sense of justice and fair play caused him to play fair with the Opposition.

CONDEMNED PRISONERS

Another incident I remember was Tun Dr Ismail's concern over the prisoners who had been condemned to death and had their appeal to the Privy Council turned down. I led a campaign to get them pardoned by the late Sultan Ismail of Johore. I had brought some of the parents of the condemned prisoners to see Tun Dr Ismail to arrange for more facilities for the parents to visit their loved ones who then were waiting to meet their Maker in Death Row. He readily ordered that the parents should be given every facility to visit their children in Death Row. *Pari passu* P.G. Lim, their lawyer and I lobbied the Tunku, then Prime Minister, and Tan Sri Kadir Yusof, the Attorney-General and the upshot was that the Pardons Board of Johore, headed by the His Royal Highness, Sultan Ismail, graciously pardoned all 11 of them and commuted their death sentence to one of life imprisonment. That was one of the rare occasions when I met Tun Dr Ismail in his office, most of the time we crossed swords in the Dewan Rakyat. But this incident that I have just related brings out his sympathy and humanity for the underdog.

BLEMISH

But I am not here just to praise him, I will present him warts and all. I remember at one Question Time, I had pressed Tun Dr Ismail to allow a doctor who had been detained in Batu Gajah to work as a volunteer in the government hospital which is next door to the detention camp. The minister refused my request and when I pressed him to give the reason for his refusal he answered: "If I were to be operated in Batu Gajah Hospital and the said doctor is the surgeon how would I know how he will treat me?" To say the least that answer shocked me. Today that ex-detainee has been a past president of the MMA and is a very prominent member of the medical profession. Which goes to show that a minister of our government is not always right. Incidentally today the President of the Bar Council has also been a guest of His Majesty's Government as a political detainee.

HISTORY

There is no doubt that Tun Dr Ismail has left his footprints indelibly in the sands of Malaysian history. He was the first man to be honoured by being buried within the precinct of the National Mosque and this honour is accorded only to national heroes. He was a patriot and a nationalist and a good politician who believed in parliamentary democracy. He was a good parliamentarian although he was not a great orator of the mould of Datuk Onn Jaafar, Zulkifli Mohamed and of Datuk Asri Toh Muda etc. He was trusted and respected by all communities especially so when he returned to the government after the Tragedy of May 1969. His firmness, fairness and integrity was most reassuring to the whole country in those tense days. Today a decade after his death, the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia once again honours a great Malaysian.

MALAYANISATION

The present generation of Malaysians after graduating in medicine if they choose to make a career in the government service can reasonably hope to reach the very top of their profession. They take for granted the opportunities that are open to them and do not know the toil and tears and heartaches of an earlier generation. At the turn of the century the medical services were manned totally by the *Orang Putih* doctors, i.e., the white man. There were no local or indigenous doctors. But in July 1905 a Medical School was started in Singapore and it later was named the S.S. and F.M.S. Government Medical School, later renamed the King Edward VII College of Medicine. In 1949, when the University of Malaya in Singapore was formed by amalgamating the King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College and the former became the Faculty of Medicine of that University. Today it is the Medical Faculty of the National University of Singapore. The early graduates of the Medical School in Singapore although graduating as doctors were treated only a little better than senior hospital assistants by the colonial government of those days. Even the white nurses would try to bully them. Then came the slump of the twenties and early thirties when although the L.M.S., i.e., Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery had by now been recognised by the General Medical Council of Britain, the graduates were called Assistant Surgeons. Jobs were very difficult to come by in those difficult days of the great slump and the local graduates found it very difficult to be absorbed into the medical service. Some of the older graduates who are alive today will relate how they had to wait as long as two years for a job. Many had to work *gratis* for months on end before they could be absorbed into the government service.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The local medical school was established in 1905 and its first batch of doctors graduated in 1910. There were seven of them and perhaps the most distinguished of them was Dr Chen Su Lan who dominated the medical scene for more than three decades. When I joined the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore in 1939, he was still the doyen of the doctors in Singapore. He was the first president of the Graduate Association of the S.S. and F.M.S. Government Medical School and when that Association became defunct and was replaced by the Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine it was natural that Dr Chen Su Lan should once again be elected its first president. He led the crusade against the smoking of opium, a government monopoly and from which the colonial government made millions of dollars every year. As I have mentioned before the local graduates who by the twenties were eligible to be placed on the Medical Register of the General Council of the General Medical Council of the U.K., were called Assistant Surgeons and were paid half the salary of their U.K. counterparts who were designated Medical Officers. The Alumni Association led by Dr Chen Su Lan and his band of early pioneers led the fight for better working conditions and study leave for local doctors. They made representations to the Secretary for the Colonies and got the British Government to concede the promotion of a select few of the local doctors to the post of Deputy Medical Officers.

As I have pointed out before, the British Raj of course saw to it that the Malayan Medical Service was reserved for the heaven-born - the *Orang Putih*, i.e. the white man. I had already related how the local doctor had to wait for some time before he could get a job and even then he was given the lowly job of an Assistant Surgeon.

There were some local doctors who had gone abroad after qualifying locally and had obtained post-graduate qualifications but on their return they had to serve as lowly Assistant Surgeons. It must have been very galling and a bitter pill for these officers to swallow. They had the experience and qualification but they could not join the Malayan Medical Service. One of the earliest local doctors to obtain a post-graduate qualification was Dr M.E. Thiruchelvam. He had gone to Ceylon on leave and from there he surreptitiously flew off to the U.K. on his own, sat for and passed the FRCS. On his return he was refused a surgical post and was made a lowly Assistant Surgeon! At that time study leave was unknown for the local doctors. Later when study leave was introduced there was a stipulation that they were being sent for experience and they should not sit for any post-graduate degrees or diplomas! One such case was Dr Gopal Haridas, the paediatrician. He had been sent on study leave to gain experience. He applied for permission to sit for the MRCP but this was refused. Fortunately on the insistence of Prof. Hawes, permission was granted. But only just in time, for Dr Gopal Haridas was actually on board ship ready to return to Singapore when he was informed that permission had been granted. He got off the ship, sat for and passed the MRCP and returned to Singapore. On his return he was still placed on the scale for Assistant Surgeons despite his MRCP! Those of us who had the good fortune to be his students, still remember him as a dedicated paediatrician who used to see his patients every night. No wonder many outstanding local doctors who had qualified abroad refused to return to this country and serve in subordinate positions. Off-hand I can think of illustrious doctors like Dr Lim Boon Keng, Dr Wu Lien Teh, Dr Yap Pow Meng, all of them Queen's Scholar holders who served with

distinction abroad. Dr Lim Boon Keng however did return to Singapore and taught in the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore for a short time after having served with distinction in Amoy University. Contrast this shabby treatment of local doctors with the opportunities for the expatriate doctor. He went on furlough once every three years and such leave could be extended so that he had every opportunity to study for and pass post-graduate examinations.

POST WORLD WAR II

After the end of World War II in the Far East, the Tory Government had been replaced by the Socialist Labour Government under Mr Clement Atlee. The BMA, i.e. the British Medical Administration took over the administration from the Japanese and the British fondly hoped that they could return to the *status quo ante*. All of us who lived through the Japanese Occupation have suffered in one way or another but there was no doubt that the Japanese had fired the thirst for freedom amongst the formerly conquered people. The Philippines were given her independence during the war in the East, India received her independence in 1947, Indonesia had to fight for her independence and Burma too became independent soon after the end of the war. The Japanese Occupation gave the local doctors the chance to show their mettle. All the European doctors were interned and the medical services for the first time were completely run by local doctors. Despite the shortage of almost everything, personnel, drugs, equipment and money, the local doctors did a magnificent job and maintained a high standard of medical care. When the British returned they found that it was not so easy to push back the local doctors and make them accept a secondary place. In fact, many white doctors learned from local doctors. For example, Dr Vellusamy in



Author delivering the fifth Tun Dr Ismail Oraton.



Author (far right) at the 17th Malaysia/Singapore Congress of Medicine in 1983.



Dr. Tan Chee Khoon (LL.D in 1971).

Singapore trained many expatriate surgeons although he had no specialist qualifications.

Soon after the war, the British stopped the competitive Queen's Scholarship and introduced the Queen's Fellowship and departmental scholarship for post-graduate studies. Under the scheme, Dr E.S. Monteiro, Prof. A.A. Sandosham, Dr A.C. Sinha, Dr B.R. Sreenevasan, Dr B Sheares, Dr T.J. Danaraj, Dr K.S. Ratnam, Dr Gwee Ah Leng, Dr C.V. Jumeaux, Dr Lim Eng Cheang, Dr Megat Khas, Dr S. Loudernaden, Dr J.S. Sodhy, Dr S.M.A. Alhady, Dr A.M. Ismail, Dr Keshmahinder Singh, Dr G.A. Sreenevasan etc., all went overseas and returned with post-graduate qualifications. After the war, the British promoted some of the local medical officers, Dr Vellusamy, Dr B Sheares, Dr A.E. Doraisamy, Dr Chong Ah Koon, Dr C.V. Jumeaux etc. This of course did not satisfy the local medical officers and so the British proposed a Parallel Scheme i.e. one scheme for the *Orang Putih* and an inferior scheme for the local medical officers. The fight for the local medical officers was led by members of the Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine. The Alumni Association then was led by stalwarts like Dr B.R. Sreenevasan, Dr N. Mootathamby, the Johore State Councillor, Dr Loh Poon Lip, Dr Ang Swee Hian, Dr A.A. Sandosham, Dr Tay Teck Eng, Dr T.J. Danaraj etc. These early post war stalwarts agitated for a University of Malaya in Singapore (which was established in 1949) and for a unified medical service where the local graduates would be accorded the same status, salary and opportunities for post-graduate study leave as the expatriate medical officers.

But it was a long and arduous fight as some of the old timers who are still living will testify. I have shown how at the beginning, the local doctors were styled Assistant Surgeons, then they were made Assistant Medical

Officers, and very few were promoted to the Malayan Medical Service and Deputy Medical Officers in Singapore. Then came unification and all were styled Medical Officers but the expatriates got a special expatriate allowance.

The other medical association was the Malayan Branch of the British Medical Association to which all the expatriate medical officers belonged and there were also a number of local medical officers. It was at about this time that I graduated in 1949 from the King Edward VII College of Medicine, Singapore, and I started to work as a houseman. I plunged straight away into the activities of both the Alumni Association and the Malayan Branch of the BMA. Although those of my generation were housemen at the princely allowance of \$400 per month, they were not young anymore. We had lost 4 years because of the Japanese Occupation and so I was already 30 years old when I joined the government service. Ours was the first batch to have to serve the housemanship in this country. I still remember that at the annual general meeting of the Malayan Branch of the BMA which I attended when I was still a lowly houseman at the then General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, I sailed into the parallel scheme that was on the agenda. I stated bluntly that the parallel scheme with all the plums in the service going to the British and crumbs from under the table going to the local doctors was not acceptable to the local doctors. The only fair way out was a unified scheme which gave equal chances for promotion to both the expatriate and local doctors. Of course the local doctors lost out as the expatriates were more numerous and moreover they were in the positions of authority. But the Alumni Association was ultimately successful when it presented its case before the Trusted Commission. The tactic used by the expatriates must be novel to the present generation of

doctors. When the older doctors applied for promotion posts they were usually told that they had the experience but unfortunately they did not have the post-graduate qualification. And this, mind you, at a time when some of the expatriates were holding high positions themselves but did not have post-graduate qualifications! A case in point was Dr Vickers who had only the LRCP and MRCS and ended as Director of Medical Services in Singapore. But when young local doctors returned from abroad with the requisite post-graduate qualifications, they were told that they had the qualification but unfortunately they did not have enough experience to be promoted to higher posts! It was a case of heads I win, tails you lose! However at about this time, that is, in the early fifties, the Member System was introduced and very often we went behind the back of the expatriates to lobby the Minister of Health. The writing was on the wall for the expatriates and they knew that their time was up. But by now there was talk of Independence for Malaya and the expatriates negotiated very favourable terms for themselves. Practically all of them left the service with a very tidy nest egg in the form of the Malayanisation Bounty which in some cases of the younger officer, amounted to more than \$100,000! In the fifties when housemen were paid the princely sum of \$400 a month, the Malayanisation Bounty was indeed a big golden handshake to all the expatriates. But before they left they tried to stifle the post-graduate training of young local doctors. It was obvious that local doctors would have to be trained both locally and abroad. They had to go abroad, as all the post-graduate examinations were held abroad. I remember two instances when the expatriates did their best to stymie the efforts of local doctors in their efforts to pass post-graduate examinations.

The first concerns a young Malay doctor who had passed the FRCS (Edin) and wanted to do the M.Ch (Orth) of Liverpool. He wanted to have an extension of one year of his fellowship to enable him to complete the additional course. This request was rejected by the expatriate Director of Medical Service. One must bear in mind that at that time there was no Orthopaedic Surgeon in the whole country. A few of us lobbied the Ministry of Health and finally the Tunku and in the end we got the decision reversed. But it was too late as the young doctor had already booked his passage home. He later returned to Liverpool to do the course in Orthopaedic surgery. The young Malay doctor went on to head the Orthopaedic Services in this country and ended as our second Director-General of Health. Today he has retired from the service and is now a prosperous businessman. Which goes to show that doctors, even orthopaedic surgeons, can be very versatile.

The other case that I recall vividly concerns another distinguished surgeon. He came a cropper in his efforts to pass the primary FRCS and the department wanted him to return. We heard of his case and went to see the Minister of Health. I pleaded with the Minister to give the young doctor another chance. I had known the young doctor as we were in school together and could vouch for him personally. The young doctor was given an extension and passed the Primary FRCS and then to make it doubly sure he went on to pass the final FRCS of England, Edinburgh and Ireland all in 1962!! Later he was awarded a Hunterian Professorship and today is a consultant surgeon in private practice.

In the fight for the local doctors in Malaya we were led by a very small band of graduates of the King Edward VII College of Medicine. It was an uphill task fighting the expatriates and our leader was Dr S.G. Rajahram. Today although he is well past the biblical

age of three score and ten, he is still in private practice. The present generation of young doctors owe a debt of gratitude to the early pioneers led by Dr Chen Su Lan and Dr S.G. Rajahram and his colleagues who blazed the trail for future generations to follow.

POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

The story of post-graduate medical education in this country is one which most Malaysians are not proud of. I am conscious of the fact that the Prime Minister of my country is present with us here this evening and as both he and I have the same trait of talking straight from the shoulder I shall tell the truth and shame the devil. I am aware that many of the participants of this Congress here this evening are from the Asean Region and hence most of them are probably already aware of what is happening in this country as far as post-graduate medical education in this country is concerned. Therefore the attempt on my part to gloss things over would be foolish. But before I speak on post-graduate medical education in this country, let us look at what has happened on the Asean scene and then Malaysians will hang their heads in shame and see how far behind we are compared to our colleagues in Asean.

THAILAND

The controlling body in Thailand is the Thai Medical Council which is an autonomous body and conducts residency training programmes for 28 specialities and sub-specialities. The training course lasts for 3-4 years and the examination and certification is carried out by the Panel of Examiners of the respective speciality and sub-speciality board. The Thais have their own Royal College of Surgeons and Royal College of Physicians

and their certification is accepted by the Thai Medical Council.

PHILIPPINES

The Filipinos follow the American System of Speciality Board. The training lasts for 3-4 years and the certification is done by the respective Speciality Board. The Philippines Medical Association through the affiliate Speciality Board is responsible for the accreditation of training posts in various recognised hospitals, both private and government.

INDONESIA

The controlling body is the Consortium of Medical Science which comes under the purview of the Ministry of Education and is responsible for the residency training of 17 specialities.

SINGAPORE

The School of Post-Graduate Medical Studies runs the training and certification of specialists in Singapore. The school is part of the Faculty of Medicine of the National University of Singapore but is nevertheless an independent body. It is run by a Board with representatives from the Faculty of Medicine, the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Medicine. The training, accreditation and certification is done by the Board. The Director of the School is Dr Wong Hock Boon and he has done a very good job to raise the standard of post-graduate medical education in Singapore to its present high standard.

From the foregoing it will be seen that in three of the five Asean countries post-graduate medical education is profession-based. In Singapore although it is University-based the post graduate degree is professionally orientated and you do not have to matriculate

from the National University of Singapore before you can sit for the Master of Medicine (Singapore).

MALAYSIA

We in Malaysia as I have stated earlier have to hang our heads in shame, for while the other members of Asean have forged ahead in post-graduate medical education for the last decade or so, we have made very little progress and we have not as yet agreed on the formation of the controlling body in this country. It is not that we do not have the expertise or the experience to get on with the job. We have, but unfortunately the leaders of the profession have not been able to get an agreement on this important matter. The leaders in the various disciplines are in agreement where training, accreditation, certification can be carried out locally. Where they differ was on who is to "control" the National Board of Post-Graduate Medical Studies. At the beginning there were too many prima donnas around and then unfortunately they started lobbying the ministers. The Colleges Bill had its first reading in Parliament in 1974 and after that it was quietly withdrawn. In the early seventies three colleges were formed, that of Physicians, Surgeons and General Practitioners. The Obstetricians and Gynaecologists presumably were too busy in the labour room and so missed the bus. The MMA had all along been an interested party and in 1980 the then president of MMA, Datuk Dr Ezanee Merican approached me to head a committee to inquire into the problems of post-graduate medical education in Malaysia and to make recommendations there on. It was with some hesitation and trepidation that I accepted the job of bringing together the warring factions. But I had one qualification for the job - I am not a specialist and hence have no axe to grind. Besides I had not taken sides in the dispute that had arisen amongst

the leaders of the profession. I managed to bring together all the leaders involved in post-graduate medical education namely the representatives of the three existing colleges of medicine, surgery and general practice, the deans of the three Medical Faculties in this country and the Academy of Medicine. After a great deal of discussion, the committee arrived at the unanimous decision that there should be a National Board of Post-Graduate Education. The committee made the following recommendations to the MMA Council namely:

1. There should be a National Board of Post-Graduate Education with representation from the universities, the Ministry of Health, the Colleges and the professional bodies.
2. Accreditation, training and certification are to be a function of the Board.
3. All post-graduate activities are to be encouraged.

When we sent in our report to the MMA Council I had fondly hoped that we had at last cut the Gordian Knot but alas it was not to be so. I had been far too optimistic and perhaps naive as well. But I had reason to be optimistic as the report was unanimously accepted by all parties and that included the representatives of the universities as well. But soon it became apparent that certain individuals in one university were not satisfied for they had all along wanted post-graduate medical education to be based on their own University. For these protagonists of the University-based system, the real reason for their advocacy of the University-based system may be a fear (unexpressed though) that if the professionals "control" post-graduate medical education in this country they will raise the standard so high that the Bumiputras will have difficulty in passing such examinations. Those who hold such views are

doing a disservice to the Bumiputras and shortchanging the Bumiputras as well. Earlier on in this oration I have touched on the achievements of the brilliant Bumiputras duo, namely Tan Sri Datuk Dr A.M. Ismail and Datuk S.M.A. Alhady and the younger set which includes Datuk Dr Hussein Awang, Dr Abu Bakar Sulaiman, Dr Mustapha Embong, Professor of Medicine, UKM, Dr Khalid Kadir etc. I must emphasize that this is a minority view among Bumiputra doctors because the younger generation of Bumiputras with better training and opportunities have already shown that they are able to hold their own with their compatriots in other communities in this country. These brilliant young physicians and surgeons are Bumiputras who are second to none in maintaining standards. Recently one of the UKM first batch of graduates passed the MRCP of Ireland and U.K.

Nevertheless, some leaders of the profession began to lobby the ministers once again. This caused the past president of the MMA, Dr Lim Say Wan last year to appoint another Committee, under the chairmanship of Dr Abu Bakar Sulaiman to review the recommendation of the Tan Chee Khoon Committee. The Abu Bakar Committee accepted the principles and the spirit of the Tan Chee Khoon Committee but when it came down to brass tacks it was incredible how petty some of the leaders of the medical profession can be! They quibbled over the name for the national controlling body as if it mattered whether it should be called a "Board" and not a "Council"! Again it soon became apparent that the odd man out in the Abu Bakar Committee were the representatives of one of the Universities. Briefly the Abu Bakar Committee agreed on the following:

1. Formation of a National Board.

2. Training system whereby all doctors, subject to entry qualifications can be accredited i.e. candidates from the universities, Ministry of Health and the private sector be accepted.
3. Training and certification shall involve doctors from the universities, the Ministry of Health and private sector.
4. As long as the whole profession is involved this can be done by the Board or by the University.

Up to now that committee has not come to any definite conclusions and quite naturally it has not submitted its report to the MMA Council as yet.

GOVERNMENT

The government is naturally concerned over the lack of progress and unanimity amongst the leaders of the medical profession over the implementation of the post-graduate medical programme. I gather that the matter has been discussed at cabinet level and that a decision is about to be taken. I understand that the government has appointed the IAPG, i.e. Inter Agency Planning Group of the Prime Minister's Department to study this problem and to submit a report. Here I do hope that the audience will note that the civil servants are to take decisions on professional matters because the profession is divided, and in their disunity had resorted to lobbying politicians.

The IAPG has, I gather, recommended that we should adopt the "Singapore System". The cabinet is well aware that any further delay is not in the interest of the profession nor of the government or of the country itself. I gather too it is about to come to a decision on this thorny issue. It will cut the Gordian Knot once and for all. The Singapore System is University-based. Post-Graduate Medical Education there is run by a Board

which is the National University of Singapore but the Board is an independent body and has representatives from the University, the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Medicine amongst its members. But when we talk of the Singapore System we must remember that Singapore is an Island and City State with only one University – the National University of Singapore.

Malaysia on the other hand has three universities with three medical faculties, two based in Kuala Lumpur and one in Kota Bharu. Furthermore our specialists are trained in many hospitals all over the country. And within the last decade or so there is a marked shift of medical expertise from the universities either to the private sector or some of our university dons have emigrated. The oldest medical faculty in this country is that of the University of Malaya, next comes the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and the latest is the University of Science, Malaysia which has still to graduate its first batch of medical graduates. The University of Malaya has an intake of 160, UKM 192 and the USM 110 with a maximum of 160. The USM hopes to move into its Medical Faculty in Kota Bharu by the end of this year. It is no secret that because of staffing problems all three medical faculties find it very difficult to cope with its present intake of medical undergraduates. Thus in the UKM for example, I gather, there are very recently 70 vacancies for academic staff. As such they have a tough job to cope with their undergraduate programme let alone tackle post-graduate medical education. I gather that the USM recently advertised for 30 vacancies for medical officers but there was not a single applicant!! University jobs with the medical faculties are not exactly popular these days. Let me quote Tan Sri Datuk A.M. Ismail, a distinguished orthopaedic surgeon on the University-

based system. He wrote in a letter to the June issue of the *Berita MMA* this year and I quote:

"It is still my cherished dream that one day this country see the creation of a profession-based system of Post-Graduate Medical Education. Such a system has stood the test of time throughout the world. A University-based system suffers from the constraint of space and constraint of number of trainees that can be accommodated at any one time. Besides a profession-based system encompasses the utilization of all the resources throughout the length and breadth of the country. In the country when we face acute shortage of specialists, this system can only enhance our needs."

Tan Sri Datuk A.M. Ismail is not only a distinguished orthopaedic surgeon, he is also the second local doctor to be appointed to the post of Director-General of Health. He has been the Chairman of the Council of the University of Malaya since 1978 and currently is still the Chairman.

He should know what he is talking about for he was a civil servant and has been connected with the University of Malaya for nearly two decades. My own advice to the universities is to concentrate your fullest energies on your primary responsibility to train under-graduates to be good doctors. Join with the profession for post-graduate training. Most university teachers when they gain experience will go to the private sector and their expertise should continue to be available for post-graduate training.

SHIFT OF EXPERTISE

At the time of the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Malaya in 1963, medical expertise was concentrated in our universities but within the last decade or so there has been a shift from our universities to the Ministry of Health and the

private sector as well. With the opening of more private hospitals and of more private individual specialists centres there has been a steady flow of university dons and of government specialists to the private sector. This exodus will continue for many years to come. In Kuala Lumpur and its vicinity three hospitals are on the drawing board of being built and one of them will be completed next year. All of them have about 250 beds each and they will have the full range of specialities. With the shift of medical expertise to the private sector and with the Ministry of Health training more and more of its own staff, it is true to say that today the seat of medical expertise has shifted from the universities to the Ministry of Health and to the private sector especially to the latter.

Post-graduate medical training in our universities is confined to the University of Malaya and the National University of Malaysia.

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

Even before the Medical Faculty opened its door to its first batch of students it started its ASTS, i.e. Academic Staff Training Scheme whereby staff were sent abroad for training and to acquire post-graduate medical qualifications. *Pari passu*, it had its own training course of three years, later on extended to four years to train young doctors in the various disciplines. These trainees would later go abroad to sit for various post-graduate examinations. It also prepared its trainees in various examinations, e.g. ECFMG and the primary examination in medicine, surgery and O & G. Its record in the ECFMG is a proud one - on several occasions it scored 100% pass a record that is hard to beat anywhere in the world. In 1973 it started post-graduate courses in Pathology, Psychological Medicine, and Public Health and since then it has graduated small batches every

year. Between the years 1973 and 1983 they have graduated 64 in Public Health, 16 in Pathology and 15 in Psychological Medicine and its record for the Part I in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Anaesthesiology is fair if not good for this region.

The National University of Malaysia now has an under-graduate intake of 192 per year which is certainly one of the largest anywhere in the world. In addition in 1981 it started post-graduate courses in Surgery and Orthopaedic Surgery followed by Ear, Nose & Throat and Ophthalmology. The course in Orthopaedic Surgery started with 6 trainees and this year it is on its third year and it has only 3 trainees left. For all the four disciplines there are only 8 trainees left. One of the reasons why there are so few trainees is that it is a full time course lasting 4 years during which time the trainee is not paid at all. So unless he is sent by the Ministry of Health or has a scholarship, the young doctor does not earn a cent for four full years. It is a difficult sacrifice to ask of a young doctor.

The format of the national body to run post-graduate medical education is not in question. The crux of the problem is whether it would be university-based or profession-based. If it is the former which university should have the honour. It is no secret that the National University of Malaysia thinks that the honour should be accorded to it. Should the National University of Malaysia control Post-Graduate Medical Education in this country? That is the \$64 million question. On the other hand there are the protagonists of the profession-based system. I make bold to say that the majority of the profession are for the profession-based system and that the adoption of this system will have a greater chance of success. In 1978 Dr Patrick Ongley in the course of his 3rd Tun Dr Ismail Oration said and I quote:

"I beg you not to procrastinate further, specify your objectives, define the steps necessary to obtain these objectives, select the appropriate means to implement these steps and then by constant evaluation of the effectiveness of your programme carry out modifications as necessary. Don't wait for the perfect plan as it does not exist but by working with a spirit of mutual trust and goodwill one can come close."

Five years have elapsed since he made that appeal and we have procrastinated for five long years. We cannot afford to waste any more time. I appeal to all Malaysian doctors to sink our differences and abide by the decision of the majority of the profession for the sake of the profession we love, for our country and for the sake of posterity. Professional standards in medicine are for the protection of the community. A badly trained doctor is a menace to the community and coming under the care of an incompetent specialist can be a fate worse than death. Let no one be under the illusion that incompetent doctors can be reserved for the poor or the rural people while they themselves can be assured of the care of good physicians. This is a deeply unethical and immoral attitude and I leave this subject on this note.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON HEALTH

Since the end of World War II in August 1945, there has been no review of our health services and meanwhile vast changes are taking place. Successive presidents of the MMA have called for the establishment of Royal Commission on Health but these calls have always been ignored by the Ministry of Health. This is such a pity as a fresh look at the problems of health in our country is appropriate. A review is necessary, not to find fault, but to point new directions and to provide an opportunity for the community to make known its view. It will also provide an opportunity for the planners in the Ministry

of Health, the EPU, Treasury and in the profession to introduce new social objectives in health planning and find ways of achieving it. This is particularly necessary in view of Malaysia Incorporated and privatisation as enunciated by our Prime Minister! Far too long has the delivery of health care in this country been the sole concern of the Ministry of Health with no opportunity for the public to participate. Now I gather that the Ministry of Health is examining the possibility of the private sector participating in the delivery of health care. Radical changes like renting out first class wards of hospitals and of health centres being rented out to the private sector are being looked into by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health now has a young and dynamic head. In view of such exciting changes it will be appropriate for me to renew the call for a Royal Commission on Health. One of the astonishing features of Malaysian Health is the fact that the Ministry of Health directly runs every single state health facility in the country. We have continued the colonial pattern we have inherited and there is no place for community involvement. There are no health boards or hospital boards in which members of the community sit to administer the service within a pre-determined allocation of funds. Another characteristic of the colonial health service that we have inherited is the heavy orientation towards hospitals. Except for a small number of doctors in health and administration, the only possible career for a doctor in the Ministry of Health is as a hospital specialist. This is a typically the colonial pattern in former colonial territories whereas in the UK, for example, half the doctors in the national health service are general practitioners. There is as yet no recognition for the specialist primary physician. This means in practice that there are virtually no fully trained doctors in the rural areas in Malaysia and only the most

junior and inexperienced are sent to the rural health centres. The contrast between lip tribute to rural health and the reality is shocking. The MMA in a memorandum to the Minister of Finance in 1981 made the same point in the following words:

"Although the five year plan gives rural health top priority, in actual fact rural health care is distinctly inferior to urban health care; whereas two-thirds of the population are in the rural areas where two-thirds mortality and morbidity is found; whilst two-thirds of disease is preventable, we find that two-thirds of health expenditure is for the urban areas where over two-thirds of doctors are to be found; whilst two-thirds of the medical budget goes to curative services."

This issue has not been taken up by members of Parliament from rural areas which goes to prove how weak the lobby for rural interest really is in this country. The unpleasant truth is that health has a very low priority amongst our politicians. Anyone of consequence in government or Parliament has priority of access to VIP care in the hospitals and far too many VIPs can take fully paid trips abroad for so-called health checks. It is no wonder then that the local elite have no interest in the state of our health services. This is also reflected in the low seniority of the Minister of Health. The post has in the past been occupied by politicians either on the way up or on the way out, more usually the latter. It is time that a senior politician choses to leave his mark in history by modernising the delivery of health care in Malaysia and breaking the colonial mould in which it has been set. But first of all we will need a Royal Commission on Health, not to find fault, but to determine how best to use the exciting possibilities of modern medical technology for the benefit of our people. Aneurin Bevan did this to the British health

services and we need someone of comparable stature to become Minister of Health in Malaysia.

The only major review of health ever done in this country was funded by the MMA. The MMA Report on the Future of Health Services in Malaysia has suggested that the targets for health delivery in Malaysia be set within the context of our Five Year Plan: To eliminate geographic differences in health and in access to good health care. To eliminate social class as a factor in health and in access to good health care. The MMA Reports recommends that the first of these objectives should be adopted as a target of the Fourth and Fifth Plan ending about 1990 and the second target should be our objective for the year 2000. This approach obviously fits in perfectly with the targets of the new economic policy and yet our planners have remained unresponsive. Perhaps all this will change if they began to take seriously Dr Mahathir's concept of Malaysia Incorporated. The situation as described by David Morley of the situation in developing countries can best describe the allocation of our health resources. I quote:

"Although three-quarters of the spending on medical care in urban areas, where three quarters of the doctors live. Three-quarters of the deaths are caused by conditions that can be prevented at low cost, but three-quarters of the medical budget is spent on curative services, many of them provided for the elite at high cost." – David Morley *Lancet*, 2:1012(1976)

The establishment of a Royal Commission on Health may help us in our search for some of the answers we have been groping for in the past two and a half decades since Merdeka. With that Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish once again to thank the Academy of Medicine for giving me the opportunity to deliver the 5th Tun (Dr) Ismail Oration.

Thank You.

CHAPTER 15

HOBBY — CRICKET

BEARING IN MIND that I came from a background that is marked by poverty it is surprising that I should choose cricket as my hobby. Those of us who are poor cannot afford to have any hobby. Our first priority was to keep hunger away from the door of the family. As such in my childhood days, we had no leisure time and no hobbies and I had no spare time to indulge in any hobby whatsoever. Whenever I had any spare time, especially at night, I would do some reading by way of relaxation. But as I had no money to buy books and there was no public library in Kajang to speak of, I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow books from my school library. That made life more bearable and happy in my childhood in Cheras. As I have said before, I would borrow about 4 or 5 books in a week. I certainly made good use of the school library while at the Kajang High School. I did not play games as I was too poor to buy the equipment that was necessary and besides I lived about 5 miles away from the school and we had to cycle about half an hour to school. As a result I did not play any games in school nor did I have any hobby. The situation was no better when I spent six years in College in Singapore. There besides poverty, my studies did not allow any spare time to play games and indulge in a hobby. At one time in the early years of my medical studies I played some chess but soon I dropped it as it was too time consuming. I would spend about two hours or so in a game of chess and very soon I found I could not afford the time spent on the game. But after I graduated, things began to look up for me. I was able to listen to test cricket matches on the radio. This was mainly on England

vs Australia which was broadcast in the night. I would sit up into the early hours of the morning listening to Bill Lawry hit centuries against England. As the years rolled by these matches were shown on TV and later on video, I was able to see more of them. On my retirement I was able to see test matches on TV in England and in Australia. I always timed my visit to both these countries with the visit of the test teams. There I would be seated in front of the TV Box watching at the test matches from morning to night. I would get a grandstand view of the test matches. This was better than being on the ground and sitting on the benches or in chairs for hours on end. Thus when the West Indies Team Tour of Australia, after the West Indies had whacked the Australians at Melbourne in the 3rd Test, Neil Harvey, an ex-Test Cricketer said that the West Indies were intimidating the Australians with something akin to Bodyline Bowling of the thirties. The West Indies under the captaincy of Vivian Richards had threatened to steamroll their opposition. They had just beaten India in the Caribbean by 3-0 after that they had beaten Australia by 3-1 and before that, the English Summer of 1988, they had whitewashed England by 4-0. Earlier Clive Lloyd had clobbered England under Gower when England lost by 5-0 to the West Indies in England. The West Indies under Clive Lloyd had reigned supreme for about 12 years. It was under Clive Lloyd that their bowlers, comprising fast bowlers like Andy Roberts, Colin Croft, Michael Holding, Joel Garner and Malcolm Marshall, would steamroll all opposition before them. The West Indies under Clive Lloyd introduced a team of four fast bowlers which gave the opposition no respite. They also have the best opening batsmen in the world. At the moment, the team has Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes and in the middle order batting, order of Richardson, Viv Richards who is one of the best all

rounders in the world, and in other middle order batsman like Gus Logie and Jeffry Dujon who is also a world-class cricket-keeper. The West Indies is my favourite team with speed merchants who were able to quicken the hearts of the spectators and with skilful batsmen like Richards and Greenidge to hit glorious sixes. They have come a long way since the days of Learie Constantine who was later knighted and then elevated to the peerage as Baron of Maravale and Nelson; George Headley, Sir Frank Worrell and the peerless Sir Garfield Sobers etc were also honoured. Under Clive Lloyd they reigned supreme for about 12 years and they are still continuing to show their supremacy.

The supremacy of the West Indies dates from the year 1950 when they toured England and there was nothing special about that team except that it introduced two new comers, in the persons of Ramadhin and Valentine who had no experience at all in test cricket. They were unknown to the English cricket world and when they bamboozled the English they were as mystifying to their compatriots back home in the Carribean. On this tour the first test match was the test at Manchester and after that the West Indies bowlers, Ramadhin and Valentine, mystified the English batsmen to the extent that the West Indies won that series and I remembered how I enjoyed listening to that test series on the radio. In that tour of England, Goddard's triumphant tour depended on those "Little Pals of Mine," Ramadhin and Valentine. In the West Indies the *Orang Putih* used to be chosen as captains. It was based on colour and not on ability. The white man was usually a businessman. It was not until a black man, F.M. Worrell, was picked as captain, that the West Indies was motivated to be the World Champions. Thus in 1961 at Brisbane the West Indies drew against Australia, the first time there was a draw in Test Cricket. After that the West Indies were

heroes wherever they visited in Australia. The F.M. Worrell Trophy was put up for competition between the two countries. When the West Indies left Melbourne at the end of that tour they were given a ticker tape farewell by the Australian, the first time this honour had been accorded to a touring team either in Australia or in England.

My interest in cricket was also due to the interest shown in cricket by my old headmaster, C.E. Gates, a Cambridge graduate. Under him the Kajang High School cricket team became one of the best in Selangor and he encouraged many of the schoolboys to play cricket. Off hand I can remember such cricketers like P.T. Samanther, K. Paramalingam, A.R.N. Lingam, Tajuddin, Maarof, Shariff, Low Nan Wan, Muhiyuddin B Mohd. Zain, Juala Singh, Ponniah, Zainal Hitam, etc. all of them played for the school. Gates also encouraged the boys to play hockey and our school team was also one of the best in Selangor. Tajuddin B Ahmad was chosen to play hockey for the Federated Malay States while he was still in school.

I remember in the early thirties the Australians under their captain W.M. Woodful, arrived in England and in their first game against Worcestershire, Don Bradman blazed the trail of victories that followed the Australians wherever they went. Then at Leeds, Bradman set up a world record of 334 runs. This was broken a few years later by Len Hutton at the oval with 364 runs. This record too was broken two decades later by Sobers in the West Indies in 1958 with 365 runs not out and that record still stands to this day. The second highest was 337 by Hanif Mohammed of Pakistan. The run getting machine set up by Bradman caused D.R. Jardine to set up the counter to cut down the runs of Bradman. He used three bowlers, Larwood, Voce, Bowes to use bodyline attack against the Australians. The fiery attack of England knocked down several of the

Australian batsmen. Telegrams flew between Australia and England and when W. M. Woodful was hit over the heart, the tour was in danger of being called off. Fortunately better sense prevailed and the tour went on. Jardine became the sacrificial lamb and when the Australians toured England, the English team was captained by Gubby Allen of Middlesex and peace returned to the playing field. It is generally agreed that the Australian team which toured England in 1948 was the best and strongest team that ever toured England. It had the incomparable D. G. Bradman, a pair of speed merchants in Ray Lindwall and Keith Miller and there were Neil Harvey, Lindsay Hassett, Stan McCabe, Arthur Morris and Bill Johnston, etc. A close second to that team was the one under Clive Lloyd who in 1984 clobbered the Englishmen into submission and carried the second whitewash in England.

The team consisted of the following Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes, Larry Gomes, Vivian Richards, Jeffry Dujon, Clive Lloyd, Malcolm Marshall, Eldine Baptise, Michael Holding, Rodger Harper, Milton Small and Winston Davis. In the history of Test Cricket, there had been only five times that a team had achieved a total whitewash on five occasions and three of them were accomplished by the West Indies.

The following were the test matches:

Australia against England in 1920-21; and against South Africa in 1931-32; England against India in 1959 and West Indies against India in 1961-62 and West Indies against England in 1984 and met again in 1988 when the West Indies scored a blackwash under Viv Richards. The West Indies team of 1984 was probably the strongest cricket team that ever represented a country. It was strong in batting with G. Greenidge and D. Haynes leading the way and followed by Larry Gomes, V Richards and C. Lloyd and the

wicket keeper was J. Dujon. Then there were the battery of four speed merchants as E. Baptise, Michael Holding, Joel Garner, Malcolm Marshall and to round off the team there was the spin bowler Rodger Harper. The team could bat all the way down to No. 10 and the opening team had no respite from the speed merchants who gave the opposing batsmen no rest at all. Very often the off spinner R. Harper had no chance to bowl at all! The English team was weakened by the absence of Geoff Boycott, Graham Gooch, Derek Underwood and John Lever who had been banned from test cricket because they played cricket in South Africa. In the second Test at Leeds, the West Indies had to make 314 runs for the 4th innings but with Gordon Greenidge scoring 214 runs with 29 fours and 2 sixes they won with ease by 9 wickets. During the year that Clive Lloyd captained the West Indies he was fortunate in that, for most of the time he had a battery of four speed merchants and he did not bother to make use of his only spin bowler! The emphasis was on pace with more fire so he was in the happy position in that his batsmen like Greenidge, Haynes, Vivian Richards, Gomes and Clive Lloyd himself could provide the bowlers with plenty of runs to bowl the opposition out.

MALAYSIAN CRICKETERS

Cricket is not particularly popular amongst Malaysians. Pride of place must be given to football which is popular amongst the three major races namely Malays, Chinese and Indians. Volley Ball and Basketball are popular amongst the Chinese and as for the Malays they love to play *sepak takraw*. Badminton was popular amongst Malayans and when the Thomas Cup Competition was inaugurated in 1948/49, Malaya was the first country to win the First Thomas Cup and this was the first international competi-

tion that this country had ever won. As I said before cricket was not particularly popular amongst Malaysians. One reason was that it is a costly game especially amongst rural schoolboys. Nevertheless cricket of a fairly high standard was played pre-war. It was kept alive mainly by the presence of the planters, the servicemen and friends of the business community. Amongst the planters, I remember "Dusty" Rhodes and A.J. Hunter who also played a good game of rugby and football. Amongst the servicemen the best known of course was Ted Dexter who went on to play Test Cricket in England and is currently the Chairman of the English Test Selectors. Before the war the Australians under G.C. Macartney, Bert Oldfield, W.M. Woodful, etc. visited Malaysia in May 1927 and amongst the spectators was A.R.N. Lingam who played cricket for Kajang High School and National Electricity Board (NEB) as a left arm slow bowler. The Australian Team which came in May 1927 was captained by G.C. Macartney. Malaya was the first country apart from England to be visited by a Australian XI. Australia lost by 39 runs in the match played on 3rd, 4th and 6th June 1928. Another Malayan who saw that match was S. Robert and he has the only copy of the souvenir of that game in the country. Robert played cricket for Victoria Institution, Tamilian Physical Culture Association (TPCA) and YMCA and became President of Selangor Cricket Association and Vice-President of the Malaysian Cricket Association. Then in the mid-thirties Sir Julien Cahn brought a team out to Malaya and played a number of games here. The most famous Malayan cricketers to have attained Test Cricket was Lall Singh, who played cricket for Victoria Institution and went on to play Test Cricket for India. After his playing days were over he looked after Kilat Club and Selangor Club as well. His elder brother B.S. Gill was a bowler who could bat as well but he died under tragic cir-

cumstances during the Japanese Occupation. Then there were a couple of cricketers from the YMCA namely Bertie Mayo and Duncan Vanderholt. Both were useful with bat and ball for the YMCA. There was the flamboyant Saravanamuttu of Penang who played cricket for Penang and during the early stages of the Japanese invasion he was at one time the "Mayor" of Penang. Among old timers there was the late Gorbax Singh, the elder brother of Hera Singh. Gorbax Singh used to play hockey for the Federated Malay States and as a cricketer he played for more than two decades and he could bat as well. Later he went to Sabah and Brunei and there he also played cricket. Another cricketer of pre-war vintage was L.B.M. Ariffin who was a graduate of Technical College and was one of the few Malays who played cricket at state level. Another pre-war cricketer was Lawrence De Silva who played for the F.M.S. as an all rounder. After World War II cricket fell in popularity especially with the departure of the expatriates after Independence in 1957. Nowadays cricket is seldom played even amongst our schools.

POST WAR

Coming to the post war crop of cricketers there was Eu Chow Teik of Penang. He was a good opening bats and was said to be up to County standard by some Test Cricketers. Then there was the all rounder Khoo Bin Kheng of the Police Force who played for the FMS and was a delight to watch. There was Chua Eng Cheng who was a stock bowler and could bat as well. He was an international at hockey as well. There was a couple of double internationals namely Mike Shepherdson of Kilat Club and he has represented the country at cricket and hockey. The Shepherdson family was a family of sportsmen particularly at cricket. Malacca produced M.C. Kailasapathy, a teacher who shone as a

cricketer. He was a bowler but when the occasion warranted it he could bat as well. One outstanding cricketer was Prof. Dr A.E. Delikan. He bowled the great Sobers with his first ball on the Selangor Club ground in 1964. Then there was K. Sekar of NEB/Selangor who took all ten wickets in an innings against Singapore. Shades of Jim Laker against Australia at Old Trafford! Mathew Danker was probably the best all round sportsman having represented Selangor at Football, Cricket, Hockey, Rugby and athletics. Amongst current players Bannerji Nair is probably the most prominent Malaysian cricketer at the moment.

I will end this article by relating what happened to me in the Dewan Rakyat in the late sixties. One day during a recess in the parliamentary proceedings, the Tunku said that we would be receiving Mr J.A. Gorton, Prime Minister of Australia, in Parliament. The Tunku would make the speech of welcome and he wanted me to second his welcome on 12th June, 1968. I was surprised to say the least but accepted.

When it was my turn to speak, I related a story about Fred Truman the fiery fast bowler and Rev. David Shepherd, the England captain and batsman. He was not the England captain then. Truman was bowling at his fastest and after Shepherd had missed him a few times off his bowling, he said to Shepherd, "Reverend, if you must pray when I am bowling do please keep your eyes open and your hands cupped!" The House clapped. They were surprised that this socialist could know so much about a capitalist game. Alas my effort was lost on J. A. Gorton as I found out later he had been a rowing blue while at Oxford!

CHAPTER 16

TWO RECENT MISHAPS

IN MY LIFE TIME of three score and ten, I have been fairly free of accident. Except for the accident to my left eye in 1931 when I lost the use of the left eye, I have been fairly free of serious accidents. But as one grows older one tends to be more and more accident-prone and one does not seem to be careful of one's own self. This was what happened to me when my wife and second son Dr Ron Tan and his wife and their daughter went up to Genting Highlands to spend a rest day, Labour Day in the hills. I had switched on the water heater the night before and the next morning my wife warned me that the hot water was very hot. After I had opened my bowels I sat on the bidet to wash myself. Unfortunately I turned on the hot water tap and scalded myself. I could not jump up because of my weak left leg and both my wife and I struggled to get out of the way of the stream of hot water. By the time I got free I found that large pieces of my skin had come off. The buttock and the skin around the anus had been scalded but the anus itself had not been scalded. I decided to get myself admitted to Sentosa Medical Centre. The ride from the hill was a painful one and I had a tough time getting to the ward. Every movement of the car and of the wheel chair was a painful one. I was under the care of Dr Ng Soong Lek who put me under antibiotic cover. As for the wound itself very soon it got infected. The surgeon, Dr Ng Soong Lek used a spray to stop the exudate. It was effective in stopping the exudate but scabs soon formed and they caused a great deal of pain. I had scalded myself in a very awkward place, and the area around the anus could not be kept clean. I could not lie flat

on my back and I could only lie on my right or left side. I could of course stand on my legs but because of my stroke, I was weak in my left leg and I could not walk as a result of the accident. For the first time in my life I could neither stand nor lie down, sit up or stand. For days on end my papers were left unread together with the books I had brought along with me. Fortunately a classmate of mine, A.R.N. Lingam could come in the morning and would read the daily papers for me. He was a good cricketer in his young days and we could discuss the first Test Match that was going on. My wife too used to read the papers to me. The rest of the day and night I would try to sleep or if I could not sleep I would literally stare at the walls of the room. I have never felt more miserable in my life. It was all my fault for being so careless. I scalded myself in my days and soon in the next day infection had set in and I had a fever with rigors as well. My total white cell count which measures the level of infection was 29,000 cells per c.c. whereas the normal figure is 8000 cells per c.c. I had been put on antibiotics and very soon the infection was controlled. But the skin took its own time to heal and the only way I could assist was by lying in bed on my sides. It was a very frustrating period not being able to read and walk. I could listen to tapes. I had no taste for classical, jazz or pop music. The most that I could do was to try and sleep. In fact I have not slept so much in my life with this spell of enforced rest in bed. As the skin began to heal I could move a little more but as I have mentioned I could not do much because of the weakness in the left leg. Nevertheless my spirit became brighter and I could take a little more interest in the things that were happening in the room. At long last on Monday morning on 22nd May I was discharged. I was more than happy to go home when I entered my room after a lapse of nearly a

month, I feel as if I was entering a new home and I thank God for my being able to enjoy life at home.

RETURN TO SENTOSA

The diabetic, especially if is an elderly person, has to be very careful with his skin especially his lower limbs. His resistance is lowered and he is prone to infection. His arteries are subject to arteriosclerosis i.e. the clogging of the vessels and hence the blood supply is poor. Any cut if not attended will become infected and may well lead to an amputation. A West Indies cricketer C.A. Roach, who was a diabetic lived to a ripe old age of 86 years but he lost both of his lower limbs to amputation. The Tunku is the best known Malaysian diabetic. Today he is 87 years old and was he not passed away on Tuesday, 4th December, 1990. In his younger days he used to drink and yet he lives to a ripe old age of four score and six. May Allah Bless Him. As a diabetic I am aware I have to be very careful with my skin to see that I do not have any cut. However early in June 1987 I scratched my left knee and the skin was broken. Infection soon set in and on Friday Morning 23rd June I woke up with a painful left leg and a fever. The infection had moved from the knee to the leg and I had to be admitted to Sentosa Medical Centre. Thus exactly one month after I have left Sentosa Medical Centre I was back in my old room — Room 6 second floor, the room is quite small and the bed, as is usual with all other hospital beds, it is a little too narrow or short for me. I was put on an intravenous drip and this added to my misery and my movements were greatly limited. On the top of that whenever the antibiotic was injected it was painful. I was on this drip for two days and when the pain was too great I asked for the drip to be taken off. Instead I was put on oral medicine. I was greatly relieved. I could move about and there was no pain and

after a few days I was discharged. When I built Sentosa Medical Centre nearly two decades ago little did I realize that I too would be admitted as a patient. But as age catches up with me and on top of that I was stricken with a stroke and weakened with Diabetes Mellitus, it was inevitable that I would be admitted as a patient. But I will try my best to give Sentosa Medical Centre a wide berth. The normal person who is hospitalized is able to lie down comfortably and is able to read either in bed or to sit up. In my case when I was admitted on 1st May, 1989 with a scald on my buttocks I was unable to lie down or sit up. I was miserable for three weeks as I could not sit up and could not read and I missed that a great deal. My misery was relieved a little by the arrival of books from USA and England. Whenever my "opium" as I told my nurse, arrives, I am very happy. On the average I order about 20 books a month. I read about half of them and the rest I keep them aside hoping when I finally retire I will be able to read this backlog of books. I now have collected about 5000 volumes in my library. To some this may be a big collection but it is a paltry small collection. Take the late, Ben Gurion, the former Prime Minister of Israel. He had a library of about 20,000 volumes and he kept them all over the house. He must have been a very fast reader to be able to read most of his large collection of books. In Malaysia we do not have the reading habit and very few of us keep a library. It is space occupying and besides new books are very costly.

MY ROLE IN POLITICS

I HAVE BEEN ASKED how I got involved in politics. As a country yokel born soon after World War I and in an era when there was no active politics in Malaya, I too wonder sometimes how I got involved in politics. As a school boy I took part in school debates and that gave me a taste of public speaking. Then when I got to college in Singapore, I got involved in the Medical College Union culminating in my being elected as the President of the Medical College Union. As President I learnt the art of tilting at the establishment, in this case the colonial government of Singapore. When I graduated at the end of 1949 and returned to Kuala Lumpur, I walked into exciting times in Kuala Lumpur. Sir Henry Gurney had been assassinated and Sir Gerald Templer had assumed duty as High Commissioner and introduced political reforms, mainly democracy at grass root level. There were elections at village council moving on to district, state and federal elections. Earlier on Sir Harold MacMichael had aroused the ire of the Malays by inveigling the Rulers to accept the Malayan Union and giving up most of their powers. This led to the formation of UMNO, followed by the MCA and MIC as well. *Pari passu* the British began to get the workers of the country to be organized. Mr J.A. Brazier was sent to Malaya to get the workers organized. This saw the birth of the trade union movement and we saw the rise of such trade union leaders such as Lee Moke Sang, P.P. Narayanan, Tan Tuan Boon, Datuk Mohamed Sovie, K.V. Thaver etc. These trade union leaders were also responsible for the formation of the Labour Party of Malaya. It was about this time in 1952 that Lee Moke Sang invited me to join the Labour Party of

Malaya. I joined the Kuala Lumpur Branch of the Labour Party of Malaya. The State divisional leader was Tan Tuan Boon, then an interpreter and a trade union leader. He was a school mate of mine in Kajang High School and later was to be elected to be the Chairman of the Municipal Council of Malacca. I was involved in the preparation of a memorandum for the Reid Commission. Amongst those who took part in these preparations was Lee Moke Sang, P.G. Lim, Yong Pung How. Yong Pung How had just returned to Malaysia after passing out from Cambridge. His sojourn in the Labour Party was a very brief one for soon after he joined the MCA and in 1959 he was involved in the MCA crisis. He later left for Singapore and today he is the Chief Justice of Singapore. As for P.G. Lim, she stayed in the Labour Party all the time and in the sixties she accepted a diplomatic appointment and today is in law practice and has accepted the chairmanship of an international arbitration tribunal.

Coming back to my role in the Labour Party of Malaya, I first took part in an election for the Kuala Lumpur Branch of the Labour Party of Malaya. My opponent was Chai Choon Kwee. I was new to the party and did not know many of the members. All the same I took part in the election and the result was that I lost to Chai Choon Kwee. That defeat did not discourage me as I joined the party not with the purpose of gaining position but to serve the party. This was recognized by the rank and file of the Labour Party for soon after Chai Choon Kwee was detained under the Emergency Regulations and I was elected to succeed him. From there I moved up the ladder slowly, first as the chairman of the Selangor Division and later as national treasurer. By that time I was already a Member of Parliament as MP for Batu and I felt I was spending too much time on politics. At that time I was a member of the Council of the University of

Malaya and was spending a good deal of time in its selection committees, various school boards, church etc. In 1955 the Labour Party of Malaya took part in the partial general election of 1955. There were 2 seats for Kuala Lumpur and the party lost both the elections it contested. Next came the first general election of 1959. We won 5 seats in Selangor, namely Batu, Bangsar, Setapak, Damansara and Rawang and 3 in Penang, namely, Tanjong, Dato Kramat and Sebarang Selatan making a total of eight. It was not a bad achievement seeing that it was our first attempt. I did not take part in this election as I could not find the time to be more active in politics. Instead I was the chairman of the election committee for the Socialist Front in Selangor and we won five seats as I have indicated previously.

CHANGE

Meanwhile the character of the party had slowly changed. As I have said earlier the Labour Party of Malaya had been formed by government servants who were mainly English educated and were clerks and teachers etc. There were also a few professional who had returned from overseas and had joined socialist clubs overseas. Towards the end of the fifties indigenous Chinese elected workers joined the party. They were mainly from Johore and the most prominent amongst them was Tan Kai Hee. From Johore he came up to Kuala Lumpur to work in the Factory and General Workers Union and when that union was banned, most of them joined the Labour Party of Malaya. I remember meeting Tan Kai Hee when he came to work in the Labour Party of Malaya as an organizer. He was a superb speaker at our rallies, fluent in Malay, Mandarin and Hokkien. He was popular amongst the grass root supporters especially in the new villages. On looking back I think if he had been picked as a candidate for Damansara he would have won easily.

Instead he was chosen to fight there in 1964 and he lost narrowly. Then he was picked up by the Special Branch and sent to Batu Gajah Detention Camp. When under detention I got him interested in further education and he passed the LCE. On his release he got involved in business and today he is a very prosperous businessman.

He started by selling Chinese liquor and very soon he secured the sole agency. He then spread his wings elsewhere and today he controls a group selling Chinese goods, office equipment and opened entertainment house, etc. His main office is in Klang and he has several branches in Kuala Lumpur. His success in business shows already that to succeed in business one does not need to have a tertiary education but one must have perseverance, honesty and be prepared for hard work.

To come back to the story of the Labour Party after the arrival of the Chinese educated new members the party veered sharply to the left. It was influenced by events in China when the Communist Party had driven Chiang Kai Shak out of China. In Malaysia the new rank and file soon called for manning the barricades and letting rivers of blood flow, etc. I remember in the middle sixties there was a group of German Socialists from the SPD (German Socialist Party) who came to Kuala Lumpur and met some of the members of the Labour Party. They were frightened by the extremist talk of the members of the Labour Party then when they returned to Germany they painted a grim picture of the Labour Party to the leadership of the Socialist International.

It was by the middle of the sixties when most of the leaders of the Socialist Front were arrested under the ISA that I myself came under increasing fire from the extremists of the Labour Party. They, the extremists were unhappy with my moderate stand on most issues. Thus, I was attack-

ed for supporting the National Language Bill. It came to the point then they wanted to bring me to trial. It was then that I decided to leave the party. I then had two choices open to me. One was to retire from politics and the other was to form another left wing party left of centre. I got in touch with Dr Lim Chong Eu together with some ex-Labourites and trade union leaders like Yeoh Teck Chye and K. George and academicians like Syed Hussein Alatas and Prof. Wang Gang Wu, we formed the Gerakan, Malaysian Peoples' Socialist Party towards the end of 1969. It had a stormy birthday. Soon after it was formed it was challenged to a public debate by the DAP. It took place at the Mara Auditorium in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, opposite the Odeon. The Gerakan team was led by Prof. Syed Naguib of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia. The DAP team included Lim Kit Siang and Lee Lam Thye. The subject of the debate was: Malaysian literature is best written in Malay. The Gerakan adopted that stand while the DAP insisted that Malaysian literature could also be written in other languages in particular in Chinese. Both sides were adamant in the stand that they took and both sides claimed victory. The next day the Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian praised the stand taken by Gerakan while the Chinese Press supported the stand taken by DAP.

The next fight between the two parties was at the Serdang Baru by-election. This followed soon after the debate and the electorate was mainly Chinese. Here the Gerakan got a good beating in the hands of the DAP.

Soon after the general elections of 1969 loomed ahead. Both the Gerakan and the DAP very soon realised that it did them no good to fight each other only to let the Alliance win the battle. We initiated contacts with the DAP. It soon became evident that the PPP, the Progressive Party of Perak, had to be drawn into these talks. In Perak the fight was

mainly between the DAP and the PPP. The Gerakan was only interested in Taiping and Teluk Anson. We quickly solved our problem there and went to the other areas where we were interested namely Penang and Selangor. We adopted the principle that the party that won the seats in 1964 would contest in 1969. That was as easy as I was the sole survivor of 1964 and the DAP won only one seat. So that was no problem. We wanted very badly to do well in Penang where we had high hopes of capturing the State. In Dr Lim Chong Eu we had a leader who was capable of leading the government should we win. We felt that the Gerakan built round the nucleus of the ex-Labour Party and DAP were capable people of capturing the government and so it turned out to be. To attain this goal we even prepared to make concessions in other states. The other objective was Bukit Bintang in Selangor. We had earmarked this constituency for Yeoh Teck Chye at that time the President of the MTUC, i.e. Malaysian Trade Union Council. As such he represented our hope of winning over the workers of this country. The negotiations were very tough and time consuming and at times acrimonious. The trouble was that some of the DAP leaders would agree on some constituency only to have his concession rejected by the party. I still vividly remember that towards the end Goh Hock Guan had his recommendation rejected by the DAP and he denied that he had agreed on that point. At that point I called off the meeting which was held in the library in my house. This shocked Dato S.P. Seenivasagam but Lim Kit Siang, the Secretary-General of the DAP broke out into a Red Indian War Dance. Seenivasagam called us back to the meeting and we finally reached an agreement not only between the Gerakan and DAP but the PPP also came to an agreement with the DAP. In the general election that followed the Gerakan beat the Penang Alliance. Dr Lim

Chong Eu became the Chief Minister and has survived to this day. The then Chief Minister of Penang, Tan Sri Wong Pow Ngee was beaten in Bukit Mertajam. At our rallies in Bukit Mertajam we used an affective battle cry "Pow Ngee Toh!!" It was spoken in Hokkien which freely translated meant "Pow Ngee" fall! In all we won 16 seats in Penang. For the federal election we won 5 seats in Penang, one in Perak and three in Selangor making a total of 8 federal seats in all. Our victory in Penang was mainly due to the fact that for the first time a Malaysian opposition party had earned the trust and support of the Malays of Penang. We had Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas to lead us into battle in the Malay Press. It was ironical that when the quarrel between Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas and Dr Lim Chong Eu broke out it was Dr Lim who insisted in accepting the letter of resignation from Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas thus keeping Alatas out of the Gerakan!

The General Election took place on 10th May, 1969 and then later the Tragedy of May 13 took place.

When the election was over we took stock of our gains and losses. Amongst the eight we won under the flag of Gerakan was an MP who was in debt and was subject to pressure from the Alliance. It did not surprise me that he crossed over soon after. Before he did that he caused me a great deal of anxiety and headache. There was another MP, a graduate in agriculture, he was not subject to party discipline and he left the party on his own accord. I had been appointed the Gerakan leader in Parliament. As such I had to look after the discipline of our MPs.

The Prime Minister at that time was Tun Abdul Razak and he made attempts to get some of the opposition parties to join the Alliance. Approaches had been made to us both in Kuala Lumpur and in Penang. When I was approached I rejected the offer saying that I was not interested in being a



Victor at Batu (1964). The Author and his Opposition Dr Too Chee Cheong and Mr Yap Chee Kwoin (far right).



Labour Party rally, 1950.

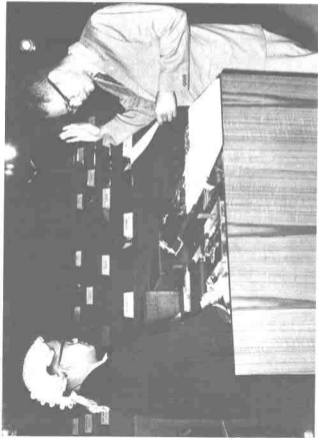


The two votes win against Chang Keong Hon (1964) – State (Kepong).



Victory at Batu (1964) at Batu Road School at 1 pm the next day.

*Swearing in of the
Author in 1964 to
Parliament at the age of
45. On the left is
Ahmad Abdullah, now
a senior executive in
Tan Chong Motors.*



glorified minister. On another occasion Dr Lim Chong Eu rang me up from Penang and proposed that I exchange jobs with him. I bluntly told him that I might have not found time to be an adequate secretary-general but I certainly had more time for the party than he as Chief Minister and Vice-President. That was the last I heard of the attempt to entice me and the Gerakan into the Barisan. As soon as most of us ex-Labourites and I left the Gerakan, it very quickly joined the Barisan. Then in 1974 when I was Chairman of Pekemas we were asked to join the Barisan and at the same time not to contest the state and federal election in Sabah. I put my foot down and that was the end of the last attempt for us to join the Barisan.

But let me now go back to the history of the Gerakan. As soon as the Gerakan State Government was formed trouble began. It started with some of the members who had worked hard for us and they had naturally hoped that the Government would help them, at least to help them to get jobs. Then there were two streams in the Gerakan Executive Committee. One was the former member of the United Democratic Party (UDP), who had been followers of Dr Lim Chong Eu, the other group was the ex-Labourites who had been built around Tan Phock Kin and V. Veerapan who had both been defeated in 1964 and had left for London and qualified as lawyers and was called to the Bar there. He was disappointed at the pace at which Dr Lim Chong Eu worked for the people in Penang. Very soon they came to the conclusion that Dr Lim Chong Eu was not carrying out the party policy for Penang. At some time they might have thought that Dr Lim Chong Eu should be deposed as Chief Minister. Such dangerous thinking posed a great danger to the party and should be nipped in the bud for if it was allowed to grow it would blow up the party and eventually destroy the party. Worse still one faction went down to Sin-

gapore to see Prof. Alatas to try and get his ears. I vaguely knew what was going on and my fault was that I did not play a more positive role for the party. At that time I was the Chairman of the University Council of the University of Malaya and that in itself was a full time job. I was also in person a Member of Parliament and a State Assemblyman for Kepong. Then at the same time too I was building a hospital, the present Sentosa Medical Centre. I was at the same time actively involved in the affairs of my church, the Kuala Lumpur Methodist Church and at the same time the Chairman of several school boards. If I had the time to settle some of the problems that arose in Penang the explosion that occurred a few years later could have been avoided. Then there was another problem. The wife of Prof. Hussein Alatas, an obvious case of thyrodoxicosis which caused the lady to be jittery. Anyway my suspicious was that she got on well with Mrs Lim when the two met in Penang or Singapore. Mrs Lim on the other hand is the wife of the Chief Minister was apt to feel important and sometimes would throw her weight about! Puan Hussein Alatas as the wife of the Chairman of the Party felt that respect should be paid to her and the fact that she had thyrodoxicosis did not help relations between the two. This ill feeling between the two ladies spread to their husbands and later this caused the explosion that split the party wide open. Earlier on Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas decided to resign from the chairmanship of the party. He wrote out his letter of resignation and handed it to me to pass it on to Dr Lim Chong Eu. I deliberately did not do so. At the next meeting of the Gerakan, he insisted that I should hand over his letter to the meeting. At that meeting when I handed over the fateful letter there was a long discussion whether we should accept that resignation. I proposed that one should withhold action until the next meeting. Dr Lim Chong Eu and his

friends were in the majority and he wanted to accept the letter of resignation. As he and his friends were in the majority, he got the meeting to accept the letter of resignation and with that, three of us, V. Veerappan, Tan Phock Kin and I all stepped down from the committee as well. Looking back after a lapse of slightly less than two decades I must admit that Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas was wrong in insisting that he should resign. He had not consulted a wide number of party leaders. It was true that he had talked to both Veerappan and Tan Phock Kin but these two belong to the anti-Chong Eu group. Then if he had intended to fight Chong Eu in the Central Committee he should have done so from a position of strength. As I had pointed out earlier Chong Eu had controlled the Central Committee at that point of time. If he had bided his time we could have increased our strength in the Central Committee and then he could have taken on Chong Eu openly.

As for me I had no quarrel either with Hussein Alatas or Chong Eu. I resigned because I was sick of the political infighting that was going on around me. On the spur of the moment I resigned and V. Veerappan and Phock Kin followed me out. That night Dr Lim Chong Eu came to my house and we had a very long talk lasting far into the wee hours of the morning. He wanted me to lead the party in place of Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas. I told him bluntly that I sincerely believed in Malay leadership and that if we got a good Malay leader, we should do our best to retain him. I told him that he on the other hand only paid lip service to the notion. I urged him to take back Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas into the party but he refused. That was how we parted and I have not regretted my rejection of his offer.

NEW PARTY

After we left the party some of us wanted to form a new party. In that they were going to approach Prof. Syed Hus-

sein Alatas but he refused to join them. Next the young turks approached me and I was reluctant to start a new party and asked them to look for another leader. I was at that time 52 years old and I was getting tired of politics. I wanted to retire and confine myself strictly to medicine and then retire from practice. Unfortunately I was persuaded to lead the new party called Pekemas. Looking back I now realise that we were too hasty in forming the new party. We should have spent more time in looking for new members. We should have got new blood especially amongst the workers and the young professionals. There were too few of them joining us with the result that the old guard had to shout too much work. The new party was called Pekemas but it did not catch on right from the start. Soon after the party was started we had to make preparations for the coming general election which was due in 1974. We started a branch in Sabah and many of the Young Turks were enthusiastic about the new venture. We were always short of funds and politics in Sabah can be very expensive. Here they carry the money in sacks and we could not match USNO in money politics. The result was that at the state election we lost badly, not winning a single seat. That experience should have taught us to go slow but it did not.

Soon after the formation of Pekemas, we were involved in the preparation of the coming general election. On looking back we were ill-prepared to start a party. There were only a few leaders and fewer still were prepared to work hard. The younger members too were not prepared to work hard and make sacrifices. After our experience in Sabah where we lost badly I had wanted to fight on a narrow front and hope we would be able to bulldoze our way through. But I was overruled. The result was that we contested far too many constituencies both federal and state. Many members of the party fancied themselves members of par-

liament or state assemblymen. I have warned them not to be too greedy but my advice was ignored. We did not have the money, and were not well organised. We did not have the money to pay for the deposit and we could not pay for the printing that was necessary. Worse, some of our members were not honest. One member, a trade unionist got me to pay for his deposit. After the election he pocketed the deposit and refused to pay it back to me! Today he is a very prominent member of the trade union movement! I borrowed money as deposit for many of our candidates and when they lost their deposit I had to make good the loss. The result was I was the only survivor at federal level at Kepong and Ong Yew How of Penang was the only state assemblyman to win. Altogether a very bad show. We not only lost but lost badly, many of our candidates lost their deposits! Worse still two of our members, Yeoh Teck Chye, the ex-MP for Bukit Bintang and V. Veerappan, the former MP for Nibong Tebal, both passed away soon after the election of 1974. On November 6th 1976, I was stricken by a stroke, the party very soon crumpled away and thus ended my career as a politician. I have not regretted my role in the political life of this country. I have not set out to achieve fame or to mass wealth. In fact I was approached by Datuk Harun, Menteri Besar of Selangor to accept a datukship but I declined. Then in May 1980, I was awarded a Tan Srisship, Panglima Setia Mohkota by His Majesty, the King. The story of this award is told in an earlier chapter. A few years later I was awarded the Datuk Paduka Mahkota Selangor (DPMS) by His Highness, the Sultan of Selangor.

I am glad that during the three terms that I have served as a Member of Parliament I have kept alive the fires of democracy in this country and that I have been called the Conscience of the Nation. Of that I am proud to be remembered as the conscience of the nation.

CHAPTER 18

MAIDEN SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT – DEBATE ON THE KING'S SPEECH ON 21ST APRIL, 1964

NOW I COME to the three terms that I served in Parliament. Here I will start by confessing that when I first entered the political arena, my goal was not to be a parliamentarian or to hold office or amass wealth. My aim was to be of service to the community, i.e. the common man. This I had already been doing as a doctor. And as long as I was serving the community I was contended. Thus, in the first general election in 1959 I deliberately did not offer myself as a candidate. During that general election I was the organizer for the Socialist Front for the Kuala Lumpur area. I could have pressed my claim for myself but as I have said before I had no intention of standing for election. I worked very hard in that election and as an result we won five seats in Selangor, namely Bangsar (V. David), Batu (Ng Aun Teck), Setapak (Ahmad Boestaman), Damansara (Karam Singh) and Rawang (Y.P. Liu) and three in Penang, namely Tanjong (Tan Phock Kin), Dato Kramat (Lim Kean Siew), and Nibong Tebal (V. Veerappen). In the late fifties and early sixties the Socialist Front provided the opposition to the Alliance and our MPs performed fairly well in Parliament. Our MP for Batu, Ng Aun Teck did not perform well in Parliament. He had been to Nanyang University but did not complete his course. He was fairly good in Malay but did not speak in Malay in Parliament. Instead, he spoke in halting English and did not shine in Parliament. However he

was a good speaker in Mandarin and was an outstanding speaker at our rallies. When the next round came in 1964 the Socialist Front had hoped of forming the next government as we had put up 64 candidates. We were a triumvirate consisting of the Labour Party, Parti Rakyat and the National Convention Party under the leadership of Aziz Ishak, the former Alliance Minister. The S.F. and the NCP were against the manner in which Malaysia was formed and the Tunku cleverly twisted it by saying that we were against the formation of Malaysia, hence we were anti-national. Both the radio and TV blasted at us and we had no chance to hit back with the newspapers being against us as well. We contributed to our own downfall as we blasted at Malaysia at every rally. When the votes were counted, the Alliance had a landslide victory with the S.F. getting only two seats, me in Batu and Lim Kean Siew in Dato Kramat. Throughout the campaign I avoided the topic of Malaysia and in Malay areas I spoke mainly in Malay. I was fortunate in that I had a large number of supporters and patients in Jinjang and Kepong, and they had been with me for more than a decade. In Batu it was a three cornered fight with Yap Chin Kwee representing the Alliance and Dr Too Chee Cheong standing as a PAP candidate. I won Batu fairly easily but I had a tough fight in Kepong, the state seat. It was a straight fight between Chan Keong Hon and I, and in the end I won by 2 votes, the most narrow margin of victory up to that date. The counting of votes started at 2000 hours on Saturday and did not end till about 1400 hours the next day, a long stretch of 18 hours. In the first count I won by about 40 votes, in the second count I lost by 9 votes and in the third and final count, when we counted the opponents' vote by vote, I won by a heart-throbbing 2 votes. In the end I was thoroughly exhausted and I was very glad that it was all over. I went to the evening service that evening and I gave

thanks to God for my double victory at the Federal level and the state. I felt that my father would have been proud of me as my mother was when she greeted me at home after the counting. The country yokel had made good!

My next job was to prepare my maiden speech in Parliament. Normally this would have been an easy and joyous job but it turned out to be a very difficult job. I had been elected to be the leader of the two men S.F. team although I had no experience and Lim Kean Siew had already served in the previous parliament. I duly wrote out my speech and then showed it to some party elders to read it. In my speech I had included two quotations from Winston Churchill's speeches to the House of Commons. Throughout the previous general election we had been accused of being disloyal by the Alliance leaders and the PAP as well and I thought that by the quotations from Churchill I would show that the S.F. were patriotic and not disloyal. The party elders did not agree with me and said that I was being jingoistic and insisted that these quotations must be deleted. Somehow this leaked to the Press and the Press speculated that I might leave the party even before I had made my maiden speech. Nothing of that sort happened. Like a loyal party member I deleted the Churchillian quotations. I am still sore about the deletion and the lapse of a quarter of a century has not eased the pain that I felt in 1964. I reproduce here, the two quotations that I made. The first was the speech made by Churchill in the House of Commons on 13th May, 1940 at the fall of France when he succeeded Mr Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister. He had specially summoned the House of Commons for a vote of confidence. He said, "I am willing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." In all our long history, no Prime Minister had ever been able to present to Parliament and the nation a programme at once so short. On the 4th June, 1940 he ad-

dressed in the House of Commons: "You ask, What is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never suppressed in the daily lamentable catalogue of human crime. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."

I now come to my maiden speech in the Dewan Rakyat on 21st May, 1964.

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya bangun untuk mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong atas Titahnya kepada Dewan Yang Berhormat ini. Tetapi terlebih dahulu saya hendak mengucapkan, oleh kerana saya datang daripada kawasan Batu, saya berharap Ahli-Ahli di-Dewan Rakyat ini janganlah ingat saya ialah seorang "mulut batu". Saya ingin mengambil peluang disini mengulang taat setia kami dari Front Socialist Rakyat Malaysia kepada Kebawah Duli, kepada Negara dan kepada Perlembagaan yang menjamin demokrasi berparlimen dalam Negara ini.

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya ingin hendak menyentoh beberapa perkara dalam Titah Kebawah Duli itu, terutama atas perkara Malaysia. Dalam menyentoh soal Malaysia ini saya suka menjelaskan semula lagi kepada Dewan Yang Berhormat ini sikap Partai kami terhadap soal tersebut. Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya sekarang minta keizinan untuk saya memberi ucapan saya di dalam bahasa Inggeris.

Mr Speaker Sir, like the previous speaker, the Member for Pontian Selatan, I too am a new Member of this House. In a sense I too am a green horn, or a freshie, as a senior in a university would call such a person. But I can assure

Honourable Members of this House that I am not exactly a political virgin. (Laughter).

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said in the national language, I come from the constituency of Batu, and I do hope that the Honourable Members of this House will not regard me, as they call it in the national language, "mulut batu", as I can well produce about a verbal diarrhoea should the occasion arise.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for Ipoh yesterday also touched on the election irregularities. My colleague, the Member from Dato Kramat, in his speech no doubt will also touch a bit on it. For my part, I do not wish to rehash what the Honourable Member for Ipoh has said. I merely want to make two comments. There was no doubt that there was intimidation on the part of the Alliance Party on a mass scale. It happened in my constituency of Batu. Mr Speaker, Sir, in the constituency of Batu there is the Sungai Buloh Settlement which has 1,500 plus voters. Naturally, all the three parties concerned campaigned in that settlement and I as a doctor perhaps had a little edge over my worthy colleagues in that place. For instance, I went to every ward and I shook hands with every patient. I did not wash my hands after shaking hands with them. Whenever I met an "Indian patient I could speak to him, "Vanakam, nan per Dr Tan Chee Khoon. Soru sappittacha?" I could speak to the Tamil patient in the language that he understood. I could also speak to the Punjabi patient, Mr Speaker Sir, "Babuji, nam khya hai? Khana khata hai?" So I went from house to house and from bed to bed and I think I did create a good impression amongst the patients of Sungai Buloh Settlement. But my worthy opponents, perhaps, because it was a Leper Asylum, did not dare to go near the patients until they found out that this rascal of Tan Chee Khoon had an edge over them. So, they too went and saw a few patients.

Mr Speaker, Sir, come polling day, and what was the result? Our supporters in that area did not dare to put up a "pondok". There was only one "pondok" in Sungai Buloh Settlement and that "pondok" was not up by the Alliance Party. Our supporters did not dare. What is the reason? The Alliance Party went round and said, "If you vote the *celaka* Socialist Front, you will get discharged tomorrow." That was what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 1959 the previous Medical Superintendent did exactly the same thing. I am glad to say that despite this intimidation, I had a fair measure of support from the voters in Sungai Buloh.

I shall comment on another irregularity that I know of: Mr Speaker, Sir, that was when one presiding officer took it into his head to issue only one ballot paper to four voters. As you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the recent elections every voter was entitled to two votes – one at Federal level and one at State level. But for reasons best known to this presiding officer, he issued one ballot paper and that was for the parliamentary seat. When it was pointed out to the senior presiding officer he admitted the fact, and then when this was brought to the attention of the presiding officer concerned, he to admitted the fact, and that is all recorded. When it was asked how could one settle this miscarriage of justice, one was told, "Oh, the error has been rectified." Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know what that rectification consisted of. As you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, once a voter leaves the polling booth and gets out of the polling compound and gets milled up in the thousands of supporters that surrounded the polling compound, I think, it is physically impossible to call the voter back and rectify the mistake. He might have gone to Port Dickson for a sea bath having voted for the right party.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is another irregularity, and I only wish to bring up to the attention of this House these two irregularities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I come now to the main topic of my speech? His majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong mentioned the establishment of Malaysia, and Malaysia has been bandied about not only in this House but also outside this House; and not only during the Elections but long before the Election, a lot of abuse and names had been hurled all over the show. Sir, in the recent elections, the Alliance Party, the P.A.P. and others as well, have resorted to a vicious campaign of hate, smears and abuse at the Socialist Front on the Malaysia issue. We have been deliberately misrepresented and maligned against. As such, we wish to reiterate our stand.

When the Malaysia Plan was first given public expression by the Tunku in May, 1961, we welcomed the idea of a closer association of Bornean territories with our country, but we warned that this should be on the basis of a secret deal with the colonial power, i.e. Great Britain. At the Malaysian Socialist Conference held subsequently, we reiterated this stand on Malaysia and we have consistently maintained this stand since. It must be remembered that on the question of the formation of Malaysia, all the Opposition Parties in the previous Dewan Rakyat were unanimously against the manner in which Malaysia was being brought about.

However, the Alliance Government chose to ride roughshod over the Opposition on this important matter and, as a result, Malaysia created the very things it was designed to prevent. As a result too, Malaysia lost the friendship of two of our most important neighbours, namely the Philippines and Indonesia; it brought about confrontation by Indonesia and the warmongers in the Alliance

Party have led us to the very brink of war. That our stand on Malaysia has been right is proved by the following.

The leading political party in Brunei, which was opposed to Malaysia, had won all the seats contested in the elections held there. It decided that despite its total victory in the elections held there, it could not work the democratic process because of the colonial yoke, and hence it had no alternative but to break out into open rebellion against the colonial power.

The Sultan of Brunei too had refused to join Malaysia despite the blandishment of the Tunku and the British Government. Large sections of the people of the Bornean States and Singapore are still against Malaysia, and large numbers are now under detention. Our neighbouring countries, namely the Philippines and Indonesia, which had hitherto been friendly to us, have taken great offence at the way in which Malaysia has been established. Even U Thant, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his final conclusions on Malaysia, has stated very clearly on page 2 that all this misunderstanding, confusion and even resentment would not have arisen, if the Alliance Government had not been overhasty. He says in his report, in paragraph 3, all this "could have been avoided if the date could have been fixed after my conclusions had been reached and made known." From this it can be seen that the manner in which Malaysia has been formed by the Alliance Government has led this country into a mess and all our warnings which were unheeded and ignored have been proved true.

Now that Malaysia has been pushed through, let me state quite categorically that our Party is pledged to finding a peaceful and constitutional solution to the problems that have been created. We believe that the source of our trouble today is the Alliance Government's failure to establish Malaysia clearly on the basis of the right of self-determina-

tion of the people of Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore. We call upon the Alliance Government to declare and support any measure to establish this. Until we have demonstrated this conclusively in the eyes of the world, particularly of the Afro-Asian nations, despite the junketing, the Malaysia issue will remain unsettled and threaten the peace and development not only of our country but also of South-East Asia, and indeed, may break out into global warfare.

Towards a peaceful settlement of the Malaysia issue, we propose a five-point plan for peace, despite the sniggering that is going on. I notice the Member for Pontian Selatan is not here; I wish he was here so that he can hear what my Party stand is; and despite his absence I wish he was here to listen to what I and my Party have to say. The five-point plan for peace is:

1. An immediate ceasefire. (Laughter)
2. Supervision of the ceasefire by either the United Nation or by contingents from the Afro-Asian nations.
3. Withdrawal of all foreign military troops both British and Indonesian but Malaysian troops should remain behind. (Laughter)
4. Release of all political detainees and the restoration of normal democratic life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do see there is a lot of sniggering around. People who have not come in touch with the infamous Internal Security Act may well afford to do so. If I may say so, when the ISA was debated in the last House, if I remember rightly, not that I want to cast any aspersions on the Honourable Members on my right, they did not oppose the ISA. Now I am sure they rue the day they did not do so, for they are not immune from the ISA. Mr Speaker, Sir, I need hardly say that as long as the Alliance Government

uses the infamous ISA to suppress the Opposition parties there can be no real democracy in this country. A classic example of this abuse of the ISA was the detention of my election agent, Lee Kok Kuang, two weeks before polling day. Now, even if the Alliance Government had enough evidence for such a detention, they could have detained him long before polling day – as the PAP did long before polling day, long before nomination day. (Laughter) But no, the Government must detain him on the eve of polling day, not only to intimidate me, but also to frighten the electorate into voting for the Alliance Party. I am glad to say that neither the electorate nor I were cowed by their blatant intimidation, for the Socialist Front won in both the constituencies we contested there.

5. The holding of direct elections simultaneously in Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore to give the people the right of self-determination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, twelve from Singapore. The other one is from the constituency of Bangsar, which is different from Singapore. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I need hardly teach the PAP a few lessons in geography (Laughter). In this connection, I wrote a letter to the Press on this matter saying that if the PAP and Barisan Socialis representation to this House should be proportionate to the seats gained in the September 1963 election, the PAP do not strictly qualify for 11 seats in this House, let alone the 12 that they now have. If the 15 seats in this House are now to be divided among the 51 seats in the Singapore State Assembly, then 3.4 seats in the State Assembly qualify for one seat in this House. Hence, for 11 seats in this House the PAP should have 37.4 seats in the Singapore State Assembly. But we know that they have 37 seats in the Singapore State Assembly and 12 in this House. Normally the PAP Government is very quick to

reply to any queries in the Press but on this important matter that I wrote about the PAP were strangely silent.

An Honourable Member: Not worth a reply.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: May be so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I leave it to the House to decide. I shall be grateful if they will explain to this House the basis of their computation for representation to this House. Hence our call for direct elections in Singapore to this House and not coming in by the back door.

I trust that the Alliance Government will give serious consideration to our five points for peace and not reject them simply because they emanate from this side of the House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I come to the matter of confrontation that has been much bandied about in this House. With regard to the Indonesian confrontation, we state quite categorically that we will oppose any attempt to crush our country either from within or from without, or to settle the issue of Malaysia by force. Let me reiterate that our loyalty and patriotism to our country is second to none and we will rally behind the Government to resist any foreign aggression from whatever quarters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if that categorical statement from me as a representative of the SF in this country is not good enough, I do not know what the other parties would want us to say more on this matter. We have no hesitation in condemning the attacks on our fishermen and the bombing incidents. The SF in the last Parliament did ask for a greater measure of protection in the form of armed escorts or the provision of arms for our fishermen. We deplore and condemn the oft-repeated threats of Soekarno to crush Malaysia by force and we do hope that the Alliance Government will not commit any more provocative act to aggravate an already very grave situation. Mr Speaker, Sir,

if this categorical statement from me does not satisfy the Government in power, I do not know what they will ask further of us. I repeat, we deplore and condemn the oft-repeated threats of Soekarno to crush Malaysia by force (Interruption), or vice versa. Our quarrel with Indonesia cannot be solved by violence or by abusive language from both sides. Such tactics will only damage the interests of the people of both our countries and also play into the hands of the imperialists.

During the recent Malayan elections the SF has been labelled as pro-Indonesia and as the running dogs of Soekarno. But what are the facts, Mr Speaker, Sir? The Alliance Government in its White Paper on the eve of the elections linked our party with Ibrahim Yacob and called us traitors because of that. But who are the real traitors to this country? Who has signed away our country to "big brother" Soekarno? Let us pause and recollect. Now that the people have been misled in the elections, let us not fool ourselves further.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that in December 1955 the Tunku led a goodwill mission to Indonesia consisting of himself, Tun Razak, Encik Aziz Ishak and Mr Oscar Spencer. In connection with that visit, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask who visited Encik Ibrahim Yaacob in his house? Who was chummy with him? Was it not the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence? Does the Minister - who is not present today - care to deny this? I know he would not, even if he were present today, be so foolish to do that, because, Mr Speaker, I have before me the proof of that visit; here it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, a photograph taken in the house of Ibrahim Yaacob (a photograph is shown to the House). This photograph shows the Deputy Prime Minister seated beside Ibrahim Yaacob and Members of this House can see. This is not a false picture. They can see this and we can

produce any number of such pictures for Members of this House. Here is Tun Razak seated beside Ibrahim Yaacob. What was the Minister doing with such a character? Would he care to explain? Here I must confess that I am in the horns of a dilemma. Are we to conclude, from this picture that the Minister's association with Ibrahim Yaacob, that our Deputy Minister and Minister of Defence is himself a traitor as set out in the Government White Paper?

You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Alliance leaders and those who ape them do not hesitate to call us names in their desperation. But we are not so desperate as to lose our sense of balance. We are willing to leave this House and the country to be the judge on this matter. We do not wish to indulge in calling people names.

Now, in connection with that visit too, what about the Prime Minister? Would he deny that he met Ibrahim Yaacob at the Guest House in Indonesia? Further more, did not the Tunku accompany Bung Karno and lavish praises on Indonesia and its leaders? Did not the Tunku at Cherubon say that Soekarno was the greatest statesman in Asia?

Encik Ibrahim Yaacob was then the doyen of Malay Nationalism and was assiduously courted by the Alliance leaders, but today he is the arch traitor of Malaysia. How times have changed and how confusing to us ordinary mortals!

Now, let us examine the relations of the PAP government *vis-à-vis* Indonesia. What did the Honourable Prime Minister of Singapore say to the Indonesia Prime Minister when he went wooing the Indonesians in January 1960? I quote this from the Straits Times for the benefit of the Members of this House and – since he is not here – to refresh the memory of his colleagues. The Prime Minister said: "We will not allow anything detrimental to the security of In-

Indonesia to be committed in any territory over which we have control." What concern, what assurance, what regard and what affection he had for Indonesia! Does he still stand by those sentiments or has he changed his stand today? Does he not remember declaring that the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch for independence had been a source of inspiration to the Nationalists in Singapore? I quote again:

"We watch," he said, "with even greater interests, your efforts to make up for past decades of stagnation under Dutch colonial exploitation."

Does not the Prime Minister of Singapore describe Indonesia as "our great neighbour with whom we must renew our link and our friendship?" The Prime Minister also felt this:

"This visit which you have so kindly arranged for us should open the way for closer understanding and co-operation between Indonesia and Singapore."

"This is the basic friendship," said the Prime Minister, "which we have towards our neighbours, the people of Indonesia. May that friendship strengthen and grow in mutual respect and mutual prosperity." This was the love, these were the sentiments, this was the affection and this was the regard which the Singapore Prime Minister had for Indonesia then. But today he sings a different tune and is almost a warmonger.

On the June 28th, 1963, Mr Speaker, Sir, Senator Cik Aishah Ghani led a three-member delegation to Jakarta – that was not very long ago! The other members of the delegation included Datin Sa'adia, wife of the Minister of Transport and Cik Som Binti Abdullah. Then Senator Cik Aishah Ghani stated: "Malaysia women always look to Indonesia for guidance just like a younger sister expecting guidance from her elder sister." She also stated that the

Malayan delegation had not gone to a foreign country but to meet their brothers and sisters. Finally the delegation was charmed by the warm hospitality shown to them by Mrs Subandrio. The delegation also met President Soekarno of whom Senator Cik Aishah Ghani said, "I think he is a charming man."

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I refer to an Alliance Minister, who was so moved by his admiration for Soekarno that he named his son after the Indonesia leader? But as the Malaysia issue heated up, this Minister wisely and quietly changed the name of his son. Unfortunately, Sir, the Minister I am referring to, is not in front of me now, but as you all know - and it is generally known in this country - the Minister in question is the Honourable Minister of Transport who subsequently challenged the Indonesian leader to a fight - Siamese style, Queensbury rules, swords and sabres. But before that he had named his son after the Indonesia leader.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these are examples I quoted will show that we who have been described as pro-Indonesian, we who have been called "running dogs" of Indonesia, are not so. My colleagues and I have not been to Indonesia, my colleagues and I have not mentioned words favouring Indonesia. None of us named our sons after Soekarno. None of us has called Soekarno a charming man, nor have we called Indonesia our great neighbour. I leave it to the House, Sir, and to the country to decide who have been pro-Indonesia and who have been the "running dogs" of Indonesia.

I now come to the question of Maphilindo. May I ask who has signed away this country to be dominated by Indonesia with its population of a hundred million? What did the Prime Minister agree to at Manila? What is Maphilindo? Why has the King's Speech been silent on

this? Is it not true that the Alliance has betrayed this country and its people by agreeing to the establishment of Maphilindo, which is to be a confederation of Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia? What will become of this country? Does not this Agreement pave the way for the slow absorption by Indonesia? What role will this country with 10 million people play with Indonesia which has 100 million people? Will not Indonesia dominate us?

We have been accused of paving the way for Indonesian domination, but the Alliance leaders have already sold this country to Indonesia. Can the Alliance leaders claim to protect the interests of all the people of this country, be they Malays, Indians, Chinese or any others? What else is the design behind Maphilindo? Why was the King's Speech so silent on so important and vital a matter? What is the view of the PAP? There is something sinister about it. That is why we must not have anything to do with it.

These few examples, I hope, will suffice to show the House and here once again I reiterate that we have been accused of being pro-Indonesia – who have been pro-Indonesia when it suited them; and now the Alliance and the PAP have the effrontery to accuse us of being pro-Indonesia and of being running dogs of Soekarno. If anything the Alliance Party and the PAP are guilty of sucking up – if I may use the word, Mr Speaker, Sir, to Soekarno when it suited their political convenience and they are now indulging in foolish abuse. Because the Alliance feared an adverse vote on the Malaysia issue and confrontation, they have used the entire machinery of the State to capture the electorate by making Indonesian domination as the bogey in the recent elections. The mysterious plane flights, the parachute drops, the police road blocks and the bombing incident all helped to create an atmosphere of fear, tension and war hysteria in this country.

It is interesting to note that all these have ceased after the elections. When my colleagues the Member for Dato Kramat put forward the hypothesis that the bombing incidents could have been the work of the CIA, he was accused by the now Minister of Home Affairs of reading too many James Bond novels - not that I know whether he reads many of those novels; he does not read those novels, Mr Speaker, Sir, (Laughter).

Hence in addition to the five points for peace that I have already enunciated, the SF calls on the Alliance Government to leave no stone unturned in the quest for peace. This does not mean the SF advocates abject surrender to Indonesia as we have been accused of. There are groups in this country who are determined to prevent a peaceful settlement. I am sure the Prime Minister is aware of these pressure groups and will be wise to resist them. The SF advocates a peaceful solution of the Malaysia dispute but it must be a peace with honour and based on the integrity of our territory in Borneo. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, if that does not satisfy the Alliance Government, I do not know what will. Hence, we once again call on the Alliance Government to take the quarrel from the jungle to the conference table and there to explore every avenue for a peaceful settlement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I now comment on the PAP and the Malayan elections. In the recent Malayan elections the PAP made their political debut, and albeit it was a disastrous one, as has been commented on by the Honourable Member for Pontian Selatan. Both the Alliance Party and the PAP in particular and others as well have called us communists, toeing the PKI line. They pretend to see a communist behind every bush, in every nook and corner, under every bed and in every bathroom - and all these communists are from the Socialist Front. However, the UMNO is worried over its infiltration by communist elements, and

we all know that the PAP rose to power with the collaboration of the Malayan Communist Party. And now both these parties have the effrontery to accuse us of being communists.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I now address two biblical quotations to the Alliance and the PAP:

"He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone."

To the Prime Minister of Singapore, may I say this:

"The beam that thou seest in thy neighbour's eye thou seest not in thine own."

Let me lay low this communist bogey once and for all. We are not a communist party; nor are we infiltrated by communists; and we do not toe the PKI line; nor are we aligned to any foreign political party.

During the recent elections also the PAP was the most belligerent in its talk and most bellicose and abusive in its propaganda. The PAP hopes to rise to power by hanging on to the "sarong" of the Tunku. Jumping on the bandwagon of the ruling party is an old and profitable pastime. However, their record of double-talk and double-cross is so notorious that no amount of ingratiating talk can persuade even a party like UMNO to co-operate with them. The PAP sought to replace the MCA as the representative of the urban Chinese masses in the Alliance. Despite repeated rebuffs from the UMNO, the PAP unashamedly continued to woo the UMNO. Here the House has just heard what the Honourable Member for Pontian Selatan has said on this matter. May I warn the PAP that if they tug too hard at the "sarong" of the Tunku, that "sarong" may well come off (Laughter) and so embarrass the Tunku and enrage the UMNO to boot. During the recent elections too, the PAP like a big circus, with great showmen and clowns, went on the Malayan circuit and everywhere they went they drew huge crowds and caused big traffic jams. Mr Speaker, Sir, in

the Singapore elections of September 1963 the MCA were quite properly described as clowns. In the Malayan elections their counterparts here were the PAP and the greatest showman and clown of them all, Mr Speaker, Sir, is here – the Prime Minister of Singapore.

Here is a booklet printed by the PAP entitled: "Winds of Change". Its proper caption, to me, should be: "The ill winds of change from south of the Causeway that does no one any good". Here is a picture of the Prime Minister of Singapore addressing a huge rally in Sulaiman Court. Yes, you can see, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a huge rally - truly the biggest rally that K.L. has seen. It was really a mammoth crowd that was entertained by that great clown. Now, Sulaiman Court happens to be in my constituency of Batu. Here the PAP knocked their heads against a stone wall and their candidate lost his deposit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, here is another picture of the same master showman addressing another huge crowd – in Penang this time; and you can see for yourself it is in Penang ...

Encik Lim Kean Siew (Dato Kramat): They lost all their deposits.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: I do not need the help of my colleague, the Honourable Member for Dato Kramat, to teach me what has happened in Penang. (Laughter) Let us see what were the result they achieved.

In the constituency of Tanjong my worthy colleague, Dr Lim Chong Eu, handed out a sound thrashing to the PAP candidate, Mr Tan Chong Bee, who polled 733 votes out of 28,493 votes cast.

In the State Constituency of Kota, Dr Lim, too, applied the *coup de grace* to the PAP candidate, Mr Lim Yew Hock – not our representative in Canberra, although the name

sounds the same— who pooled a mere 165 votes out of 9,129 votes cast.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in Johore and Penang the PAP lost their deposits in all their Federal and State seats they contested. In all, the PAP lost their deposits in six out of the eleven Federal seats they contested; and in the State elections they lost 9 deposits out of the 15 seats they contested. The recent Malayan elections must have taught the PAP a salutary lesson, and no doubt the Prime Minister of Singapore is today a sadder but wiser man.

Dr Lim Chong Eu (Tanjong): On a point of order. I have been trying to catch your eye, Sir. I really do not know under what Standing Rule and Order, so I beg your permission on a point of order. I thank the Member for Batu for all his references to me, but I wish to clarify that the term "colleague" probably means that we are sitting on the same side of the House; and I ask on a point of order that as I have yet to speak for myself, I hope we shall have time to speak for ourselves on the issue that were brought up by the Honourable Member for Batu. Probably there were Standing Orders under discussion. I would ask that reference to our victory in Tanjong not be so associated with Batu.

Mr Speaker: Can you mention the number of the Standing Order?

Dr Lim Chong Eu: Just on a point of order, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I think you have mentioned a Standing Order. What is the number of the Standing Order?

Dr Lim Chong Eu: I merely want to dissociate myself, and to point out to the House, that the term "colleague" used by the Member for Batu probably refers to the fact that we are sitting on the same side of the House and the fact that the Member for Batu has so kindly referred to the election results in Tanjong in the last elections. However, I feel it

should be left to us to deal with it rather than to be taken up in a manner associated by the Member for Batu.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: Mr Speaker, Sir, I hasten to reassure the Member for Tanjong that I have no intention of associating him with my views. When I said "my colleague, Dr Lim Chong Eu" - I should have said "the Member for Tanjong" - I meant he and I are both doctors and both in the sense are colleagues. (Laughter) I did not mean that we are both political colleagues. He and I are doctors from the same profession, and it is usual for us on occasions like this to refer: "my colleague from Larut Selatan." That does not mean that we have the same political views. (Laughter) Mr Speaker, Sir, May I continue?

Mr Speaker: Yes, you may continue.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: The PAP maintains that whatever votes the SF gained in the previous elections were protest votes gained by default from the MCA. The recent elections have proved that whatever votes we garnered in were solid leftwing votes. Thus, at the Federal level in 1959 we had 13% of the votes. This year we gained 16% of the votes cast. They were not protest votes. In Selangor, in 1959 we had 17.7% of the votes cast; this year we gained 40% of the votes cast. If it is true to say that in the recent Malayan elections the PAP votes were protest votes, then how is it that the PAP votes were so few? Let us now examine once again the election results of the PAP in the recent Malayan elections. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have here two typed sheets with me, but I shall not bother the House by reading the votes gained by them, such as, at Federal level 778 out of 28,500; 3,000 out of 20,000; or at State level 165 out of 9,000; and 359 out of 10,000. I shall not bother the House with such details, Sir. I think the Malays have a word *malu*, and this is the word which, I think, the PAP does not understand. In Singapore, the Prime Minister of Singapore is the lord of all he surveys

and his Ministers – or shall I call them his minions – are at his beck and call. Now, that he has come to the Malaysian Parliament, that giant is reduced to pint size by people of both sides of the House. He can no longer be the Oracle of Delphi, as he seeks to prove to be in Singapore.

May I now turn to some of the other matters that have been raised in the Gracious Speech of His Majesty. May I refer to the Ministry of Health. If I remember rightly, in the previous House the Minister of Finance once said that the SF talks the most when they are the most ignorant of the subject. I can assure you, Mr Speaker. Sir, that the Member for Dato Kramat and I are not exactly ignoramuses and that in speaking on health I am, so to say, on home ground. I regret that the Honourable Minister of Health is not here today to listen to what I have to say, but I do hope that what I have to say will be conveyed to him in due course, if not by word of mouth, through the Hansard.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is regrettable that the Minister of Health in his very first press conference should put his wrong foot forward and antagonise the medical profession. I refer to the press statement where he stated that the Government would train Assistant Medical and Health Officers. When this matter was first mooted in the last House, I thought that the medical profession had made their views quite clear to the Ministry and that this matter would be dropped. But now I see that the Honourable Minister of Health has chosen to raise this matter again. I do hope sincerely that he has been mis-quoted on this matter, and I do hope that when the time comes for the Government benchers to reply to my speech they will clarify this point, for it is a point that is of great importance, not only to the medical profession but to the health of this country.

Mr Speaker. Sir, if I may say so, in that Ministry there is so much confusion that, to say the least, many medical of-

ficers are disillusioned. They are disillusioned because you see quite a number of young M.C.S. officers holding the reins in that Ministry and ordering venerable doctors who had qualified long before the war about as if they were peons. This is strongly resented by the medical profession and the medical profession has asked that a medical man be put in charge of that Ministry instead of an M.C.S. officer.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another aspect of the Ministry that has antagonised the profession has been the cholera outbreak in Malacca last year. Through the inept handling of the officers concerned there, the cholera outbreak was allowed to spread; and instead of putting their house right, we saw various statements from the various Ministers. We had a statement from the Minister of Works, Posts and Telecommunications, reassuring the country that there was no need to worry and that all was under control. But meanwhile the cholera raged and spread north and south, and even across the Causeway. Mr Speaker, Sir, if I may, I would like to quote here from a report of the Malayan Medical Association on this aspect. As you know, during that cholera outbreak the Acting Minister of Health, again I repeat, instead of putting his own house in order, started maligning the private practitioners in this country. Now I would read the report from the Malayan Medical Association tabled at their fourth annual general meeting in 1964:

"Your Council appointed a Committee to visit Malacca and investigate the cause of the outbreak of cholera in the State. The Malayan Medical Association submitted a memorandum on its findings. The unsatisfactory state of affairs regarding the sanitation, water supply and sewerage disposal was the fundamental cause of the outbreak.

"The Minister of Health appears to have no jurisdiction over the health service in local authorities like the

Municipality of Malacca town. It is also unfortunate that the Ministry were unprepared at all levels to meet with an emergency outbreak of cholera of the proportions it reached. It is wrong to apportion blame to any single officer when the system is at fault.

“It is the view of the Malaysian Medical Association that the attacks made against the private medical practitioners during the epidemic were uncalled for. We are glad to know that the Government Commission of Enquiry has remarked that a better relationship should exist between the Ministry of Health and the private medical practitioners during an epidemic.

“It is interesting to note that the Commission has accepted most of the 14 recommendations put up by the Malayan Medical Association to the Commission to prevent further outbreaks of major epidemics in Malaya.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that there is a shortage of medical personnel, particularly of doctors. What has the Government done to solve this problem? Yes, the Government has done through ASA to try and recruit some doctors from Manila until its unwise move in the matter of Malaysia brought an abrupt end to that arrangement. It is true that the Ministry of Health is searching high and low for doctors, but what has the Ministry of Health done? I do know that it is very inept in its handling of doctors. I do know of doctors, who have applied for jobs in the Ministry of Health, having to wait for two, three or four months before they are appointed. Sir, if you ask any doctor, to wait for the Government to appoint him that length of time, can you wonder if the doctors choose to go elsewhere, even to go back to U.K. to practise rather than to wait for this dilatory delay on the part of the Government.

Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must pay a tribute where tribute is due. I do know that the PAP Government has a different

type of Ministry of Health, and I think the Minister is here today. There I know that if a doctor sees the A.D.M.S. (Health) today, in a very short time - even in a day or two - he is appointed to the service. If that can be done south of the causeway, I do not see why there should be such great delays in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I now come to the question of Labour. We are told, Sir, that this Government now has a new dynamic approach to Labour questions and that employers have been exhorted to place the national interest before their own. Mr Speaker, Sir, times without number, we have seen in recent months and days, a rash of strikes, or threatened strikes that have broken out - a strike has been on and off, and you do not know whether it is on or off. We want to know from the new Minister what is this new dynamic approach to Labour relations. We do know that, whenever a strike takes place, very often it is due to the fact that the union leaders are all sacked without a "by your leave". When a strike takes place, the employees are exhorted to place the national interest before their own, but there is not a word said about the employer. I have yet to see any statement from the Ministry of Labour condemning unethical practices from the employers. We have known, we have seen, and there is evidence still, of employers locking out workers. Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Minister cares to go to the 3rd Mile Gombak, he would see there a strike going on, and that has been going on for more than three months, and the cause of that strike was all because the workers there wanted to form a union; and when they legitimately formed a union, the Committee was sacked *en masse*. I want to know what has the Ministry of Labour done to persuade the employer to come to an amicable settlement with the employees? We do know that in almost all of these cases it is the employees who have been victimized by the

employers; and we do know that very often the employees run to our benevolent Prime Minister to find a solution to their problems. But I must warn the workers of this country that that is a very dangerous practice, because today you may have a benevolent Prime Minister, tomorrow you may not have such a benevolent Prime Minister, and if you continue to run to the Prime Minister for all the solutions of your labour ills, then one day the workers of this country will rue the day they have established this practice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the dispute between the MPIEA and the NUPW we have the astonishing statement advice by the Honourable the Prime Minister that the NUPW should go to London to find a solution to their problems with the Rubber Growers' Association in London. Mr Speaker, Sir, if that is not pure colonialism, *kolonialisme tulin* as the Malays say, what is it? It shows that this Government is still tied to the apron strings of London and this Government still takes orders from its master ...

Encik Ibrahim B. Abdul Rahman: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order – Standing Order 36 (2) says: "Reference shall not be made to any matter which is *sub judice* in such a way as might in the opinion of the Chair prejudice the interests of parties thereto." Sir, the matter of the MPIEA and NUPW is under arbitration now.

Mr Speaker: (To Dr Tan Chee Khoon) Yes, he is referring to Standing Order 36(2). The matter is *sub judice* because it is still under discussion. Please proceed.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon. Mr Speaker, Sir, that is not a court proceeding, and as such I do not think it is *sub judice*. That is merely a mediation. We can see the employees and employers still spouting their pieces both inside and outside the Press – and I do not see why I should be reminded of that. Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall not continue, not in deference to the Honourable Member, who interrupted me, but that I

merely to make my point that this Government is still being tied on to the apron strings in London.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I now come to the Ministry of Education? Just now you have heard me referring to the recognition of the Nanyang University degrees. I wish to remind this House that the graduates of this country are very perturbed over a section of the Constitution of the University of Malaya. I refer to Section 47, and may I, Sir, with your permission, read out Section 47:

"A student shall not be admitted to the University to a course of study for a degree unless he (hereinafter in this Part referred to as a 'matriculated student') shall have satisfied such requirements as may be prescribed by Act; provided that except with the agreement of the Minister, students who have been awarded Federal and State scholarships or other similar financial assistance from public funds for University degree courses, shall not be refused admission if they satisfy such requirements."

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I am right in saying that a large body of academic people, and certainly the graduates of the University of Malaysia, are perturbed over this section that gives the Minister of Education the right to compel the University to accept a student chosen by the Government, be it the State or Federal Government; and I believe I am right that the University of Malaya Graduates' Society has already made representation to the Government on this matter.

May I also, Mr Speaker, Sir, say that because of certain events in the University of Singapore, where the Vice-Chancellor, in the words of a distinguished and academic man, has been hounded out of the University. That has caused the Guild of the Graduates of the University of Malaya to hold a protest meeting on this matter and to send their views to the Council of the University of Malaya and

through it to the Government. I do hope that the present Minister of Education will give us an assurance that the autonomy of their University shall not be tampered with.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now dwell for a little while on the Ministry of Welfare, and here, Mr Speaker, Sir, may I say that I welcome the formation of the Ministry of Welfare, and may I have your permission to speak in the National Language.

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, dalam pilihan raya yang lalu saya ada melawat Rumah Pertolongan di antara kampong-kampong Melayu di kawasan saya. Di beberapa keluarga di kampong itu saya ada menengok beberapa kanak-kanak yang tidak bersekolah. Apabila saya bertanya: Encik, mengapa anak kamu tidak pergi sekolah? Beliau menjawab: Tuan Doktor, apa kata awak? Macam mana anak saya boleh pergi ke sekolah, perut saya lapar, saya tidak ada wang, tengok perut saya kenyangkah? Dan bagaimana saya boleh mencari cukup wang untuk membeli buku-buku. Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya berharap Menteri Kebajikan Am boleh menengok perkara yang saya bawa ini dan saya berharap Menteri itu boleh menolong orang yang miskin dan orang yang tidak ada wang untuk membeli buku-buku bagi anak-anak mereka.

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, kami dari SF berasa sangat dukacita sebab Titah Ucapan Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda tidak menyentoh tentang Bulan Bahasa Kebangsaan yang akan datang. Tuan Yang di-Pertua, kalau Kerajaan sendiri tidak menyentoh perkara ini dalam Titah Ucapan, bagaimana kami boleh memanggil rakyat belajar Bahasa Kebangsaan.

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya hendak memberitahu kepada Ahli-Ahli Yang Berhormat, pada tahun yang lalu saya ada menjemput Menteri Muda di hari menyampaian hadiah di sekolah jenis kebangsaan rendah yang saya men-

jadi pengerusi lembaganya. Apabila guru besar itu dan saya telah memberi ucapan dalam Bahasa Kebangsaan dan Bahasa Inggeris, Menteri itu memberi ucapannya di dalam Bahasa Inggeris sahaja. Kalau Menteri Kerajaan tidak membaca Bahasa Kebangsaan bagaimana kami boleh memanggil rakyat belajar Bahasa Kebangsaan?

Tuan Yang di-Pertua, Kerajaan Perikatan kerana kemenangannya yang gilang-gemilang mungkin tidak mahu mendengar shor-shor daripada kami ini. Satu daripada jawapan Menteri-Menteri Kerajaan Perikatan dalam Parlimen yang lalu ialah yang pemerintah sekarang adalah kami. Kalau parti kamu yang memerintah, kamu boleh buat apa-apa yang kamu fikir baik. Adalah menjadi satu pertanyaan, apakah jawapan yang begini boleh menggalakkan pertumbuhan Demokrasi Berparlimen dengan sihat dalam negara kita ini? Sungguhpun SF mempunyai dua orang wakil sahaja dalam Dewan yang berhor-mat, saya suka mengingatkan bahawa kami mewakili 16% pengundi-pengundi negara ini dan beberapa banyak lagi penduduk-penduduk yang bertimbang rasa dengan kami.

Dari itu, Tuan Yang di-Pertua, saya anjurkan kepada Kerajaan menimbangkan pendapat kami memandang bahawa anjuran kami itu ada-lah datang daripada sebahagian rakyat yang taat setianya tidak kurang daripada pengundi-pengundi yang mengundi Parti Perikatan. Kita mempunyai satu masalah yang besar - masalah konfrontasi di hadapan kita. Satu perpaduan rakyat adalah perlu menghadapi masalah ini. Marilah kita berpedomankan peribahasa lama: yang berat sama dipikul, yang ringan sama dijunjung dalam menghadapi masalah ini.

Sekianlah sahaja, Tuan Yang di-Pertua, kalau sekiranya ucapan saya tidak sedap atau kasar, saya minta maaf dan sekali lagi saya mengucapkan terima kasih. (Tepok)

CHAPTER 19

THE CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, SECOND READING ON 9TH JULY, 1964.

ON 9TH JULY, 1964 the Constitution was amended to provide for the creation of an Assistant Minister, a Parliamentary Secretary and a Political Secretary, etc. I strongly opposed this Bill as below is my speech made on that occasion.

Dr Tan Chee Khoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise to oppose the Bill before us today. Before I do so, may I make a few comments on the speech of the Honourable Member from Singapore. He started off by saying that in Singapore there was once a Professor of History who thought it more lucrative to forsake academic teaching and write a book known as Parkinson's law, and the Bill before us here today justifies Parkinson's law with a vengeance – create one post, then find an excuse to create another post; create a post for an Assistant Minister, tomorrow you need a Political Secretary or a Parliamentary Secretary to help him. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not always that we in the Socialist Front do agree with those of us on this side of the House, the PAP. It has been said by the Prime Minister of Singapore that this narrow causeway, the chasm that divides us, is unbridgeable. I, for one, in this instance, despite the unkind words of the Honourable Prime Minister for Singapore, wish to lay aside party politics and say that I do support him on what he has said about Parkinson's law and what he has said about what the Civil Service is for. If it is found necessary that there should be reinforcement, that the Civil Service is inadequate, that the Ministers are not getting adequate assistance, then the

proper thing is to increase the Civil Service. He has talked of grades of petrol – \$2.00 for super-octane or higher-octane. You can have Ph.Ds in the Civil Service, Master of Arts, Master of Science, in the Civil Service, and then you come lower down, Honours graduate and Pass graduate. So the Government has, at its disposal, this facility if the need should arise to enlarge the list of civil servants.

He has also expressed his anxiety in the matter of Senators who represent no one but themselves. Here again, we in the Socialist Front agree entirely with him that these Senators represent no one but themselves. He has pointed out that if a Senator was appointed Minister, he would find it indeed difficult to answer questions from us, the elected Members of this House. He has also expressed his appreciation and we in the Socialist Front also do appreciate, that Government has thought it wise not to appoint any Senator any more to this House. The former Senator is now a properly elected Member of this House – the frontbenchers have properly stated that he has won in Ulu Selangor, and we give them credit for it. We give them credit for not getting any Minister into this House by the backdoor.

Now, of greater importance is the anxiety shared entirely by us that at the very first opportunity the Government has thought it fit to tinker with the Constitution – and merely to suit the appointment of Secretaries and Parliamentary Secretaries and Political Secretaries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Constitution is a very sacred thing. It should remain inviolate as far as possible. Like the Member from Singapore, I do agree with him, we in the SF do agree with him, that from time to time it may be necessary that the Government should amend the Constitution according to the needs of the country – there we agree with the Government, but not for the Government on the second meeting of this House, and giving so short a notice, to

amend the Constitution, as has been quite properly pointed out. The first time we knew of this Amendment to the Constitution was when we came on Monday, sat down, and saw to our horror that there is Amendment to the Constitution. Bearing in mind what happened – I think it was in late 1961 and early 1962 – when the Government made major amendments to the Constitution, I have visions of far more drastic amendments than these set out today by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs. Quite properly, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Member from Singapore has also pointed out that in the matter of amendments to the Constitution, not only the State should be consulted, but I think Parliamentarians should be given a chance to think it over, to consult with their constituents – in fact, the whole country should be consulted on any amendment to the Constitution however small. The Government would like us to believe that this Amendment is a small one and should not cause any trouble to the Opposition, and they should approve of it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to say that if in future the Government should think it fit – I will not say “tinker” – to amend the Constitution, then I hope it will give not only us, the representatives of the people on that side and this side of the House but also, what is more important, the people of the country time to think over it, so that if they disagree they can then write to their Members of Parliament, call their Members of Parliament to account and say, “Look here, this is what you must do.” As it is, where is the time to consult our constituents? Some come from Sarawak, some come from Sabah, and some come from Singapore and they have not the time to go back and consult their constituents. So, I do hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in future – and I make this as a plea that not only Members on this side, but perhaps, those on the other side of this House will also re-echo it – if there is

any amendment to the Constitution, the Government should, in future, try to consult, what is most important, the people of Malaysia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill, apart from seeking powers to give political privileges to party colleagues, is also designed to perpetuate and enlarge a discredited and useless Upper House by filling it with political stooges. It was generally thought that the Upper House is performing no useful function. This can be seen from the pains taken by the Members on questions which have come before them in the last five years. One of the Honourable Members told me that they were mere rubber stamps; and another said that all that had to be said of the subject that were brought before them had invariably been said in the Lower House, where such matters had already been discussed at length. If that is so, then the suggestion that the Senate should consist of people with experience, scholarship, and service is a mockery. This *tidak apa* attitude that has been adopted in the Upper House, and which cannot be denied, is due to the fact that the Upper House is filled with political amateurs who could not find a way of getting into Parliament by the front door, and had to come in through the back door provided by the Senate. Thus, it is a refuge for a number of discredited, defeated, and frustrated Alliance politicians. If the Minister denies what I have said, then I would like him to set the record correct by giving the experience of the Members, or the contributions that these Members had made to the welfare and happiness of the people of this country, before they were appointed to that august and dignified House. I can say without fear of contradiction that very few of the Members of the Upper House are men of merit as set out in the Constitution.

Under Article 45(2) of the Constitution, it is provided that the Members to be appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan

Agong "shall be persons who, in the opinion of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, have rendered distinguished public service, or have achieved distinction in the professions, commerce, industry, agriculture, cultural activities or social service, or are representative of racial minorities, or are capable of representing the interests of aborigines." Can the Members of the Alliance in this House search their souls and truly say that those occupying the seats in the Senate belong to that group of persons described in the Constitution? Can they search their conscience and truly say that amongst the Members of the Senate there is a doctor, lawyer, teacher, engineer, who is an acknowledged leader in his own profession? Perhaps, the Members of this House may not even know who the Members in the Senate are really. Such is the distinguished services that Members have given to this House that the majority of the leaders of this House does not know the Members of the Senate. Has any cultural or professional body ever been consulted?

Encik Ibrahim B Abdul Rahman: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Honourable Member is irrelevant, because we are not discussing the appointment of Senators.

Mr Speaker: He can speak on that. It is general policy.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: I fail to see how that is irrelevant, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are asked to amend the Constitution on the House of Senate, and here I am told that I must not speak it, Sir. (Laughter) I really do not know. If Honourable Members on the opposite side want to interrupt me, and they have the privilege to do it, I hope that they will find an appropriate time to do so. (Laughter).

Mr Speaker: Please proceed.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: May I resume, Mr Speaker, Sir? Have any cultural or professional bodies been consulted and appointments made from them? I belong to a number of professional and cultural organisations, namely, the

Alumni Association of the King Edward VII College of Medicine, the Malayan Medical Association and the University of Malaya Graduates Society. But as far as I know, these bodies have never been consulted nor any appointment made from them to the Senate. I do know that the University of Malaya Graduates Society have made representations to the Government on this matter, but as usual their representation was ignored.

If our Senate is to be a second Chamber and its working patterned after that of the House of Lords, then I say that our Senate has failed miserably in its duties. I have here an authoritative book on "The British Constitution" by J. Harvey and L. Bather.

On page 37 of this book the authors say that a considerable part of the legislative process is performed by the House of Lords. The main legislative work performed by the Upper House is in the revision of Bills. This may be aimed at achieving concessions in Government policy and the Lower House still has the ultimate power to reject. More usually, however, the object is to make the bill more workable. Can it be claimed that the Senate has performed this function in the last five years of its existence? That the Senate has not played a useful role in the legislative process is proved by an article in the Malayan Law Journal of December 1963, a copy of which I have here with me. In an article entitled "The Constitution of Malaysia and the Malaysia Act", by Professor H.E. Groves, Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of Singapore, he has this to say of the Senate:

"During the life of the Federation of Malaya the Senate was not noted for taking legislative initiative nor departing from the legislative programme of the party in control of the House of Representatives."

Mr Speaker, Sir, if the opinion of this eminent lawyer on the Senate is not adequate testimony of the uselessness of the Upper House, I do not know what is. Here then is an unbiased opinion of the usefulness of the Senate by a legal luminary who is the Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Singapore. Hence the SF calls on the Alliance Government to form a Royal Commission, preferably composed of men of repute from outside this country to examine the legislative record of the recommendations to this House.

The Reid Commission on page 23 of its Report has this to say on the nominated member, " ... we recommend that Parliament should have power to reduce the number of nominated members or abolish them if a time should come when that is thought desirable. "However, we are now asked in this Bill to do the exact opposite, i.e., increase the number of the nominated members from 22 to 32.

As for the State Representatives who are indirectly elected, the Reid Commission says, and I quote (*vide* page 23 of the Reid Report):

"We provide that the members from each State should be elected by the State Legislative Assembly but we think that it may be found at some future time that this system of indirect election is undesirable and we therefore recommend that Parliament should have power to introduce a system of direct election by the people of each State in place of indirect election which we regard as appropriate in the present circumstances."

However, two members of the Commission, namely, Sir William Mckell and Mr Justice Abdul Hamid have expressed a joint opinion which should make the Alliance Government look silly, and I quote it, Sir (*vide* page 23 of the Reid Report):

"It will be seen that none of the members of the Senate are to be elected by the people. We consider that a Senate so

constituted does not conform to a system of parliamentary democracy, and is not in keeping with the aspirations of a people whose desire is to enjoy self-government in the real sense and democracy in its purest form. Merdeka, to the celebration of which the people of Malaya are looking forward, means to them freedom, freedom to govern themselves through representatives of their own choice under a system in which their parliamentary institutions, shall be exclusively representative of the people's will."

Alas! We are as far from that as we are from the moon. Perhaps in the Malaysia of today it would be easier to ask for the moon. But the freedom that was envisaged by the fathers of the Constitution was not the freedom we got and the freedom we have now will shock them.

However, we would not be making the situation worse if we do not increase the number. But if we do, we are adding injury to insult. Therefore, we oppose this Bill as the Senate in its present form is an anachronism and we suggest that the present Senate as constituted shall be scrapped and that we should have a fully elected Senate.

This Bill also seeks approval for the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries who shall assist Ministers and Assistant Ministers in the discharge of their duties and functions. This is, as has been pointed out, Parkinson's Law with a vengeance. And we are also asked to approve powers for the appointment of such number of persons - not stated - by the Prime Minister as he may think fit to be Political Secretaries. These are really jobs for the boys with a vengeance. At the rate the Alliance Government is creating jobs for their MPs as requested now and in Quasi-Government bodies, very soon there will not be any MP left without a job from the benevolent and paternalistic Government. No wonder politics is regarded as a very rewarding vocation in Alliance circles (interruption). Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not

rewarding to me (Laughter). As Honourable Members know, it is not rewarding at all to me both financially and otherwise.

Why Ministers should have Parliamentary Secretaries I do not know, nor can I fathom the reason. As far as I can see, every Minister has the whole paraphernalia of Government to assist him. One has only to look at the top brass of Government sitting behind the Government benches to see that the Government Ministers and Assistant Ministers have more than adequate assistance if they want it. Every Minister has a Permanent Secretary, some a Deputy Permanent Secretary, Assistant Permanent Secretary, Principal Assistant Secretaries galore, personal Private Secretaries, Stenographers, Clerks, Typists to assist them in the performance of their duties. Why then the necessity for the creation of Political and Parliamentary Secretaries? Again I reiterate these political perks are jobs for the boys with a vengeance.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon: Mr Speaker Sir, if I am accused of reading my speech and if that is right, then I think I am in very good company. (Laughter)

Mr Speaker, Sir, these political perks are jobs for the boys with a vengeance. Sir, if the Government thinks it fit to give political perks for their MPs, we on this side of the House know that with a huge majority they can do so without any trouble. But I do hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in creating perks for their boys, they would not tinker with the Constitution in the process. Again I reiterate that the Constitution should as far as possible remain inviolated and should only be amended when there is a real necessity for it and when the people of the country have been consulted over it.

CHAPTER 20

INTERVIEWS

DURING MY LIFETIME, especially during my life as a politician, I have been fortunate. It is obvious that a politician has to have the Press on his side. The Press can make or break a politician and all politicians have to cultivate the Press. I have been fortunate that my relations with the Press have always been good. Below I reprinted three interviews that I have had with the Press.

The first is an interview by Adibah Amin, a doyen of the Press in Malaysia. She has written extensively on Bahasa Malaysia and on other topics as well. She has had several honours heaped on her.

On 2nd April, 1973 she interviewed me at home. We spent several hours on this interview and I think she has done a good job in depicting me to the public. She opened with the word "Indefatigable — He is the doctor on the go — but who never seems to be in a hurry... When I asked Dr Tan Chee Khoo to let do a profile of him, he laughed and said: "I hardly qualify as a glamour boy of the Press. But he granted me an interview — followed by several brief meetings in between his numerous appointments. For besides being Pekemas leader, MP for Batu, Selangor State Assemblyman for Kepong and private medical practitioner, Dr Tan is on a host of boards, councils and committees — in politics, education, medicine and social welfare.

He never seems harassed or in a hurry, however. There is a relaxed air about him that inspires confidence. He gives you his full attention — so that if you are not careful, you find yourself telling him your problems instead of interviewing him.

Those who know him well say he can be very fierce on occasion but always on a matter of principle.

In Parliament and the State Assembly, you can feel the anger and concern behind the scathing wits of some of his statements.

There are also lighter moods when he brings the roof down with some outrageous remark.

This lanky, grey-haired man with the urchin smile gets away with a lot in Parliament and Assembly. When he goes too far he takes reprimands gracefully, is subdued for a while but is soon himself again.

SMILES

Many of his remarks are remembered for a long time. People still smile and click their tongues over his "warning" to the PAP way back in 1964 "not to hang on too much to the Tunku's sarong lest it come off and cause the Tunku considerable embarrassment."

Certainly the Tunku was not offended. In the same year the Tunku, and in 1965 the Tun, commended the "Member from Batu: for his integrity – to which the Member responded with mock alarm" "I hope this is not a kiss of death for me, politically," and "Do not kill me with kindness."

A number of MPs from both sides have told me that they find it hard to be angry with Tan Chee Khoon.

"He may be misguided in some respects, but there is no mistaking the sincerity of the man," said one. "Besides, he does talk a lot of sense."

KNACK

"He has a knack of coating bitter truth-pills with humour," said another.

"He is good for jolting awake a sleepy brain," said a third. "You can count on him to stick his neck out and say many things that need to be said."

But there are some who criticise him for being "too left" or "too right" or dismiss him as a "noise-maker", a "dreamer" or "an intellectual playing politician."

When I told him all this, he smiled and said quietly: "I am just a man trying to do my share in helping the downtrodden. My feet are very much on the ground. And I know what it is to be poor."

Tan Chee Khoon was born in 1919 in a kampong 11 miles south of Kuala Lumpur.

He went to the Pudu English Girls' School, the Kajang High School, the Victoria Institution and on to the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore.

He won many prizes for coming out top in examinations and held the scholarships of the Victoria Institution and the College of Medicine.

"I remember when I was eight or nine feeling frustrated because there was no money to buy books."

"Then one day I came across a history book in a relative's house and I read it from cover to cover.

"At 11 I went to Kajang High School, I read most of the books in the library-fiction and non-fiction alike."

Later he had the Victoria Institution library to raid. And in 1937 he joined the Kuala Lumpur Book Club (25 years later he became the Club's first Asian president.)

SPORTS

Besides taking part in some games, Tan Chee Khoon amused himself by devouring all the books he could lay hands on.

"There were no other diversions - no radio, TV, cinema or anything."

By the time he entered the College of Medicine in 1939, he had read a great deal of serious non-fiction, including politics. History was still his chief passion, and is to this day.

"It is fascinating. And it is very important, if one is not to repeat the mistakes of the past."

The war and the Japanese Occupation interrupted his medical studies. In 1944 he got married, but when the college re-opened in 1946 he went back and graduated with an LMS in 1949.

ABILITY

Tan Chee Khoon's leadership ability showed early. He was treasurer of the Medical College Union in 1946, vice-president in 1947 and president in 1948.

After graduation he joined a private hospital in Singapore for three months, then served for two years in the General Hospital in Kuala Lumpur. In 1952 he went into private practice and his wife who had been teaching in a Chinese school, resigned to help him.

He began to make his presence felt in politics. By 1956 he was chairman of the Kuala Lumpur branch of the Labour Party of Malaya and by 1959 chairman of the Selangor division and national vice-chairman.

Some people are very certain that if Tan Chee Khoon had stood for Parliament and the Selangor State Assembly in 1959, he would have won.

"Would I? Yes, probably. But somehow I never gave it a thought. I never fancied being an MP or a State Assemblyman.

"But in 1964 I could not get out of it. We were going all out and I had persuaded many people to stand. After that I could not very well refuse to stand."

WINNER

So he stood for the Dewan Rakyat constituency of Batu and the Selangor State Assembly constituency of Kepong, and won both.

The fight for the state seat was neck to neck. Dr Tan recalls very clearly the night when the votes were counted.

The Federal count was easy, for he had won by a majority big enough to be unmistakable. But the votes for the State seat had to be counted extra carefully as Dr Tan's pile and his opponent's looked very much the same size.

"The first count showed I was 40 votes ahead of him. The second count showed I was only 9 votes ahead.

By the time it was eight in the morning and everyone was groggy from a sleepless night, but I asked for a re-count, in case some of my votes had got by mistake into his pile. They agreed and they looked through his pile vote by vote. With every *Kepala Lembu* found among the *Kapal Layar*, my score went up by one and his went down by one. The count ended at 1.30 p.m. making altogether 15 hours of counting. And the result – I had won by two votes!"

At the same time of the 1964 elections Dr Tan was national treasurer of the Labour Party, treasurer of its Selangor division and chairman of its Kuala Lumpur branch – posts which he held until 1968.

At the next elections, in 1969, when he was returned to both constituencies, he was secretary-general of the Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia which he had helped to found.

SHADOW

In 1971 he founded yet another party, Parti Keadilan Masyarakat (Pekemas), and became its first president.

A shadow flitted across his face when I mentioned the break-ups and rebuilding he had gone through in the past five years. He was silent for a while, then he said: "Well, at

least I am grateful for one thing. In all three parties, I have been fighting for the same basic principles."

I asked "Some people say the Gerakan split of 1971 was because there were too many intellectuals in the party. Is that right?"

"No," he said. "A party could not have too many intellectuals, in the sense of thinking people. But a party will suffer if there are too many prima donnas. I tried to avoid the split, but I was caught between the prima donnas. Besides, there were vital differences in principle."

A SHARE

Dr Tan Chee Khoon wants a just and free society, but he accepts certain temporary limitations to the ideal for the sake of peace and economic stability.

"Malay leadership, for instance, is a fact of life that has to be accepted. As I see it, for the next 30 to 40 years the Malays will not accept a Government where non-Malays play a dominant role.

Within Malaysia's historical context, Malay privilege too is a necessity to give a handicap to the less advantaged. But this must not continue "ad infinitum" and must be properly used.

"Both Malays and non-Malays now want deeds which will convince them they all can have a share in the country's prosperity and a secure place under the Malaysian sky."

Dr Tan is very concerned about the "myth" of Chinese wealth, for he feels it has led to a lot of racial misunderstanding.

POVERTY

There is a woeful lack of statistical data on ownership of wealth in this country. The wealth owned by the Chinese is confined to about 200 families. But because of them all the

Chinese in this country are labelled rich. If you ask the Malay in the traditional rural sector to exchange places with the Chinese in the traditional urban sector, they will be exchanging poverty for poverty.

Dr Tan welcomes the idea of restructuring society but feels it must be done thoroughly to include the public as well as the private sector.

Also, projects to wipe out poverty should help the small artisans, petty traders, hawkers, stall-holders, servants and trishawman of the towns as much as the farmers, rubber tappers and fishermen in the rural areas.

BUS SERVICES

"Do you believe that poverty can be wiped out without complete State control?" I asked.

"I do not believe in complete State control, for it kills initiative. Some say you cannot go half way in these things, but I disagree."

For Malaysia, Dr Tan does not even envisage a welfare state or a "half welfare state" in the near future, as this would need a very strong economic position to maintain.

But he does feel that State control should be gradually increased from now. "The Government could begin with the bus services, for instance. It would be a great help to the poor people who use them."

And he believes in increasing direct taxation – as indirect taxation like the sales tax he opposed so vehemently in last year's budget debate "hits the poor much harder than it does the rich."

To my question whether he was ever drawn to Marxism he answered: "Never. And I could never be. One reason is that I believe in God."

HEATEDLY

Indeed he has spoken up most heatedly whenever he feels this freedom threatened – particularly freedom of speech on national issues. He also believes strongly in the importance of “a vigorous, loyal, honest Opposition” in a democracy. On coalition governments he said: “We too have been invited to tea, but we will not come. I agree that there must not be too much politicking and that we must co-operate for the common good. But if all political parties joined the National Front, who would provide the voice of dissent so vital to a parliamentary democracy?” On the Opposition’s own United Front, formed on his party’s initiative, Dr Tan is quite optimistic. “There is every indication we will agree on a minimum programme. This is important, for without a minimum programme it would be a mere marriage of convenience.” However, he realises it will not be easy. The parties have been so used to “hitting” one another that they cannot suddenly start “kissing” one another.

PROBLEM

The parties in the Government coalitions are facing the same problem, he said, as shown in the recent Kuala Kedah by-election. Next year’s general elections will show just how strong these “marriages” are, he said. One of the subjects Dr Tan feels most deeply about is education. It is a subject he can speak on with authority, having been actively involved in it for the past two decades. He has been on more than a dozen school boards and chaired quite a number. He has served on the University of Malaya Council for over 15 years as representative of the Guild of Graduates and as chairman. He was on the Higher Education Council and when last year it was revived as the Higher Education Advisory Council he was again appointed to it. Dr Tan feels

that though the Government has already spent a lot on education, a lot more needs to be spent. He is convinced that poverty is a major cause of children dropping out of school. "Many cannot even afford exercise books, let alone textbooks. These should be brought in bulk and given or loaned to them." Free primary education is not really free, he said, when poor parents are burdened with the cost of books, uniforms and a variety of fees. As a result they have to take their children out of school while only semi-literate. "Democracy becomes a farce when the people are not truly literate." The answer is in giving "truly free" education up to secondary level. The education budget should also be increased further to allow for a better teacher-pupil ratio, as crowded classrooms and overloaded teachers contribute to the high drop-out and failure rates. In higher education, however, Dr Tan feels that more private individuals and corporations should help by setting up scholarships and student loan funds.

APPEAL

He made this appeal at last year's special convocation when the University of Malaya conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. "The magnates should have a social conscience and help the children of the working class who have gained entry into universities," he said at the convocation. He also urged graduates to start student loan funds "to repay to society that which they have so abundantly received from society." Dr Tan feels very strongly about this "debt". And he himself has tried to pay his share. In 1950 he started awarding the Gates Medal for the top boy in the School Certificate examination in Kajang High School. In 1955 he instituted the Tan Chin Ghee Scholarship in memory of his late father for the best Form Four Student at the same school. He also established the

Tay Kim Siew Scholarship in honour of his mother for the top student in the University of Malaya medical faculty's first examination. For this scholarship he contributed \$20,000. Friends have told me that Dr Tan has helped many individual students through university, asking only that they help some struggling student in turn when they graduate. In this way he hopes the help would snowball to include more and more students.

PATIENTS

When I asked him about this his smile was rather sad. "It has not worked as well as I hoped. People forget, you know. But the few who have kept their pledge make it all worthwhile." In Medicine, his chosen profession, Dr Tan Chee Khoon has also played a leading role. He has been president of the Selangor Private Medical Practitioners' Association, president of the Malayan Medical Association and member of the Malayan Medical Council. In 1967 he served as a committee member of "Medic Alert" and in 1971 was on the Nik Kamil Cabinet Committee to make recommendations on medical legislation in Malaysia. Dr Tan sees to it that whatever his other activities, the patients in his wards and clinic get due attention. He keeps up with the latest developments in medicine by reading up and attending clinical meetings. "Of course you always feel inadequate. But as long as you do your best, and are humble enough to keep on learning, you are all right." After 21 years of private practice, Dr Tan has developed strong bonds with his patients, especially the poorer ones. A day in Dr Tan Chee Khoon's life is packed tighter than most people's, but the way he describes it, he makes it sound quite leisurely. He gets up at six, takes a stroll round his garden, does the ward rounds, then goes to the clinic to attend to his outpatients until evening.

MEETINGS

He holds party meetings at night and as many of his other meetings as well. Occasionally he has to attend day-time meetings like those of the National Unity Council, the Higher Education Advisory Council, the University Council and some others. And of course he finds time to walk around his constituency and to help out when he is needed. "When do you do your reading?" I asked. "At night sometimes. And during weekends when I take my family right away from K.L.," he replied. He has a library of medical books and another one of books on football, cricket, boxing and history, particularly military history and espionage. I am told that Dr Tan's collection of books on military history is the best in the country. As I looked at the shelves of well-thumbed volumes which had obviously been collected lovingly over the years, Dr Tan told me of a talk he gave last year at the Military Staff College. He has been asked to talk on a political topic but he chose one on an aspect of military history instead. "There was a crowd of military bigwigs there. I talked for more than an hour, then we all stayed on for a long discussion. We really enjoyed ourselves." This is a little-known facet of Dr Tan Chee Khoo. There are many more facets to discover, I am sure, if only there were more time. But he is a very busy man, however hard he tries to hide it. And as I said goodbye to him I thought he looked a little tired and a little wistful. "More young people should join politics," he said suddenly. "We need people with fire in the belly." As he said these words his face came alive, and I saw there was a lot of fire yet in Dr Tan Chee Khoo.

Next I was interviewed by *Balai Muhibbah* on the occasion on the 30th Independence Day.

"Pemimpin Pekemas, yang telah meletakkan jawatan Dr Tan Chee Khoo berkata, Malaysia akan mempunyai

masa depan yang cerah dan cemerlang, jika pemimpinnya rela bersikap “moderate” dan sanggup mengambil tindakan yang berani walaupun tidak begitu popular untuk kebaikan sebilangan besar rakyat.

Dr Tan dalam satu temuramah khas dengan *Balai Muhibbah* sempena Ulangtahun Hari Kemerdekaan menyatakan di mana-mana pun di dunia ini terdapat kaum ekstrimis yang lampau, tetapi ini tidak harus menyekat usaha untuk kebaikan sebilangan besar penduduk di negara ini. Dr Tan yang dikenali oleh rakyat sebagai seorang tokoh pembangkang yang berkalibar yang membuat kritik-kritik membina di Dewan Rakyat, baru sahaja mengumumkan pengundurannya dari memimpin Parti Pekemas, walaupun beliau akan terus menjadi wakil rakyat Kawasan Kepong hingga pilihanraya yang akan datang.

Beliau sekarang uzur berikutan sakit jantung yang menyerangnya beberapa bulan yang lalu.

Dr Tan mula menceburkan diri dalam politik pada awal tahun lima puluhan dalam Parti Buruh, dan telah menjadi Ahli Parlimen pada tahun 1964. Pengundi kawasannya telah memberi mandat buat kali yang kedua dalam tahun 1969, walaupun atas nama parti lain iaitu Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. Dalam pilihanraya 1974, Dr Tan Chee Khoo berjaya dalam kawasan Kepong atas nama parti baru yang dipimpinnya iaitu Pekemas.

URUSAN

Beliau sekarang terpaksa berulang-alik dari rumahnya di Ampang Hilir ke Hospital Universiti untuk melakukan physical exercise dua atau tiga kali seminggu di samping terus mengendalikan urusan pentadbiran kliniknya sendiri di Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman.

Dr Tan memberitahu *Balai Muhibbah*, faktor yang mendorongkannya menceburkan diri dalam politik ialah perhatiannya terhadap umat manusia.

Beliau mengingatkan bahawa mewujudkan perpaduan di sebuah negara seperti Malaysia akan mengambil beberapa kurun, dan dalam sejarah sebuah negara, satu kurun bukan lama masanya.

Tokoh politik yang tidak asing ini menasihatkan mereka yang ingin menjadi pemimpin dalam satu masyarakat yang berbilang kaum, harus mengelakkan diri mengambil atau pendirian yang ekstrimis dalam apa-apa isu.

Beliau bersetuju bahawa apa-apa isu pun boleh dijadikan satu isu perkauman, tetapi ini harus dielakkan.

Negarawan ini berpendapat, perjalanan masa akan dengan sendirinya mengatasi beberapa masalah, dan ia memberi perlaksanaan Bahasa Malaysia sebagai contohnya.

MELAHIRKAN

Pada mulanya, menurut Dr Tan lagi, terdapat bantahan-bantahan terhadap perlaksanaan Bahasa Malaysia, tetapi perjalanan masa dengan sendirinya juga melahirkan generasi muda yang fasih menguasainya.

Menyentuh tentang penyusunan semula masyarakat yang sedang dijalankan oleh kerajaan, Dr Tan pada dasarnya bersetuju dengannya, walaupun menasihati perlaksanaan dijalankan dengan tidak menimbulkan kesan-kesan buruk terhadap mana-mana kaum.

DASAR-DASAR

Dr Tan berpendapat, walaupun negara telah mencapai kemerdekaan pada tahun 1957, ia benar-benar merdeka sejak beberapa tahun sahaja, lepas askar-askar asing diun-

durkan dari tanahair ini dan kerajaan mula mengamalkan dasar-dasar luar yang berkecuali.

Mengenai pembangkang negara ini, tokoh pembangkang ini memberitahu *Balai Muhibbah*: “Sistem demokrasi berparlimen tanpa pembangkang adalah tidak bermakna.”

Dr Tan berpendapat satu kebudayaan nasional berdasarkan kepada pelbagai kebudayaan yang terdapat di negara ini akan dilibatkan lama-kelamaan.

Beliau berharap pihak kerajaan yang mempunyai majoriti yang begitu banyak dalam Dewan Rakyat akan bertindak untuk kebaikan semua.

Nasihatnya kepada rakyat negara ini ialah: “Kerana negara kita adalah satu negara berbilang kaum, berbagai agama, beraneka kebudayaan, kita harus bersikap “moderate” dalam apa juga yang kita buat dan sentiasa memperhatikan kesan-kesannya terhadap kaum-kaum yang lain.”

“Jika kita tidak melupakan ini,” Dr Tan Chee Khoo percaya, “sebilangan besar masalah yang kita hadapi diatasi.”

Balai Muhibbah berharap kesihatan Doktor yang diragu-ragukan akan pulih seperti sediakala, dan beliau dapat menyumbangkan khidmatnya pada bila-bila masa diperlukan.”

The third interview was by Malaysian Business in September 1975. I reproduce below that interview.

“A life of public service and public office long ago reconciled Dr Tan Chee Khoo to the first and enduring discovery of every Opposition politician. He must take disappointment and disillusionment in his stride. He must never cease learning and serving, and if he compromises – as often he does – principles should never be sacrificed. And

certainly, Dr Tan exhibits this trait of willingness to learn and to serve. One of the extraordinary features of his career is the ten years' apprenticeship he served in the ranks of the Labour Party before aspiring to political office.

This was in 1964, when he won the Parliamentary constituency of Batu and the Kepong seat in the Selangor State Assembly. Dr Tan had already been chairman of the Selangor division of the Labour Party, national vice-chairman of the Party and a central committee member of the Socialist Front. Nor were his activities restricted to the political arena. He was chairman of the Central Branch of the Malayan Medical Association, chairman or member of the Board of Governors of a dozen or so schools, a lay leader of the Wesley Methodist Church, a member of the University Council and was involved in a number of arbitral proceedings.

It is difficult to imagine this gentle, soft-spoken man in the role of a politician. A role that often conjures an image of toughness, doggedness and shrewdness. But perhaps the amiability belies a persistency and stubbornness, a refusal to budge, when certain principles are involved. For even in his early days, in the late forties, which coincided with the beginning of the Emergency and the liquidation of the Malayan Union, he was already railing against the establishment, at that time, the colonial British.

Since then, Dr Tan has been in the Opposition camp. And here again he has taken a liberal rather than a radical stand. As he sees it, the duty of an Opposition party is not to disagree *per se*. Its job is to keep the government on its toes and he is quite prepared to recognise and support the government when he thinks its proposals are fair and progressive.

He asserts that for democracy to survive in Malaysia it needs a strong and united opposition. And he is working

towards this end. It will not be an easy task but he hopes that when the next round comes, the electorate will have a clear-cut choice – the Barisan National or the Barisan Rakyat.

In the following interview Dr Tan reflects on his past, his disappointments and hopes, and comments on a broad range of subjects of vital concern to Malaysia and Malaysians.

Q: You have had, Dr Tan, as wide an experience of public life in Malaysia as anyone – how have you found time for these exacting activities and duties? Little can have been left for leisure.

A: Well, on the surface my multifarious activities do take up a lot of time, and often I am almost a stranger to my children. I leave home early and return late. First and foremost I am a practising physician and I have to help in a 115-bed hospital. My church activities also take up time. However, I try to regulate my hours between the dispensary and attendance in Parliament. This used to take up a good deal of time. The House now sits at 2.30 p.m. and rises at 6.30 p.m. This leaves the whole morning free for my professional work.

Political work does not quite cut into my professional life to the extent that most people think it does. As for my other activities, I usually attend to them in the evening or at night.

Q: Besides your medical and political work you are also involved in university activities?

A: Yes, I am a member of the Council and Court of the University of Malaya. In fact, the university at one time took up a great deal of my time – council meetings and committee meetings in the evenings. I suppose my three partners sometimes take a dim view of my being away quite so much.

I also sit on the Language Board of Citizenship. This is one thing I like to do. I act as a check to overzealous bureaucrats who ask what in my opinion are the wrong sort of questions. Very often, the person who comes to the board is not very literate. The question can confuse the applicant. I have been able, I think, to correct this tendency. We are not testing their knowledge or their intellect, but their ability to speak and understand the language.

Q: Do you have a separate office to handle your political work – to answer enquiries and so on?

A: I have three workers in the office who help with citizenship or other enquiries. They have been with me for a long time and handle most of my political work.

Anybody can walk in and ask for help, regardless of party affiliations. In addition the party has a branch in Kepong and I hold meet-the-people sessions twice a week at Kepong and at Sentul every Wednesday. An MP represents his constituency and he should be available to anybody.

Q: Perhaps we could now go back to your early beginnings. Were you born and educated here?

A: I was born in Cheras, about 11 miles from K.L. My father was a conductor of a rubber estate of about 40 acres. After work, at about two, he would return home and look after his own bit of land. I went to a rural school – Kajang High School. The headmaster, a Cambridge man, once asked me, "What do you want to do?" I told him I wanted to sit for the Queen's Scholarship and be a doctor. He took note of that. I did fairly well in the Junior Cambridge and he paid attention to my progress in the Senior Cambridge.

In those days one needed a classical language for medicine. I learnt Latin – very much the hard way. The headmaster taught me *gratis*. He went home on leave and I used to send my exercises to him, getting them back two

months later. There was no airmail then. He was then transferred to Victoria Institution and in 1937 I went there. This greatly facilitated my Latin lessons. I finished the course in one year, sat for the examination and passed.

The next year I sat for the Queen's Scholarship Examination but failed to win the scholarship. It was won by the late Dr Yap Pow Meng.

Q: So then you entered medical school?

A: Yes. I was awarded a scholarship to the King Edward VII College of Medicine in 1939. My studies were interrupted by the Japanese Occupation and I did not graduate until 1949.

Q: Did you enter private practice right after graduation?

A: No really. I worked in a private hospital in Singapore for three months and then served for two years in the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital, in 1950 and 1951. I went into private practice in May 1952. We moved to our present building in 1972.

Q: Were you involved in student and political activities during your university days?

A: Yes. I was successively the treasurer, the vice-president and the president of the MCU, i.e. the Medical College Union. Even in those days, that is the late forties, which coincided with the beginning of the Emergency and the liquidation of the Malayan Union, I did rail against the establishment, that is, the British.

Q: How, why and when were you first interested in politics?

A: After I have entered private practice, a number of my school mates, in particular, the late Tan Tuan Boon and Lee Moke Sang, who were prominent trade unionists and stalwarts of the Labour Party of Malaya, got me interested and I later joined the Labour Party. From then onwards

there was no looking back. But I served as a party official for more than a decade before finally standing for elective office in 1964 when I became MP for Batu and State Assemblyman for Kepong.

Q: Are the types of illnesses treated now different from those a few years back?

A: Oh yes. Measles, for example. Chinese and Malays used to think they merely had to wrap the patient up and he would recover. Instead they often developed a respiratory tract infection and when they came to us, they were in extremes. Now they come quite early and we can prevent complications. Also, of course, there are newer antibiotics.

More attention is also paid now to preventive medicine. Tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis used to be common. The pattern is changing. There is very much less tuberculosis. Sanatoriums specially built for tuberculosis patients, the Lady Templer Hospital, for example, are now general hospitals.

Q: Perhaps we can now touch on your political activities. How do you see your role as leader of an Opposition Party?

A: Many people have said that I seem quite prepared to recognise and support the government when I have thought its proposals fair and progressive. And why not? I have also opposed to the last any action with which I have disagreed. I do not believe it is the duty of an Opposition Party to disagree *per se*. Its job certainly is to keep the government on its toes. The main thing is not to oppose for the sake of opposition. If the government comes up with legislation in the interests of the people then we should support it.

Q: Can you remember occasions when protests from the floor have produced results?

A: Oh yes. A number of times, too many to go into. I clearly remember – in 1964, there was an amendment to the Constitution on the order paper. No notice had been given. We were taken absolutely by surprise. There was an immediate outcry. The Bill was withdrawn and introduced a week later, after we had time to consider it.

More recently, there was an amendment to the University and University College Act (UCA). All offences under Section 15E of this Act, for example, addressing gatherings in "Speakers' corners" in the universities were to become non-bailable. Only heinous crimes are non-bailable. It was ridiculous to put this offence in the same category as murder or rape. We protested. To the credit of the government it withdrew the proposal in the committee stage.

Q: The Opposition parties have not been able to organise a common front. A united party surely would be more effective?

A: Agreed. The Opposition should be credible, able if necessary to form an alternative government.

In the last five years Opposition parties have realised they do themselves no good to continue slitting each other's throats. The electorate won't stand for it. There is move now to get closer together and draw up a programme to ensure unanimity on some issues. The Partai Socialist Rakyat Malaysia (PSRM), Democratic Action Party (DAP), Kaum Insaf Tanah Ayer (KITA), Sarawak National Party (SNAP) and Pekemas are now getting together.

I feel we should have an agreed candidate for many seats. We should stop splitting the votes. So, I am all for a united Opposition. We cannot, however, change overnight. For a long time DAP, for example, has fought us. It will take time to get over these animosities. The Opposition should try to form an alternative party, capable of taking power.

Q: What do you see as the major problems in Malaysia?

A: Our country is faced with several dangerous prospects. There is the ever present danger of racial disorder. Only a multiracial opposition can stabilise the racial consensus.

Then there is the temptation to establish a one-party state. This has already been sounded in public and withdrawn, but no doubt the thought still lurks and lingers in the corridors of power.

Sabah has shown how disastrous it can be to have a one-party state.

The best guarantee for democracy is a strong Opposition which can form an alternative government. Unless this democratic opportunity is provided to our people, both at state and federal level, they will turn to armed struggle to gain justice.

Then there is the problem of unequal distribution of wealth. Economically we are rich. In Asia we rank second or third to Japan, if island states like Hong Kong or Singapore are discounted. The Government has published statistics which show that between 1957, the year of Merdeka, and 1970 the majority of our people have grown poorer whilst a tiny number of powerful families have gathered increased wealth.

Forty percent of households received only about 12% of the total income in 1970. This poverty is widespread and it affects all races especially the Bumiputras. Unless these grave injustices are rectified there will be serious trouble ahead for Malaysia.

Q: In last year's election Pekemas won only a single seat, your own victory in Kepong. Were you bitterly disappointed?

A: Disappointed, yes, but not bitterly. I had already warned the party to expect this. The see-saw pattern of elections here (1959, the government down a bit; 1964, up; 1969, down) would see the government up again in 1974. I asked them not to try for more than 15 Parliamentary seats and not more than 50 state constituencies. But towards the end, in the excitement, they did not heed my advice. For example, Pekemas was sure it would capture Penang and perhaps Perak. In fact we won only a single seat in Penang and lost all in Perak.

Q: How do you account for the failure of PSRM in the last election?

A: Unfortunately, it tends to talk well above the heads of the electorate. Subjects such as nationalisation do not mean much to the padi planter, fisherman or rubber tapper. PSRM has very good chaps. The programme sells well to intellectuals. In Pahang and Trengganu they are quite strong.

Q: Your interest in foreign policy was expressed early in your career as MP. Do you think foreign affairs are getting the necessary attention, commensurate with the vastly changing situation in Asia, for instance?

A: Tun Razak is more realistic. In 1964 when I spoke on confrontation with Indonesia, and for an open-door policy with China I was yelled down. The government has changed its attitude. Today we have no foreign bases here. And Tun Razak took part in the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference. Today our foreign policy is more neutral.

Q: What of the ASEAN commitment? Has the end of the war in Indo-China contributed to peace? Or do you think there has been as yet no essential change, except of course for the end of the fighting there?

A: ASEAN is only a talk shop. Very little comes out of these talks. When asked about ASEAN policy towards

Indo-China, the Prime Minister replied that ASEAN was not a political body.

As for some ASEAN countries themselves – Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore – they have made vast fortunes out of the Vietnam war. And we in this country are not really blameless. I remember in 1962 one Socialist Front MP asked about Malaysia sending arms and Tunku Abdul Rahman in his memoirs is disclosing this. So the Vietnamese have bitter memories and are in no hurry to make friends.

We are in a state of uncertainty. What is worrying is what happens to the huge surplus of American arms. Even in small supplies these arms can give the rest of Asia a tough time.

I feel that the people in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos need first to build their countries. They are not in a position to export communism to the rest of South-East Asia. They have their hands full in reconstructing their own society. The smuggling of arms is a different matter altogether.

Q: Ought the ASEAN partnership to be strengthened by agreement for defence purposes, as well as the pursuit of effective regional trade and economic co-operation?

A: I think of defence only in terms of these countries pledging to help each other; but if it means bringing in foreign troops then no. And help each other against whom? The USSR? We are living in a nuclear age. We would be wiped out. Indonesia has its hands full. It is not in a position to send troops anywhere. So it could not really help us.

Q: Now to a matter nearer home. Dr Tan. You have often spoken of a fairer deal for the consumer. How can prices be regulated, and inflationary rises checked?

A: Well, we have a National Consumer Advisory Council. It is a showpiece and nothing more. When the government allowed price increases in sugar and petrol,



The Tunku and the author.



Interview with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan of Johor at his palace.



The Author's library.



*Tan Siew Eng (left) and Tan Kai Hee - Labour Party stalwarts.
Now husband and wife.*

this body was not consulted at all. Why have a consumers' council if it is not consulted? If the government examines carefully all price increases, why not allow the consumer associations a voice?

Big cartels can raise prices. When they are making big money they never think of passing on some of the profits. When profits are down, then the consumer gets it. He is always at the wrong ends of the stick. Competition would provide a large part of the answer. Government should not allow trade monopolies.

Q: What about the price of rice?

A: The government must not over-protect the padi farmer. I agree that the padi harvest should fetch a better price but the consumer should not pay for inefficiency. Let there be a quota on imported rice to stabilise prices. We pay too much at the moment.

On the other hand it does not mean that this increase in price improves the farmers' earnings. Fertiliser is up almost fourfold; so are insecticides. In real terms the farmer is not better off. The owner of the land, the absentee landlord, is the man who gets the profits. The government cannot or will not control them.

Q: You have suggested, in trade union interests, that there should be automatic recognition by the employer once the workers have been registered as a union. Is this necessary?

A: Yes, Because it does not follow that the employer will recognise the union even though it has been registered. I think recognition should be automatic. Very often, on one pretext or other the employer refuses to do so.

Q: What about corruption? Is it getting worse?

A: Far worse. Take an ordinary chap who wants a house. He has to pay money to the chap who writes down his name. More and more trades need licences. Introduc-

tion of special measures means more palms need to be greased. It goes very high.

Q: Why does the government appear to be unable to control it?

A: Too many well-known and important people are involved. It is very difficult. Take drugs for instance. The government knows that certain people are involved, but it seems unable to do anything to get at them. Only the lower echelons are caught.

Q: Are you satisfied with the present penal provisions against drug pushing?

A: A law has just been passed severely increasing the penalties. I guess it takes time to have effect. But it needs more than laws. Drug addiction is very much a social problem. If there were no demand there would not be any opening for these pushers.

Q: How can private doctors help the fight against drug addiction?

A: Private practitioners can help by treating addicts. That is obvious. But it is more important to educate the public. This is a frustrating job. The general public does not realise that overcoming addiction is a long and involved process. It is important, first, to be sure that the addict is properly motivated. However, it is not merely a matter of what doctors can do; they come almost at the end of the picture. Parents, friends, teachers and the government can all help with the prevention of this disease – for it is a disease.

School children can be shown slides of what happens to addicts; this is not done. More effort can be taken to cut off supplies. Parents should take an interest in their children, not give them too much pocket money.

Once the addict does see the doctor, it will be a pure waste of time and money if he is not properly motivated. He will return to the habit once he leaves the clinic or hospi-

tal. Another thing, the private practitioner has not enough time to talk to addicts. It is really a question of government getting to work. And of course the addict usually gravitates to crime to get more money for drugs. I do not think the government is aware just how big this problem is.

Q: Back again to politics. Would you agree to compulsory voting?

A: Yes. If voting was compulsory the government would lose its majority. Buying votes would not help.

Q: What about marked ballot papers?

A: In theory this makes the voter easily identifiable, but in practice it does not matter. At the end of six months all the ballot papers are burnt. Nobody really knows who votes for whom unless you go through a lot of trouble and inconvenience. Another thing about voting - I would like to see the age lowered to 18 years.

Q: There is legislation for non-Muslim women but what about a marriage and divorce law for Muslim women?

A: There was the time when I raised this issue in both the Selangor State Assembly and in the Dewan Rakyat and was howled down for my trouble. Now I am glad that the government is looking into this matter.

Q: And the future - what plans do you have?

A: Politically my plans are to strengthen the Pekemas in order to prepare it for the next general elections.

Pari passu I shall do all I can to unite the Opposition parties so that when the next round comes around the electorate will have a clear-cut choice - that is either the Barisan National or the Barisan Rakyat. I do know that the latter task is not an easy one but we have had a good start by finding agreement on the issue of Human Rights, fielding our candidate for the Selangor by-election and now working actively on the minimum programme for the Opposition.

No one can deny that for democracy to survive in Malaysia we must have a strong and united Opposition which can provide a credible alternative to the Barisan Nasional. I am sure the electorate will respond to the clarion call to strengthen the Opposition rather than the government. I am under no illusion that the task is an easy one but I shall strive hard for it.

I was interviewed by Ms Halinah Todd on Corruption in the New Straits Times.

In the early 1960s, Dr Tan Chee Khoon was going through the Customs checkpoint at the Singapore railway station. He paid duty on his goods, took his receipt and walked to the train. Then he glanced at the receipt – it was for \$3. He had paid \$25. He went back to the Customs officer and pointed out the “error”. The officer told him blandly that he had only paid \$3. “You watch out, warned the doctor.”

When he returned to Kuala Lumpur, he reported the incident to the Minister of Finance. And that was the last he heard of it.

A few months ago, Dr Tan was eating at a restaurant and a man approached him, shook his hand and thanked him. “For what?” asked the doctor. “I was the Custom Officer that you reported in 1964,” the man said. “I was transferred in 24 hours. You put the fear of God into all of us.”

Dr Tan has been waging war against the corrupt, big and small, since he entered politics 25 years ago.

Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon who tops 6 ft., has been a towering figure on the Opposition benches since 1964. He is now retired and is fighting the effects of a stroke which left him partially paralysed on his left side. But he still treats patients two or three hours a day, walks miles each morning and puts himself through a gruelling physiotherapy

session several times a week. He walks slowly with the help of a stick but there is nothing slow about his answer to questions.

His war against corruption has been a war with no clear victories. No government is inclined to admit that it has acted on the advice of an Opposition MP.

"Anti-corruption was a major plunk of every party I have served – the Labour Party, Gerakan and Pekemas. Time and again I have raised instances of corruption in Parliament.

Dr Tan remembers raising the case of a Sabah politician who within a year of his election was sporting several palatial new houses, a fleet of cars and a yacht. Dr Tan was bitterly disappointed when the most well-known fighter against corruption on the government benches, Tun Dr Ismail, rose to the Sabahan's defence. But later the Sabah politician was removed from the party and brought to court.

In the late 60s, there were three major corruption cases before the courts – two involving senior government servants and another a former Registrar of the University of Malaya.

Dr Tan heard that all three were about to be let off the hook. He went to see Tun Razak and argued with him that if these prosecutions were dropped, corruption would become rife. Tun Razak listened and the cases continued through the courts. "Not many people," Dr Tan commented last week, "had that kind of stature with Tun Razak." Because Dr Tan had this kind of stature in Parliament, and because of his overwhelming popularity in his Batu constituency, he was approached more often than most politicians and told that it would be worth his while to join the government party.

"Sometimes it would be done obliquely: in the middle of a campaign or before a controversial Bill was presented to Parliament I would get a phone call to meet so-and-so for tea. I would tell them that I had enough tea in my house." Or the approach would come more directly. "I asked them: What can the Government offer me that I do not already have? Money? I have enough – any more would be an embarrassment to Siew Sin (Tan Siew Sin, then Minister of Finance. Dr Tan had been investigated by the Income Tax Department earlier). Honours? I don't need titles. Position? I am already one of the top men in my profession. A Ministership has no attraction to me."

When interviewed in his Sentosa Clinic, Dr Tan objected immediately when I addressed him as Tan Sri, "I am a doctor here." His letterhead carries only his medical titles. But the name plate on his door carries the Tan Sri. This seven-storey clinic, bustling with ordinary people and abuzz with Cantonese, is proud of its famous doctor.

Dr Tan became a Tan Sri last year after his retirement from politics and "in recognition of his contribution to the medical profession." It was on these grounds that he accepted the honour. But there was also another reason. After his retirement he had several times sounded out newspapers about writing a weekly column on public affairs. He had been politely put off. "I thought a "Tan Sri" would give me the "respectability" to write for the press," he commented wryly. Dr Tan knows that his fight against corruption had only been a holding action, successful against individuals, but not against the general trend. "There has always been corruption," he explained. "Do you think that the British were angels." "But it became entrenched in the 60s. The political leader at that time was not corrupt but he knew that corruption was rife and did little to weed it out. There are just not enough prosecutions.

There are more people now in position where they can take bribes; there is more money about, but prosecutions are pressed against only a handful of people." Dr Tan reacted with outrage at the suggestion that some kind of payoff is necessary for party faithfuls who have made personal sacrifices for the good of the ruling party. "Rubbish!" he fumed, "People who enter politics for personal benefit should not be in politics at all. It is that kind of system that breeds corruption."

"Look at the cost of election campaigns nowadays. Because of the lavish expenditure to woo people into the party, each candidate spends hundreds of thousands of dollars. Then he has to recoup through corruptly accepting money to issue licences or taking cuts on state contracts and so on. And then it spreads right down through the system." Are opposition politicians corrupt? "They don't have the opportunity." Again that wry smile. "But if they did many would fail the test." Dr Tan denies being an ascetic. "I don't smoke. I don't drink. And I don't go to the races. But I live comfortably. I spend a lot of money on buying books – ten to twenty thousand a year. I have the best collection of military history in the country."

Is he rich? This building belongs to me (the seven-storey medical centre in a choice spot along Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman). I built it in 1970 when everyone else was selling up and running to register themselves at foreign embassies in Kuala Lumpur." Dr Tan also owns a small oil palm estate at Batang Kali and a holiday bungalow at Port Dickson where he spends most weekends.

His parents were poor but "they were upright people, staunch church-goers who brought us up to care for the underdog." You could look at Dr Tan Chee Khoo as a political Don Quixote who has spent most of his life standing in vain against the trends of the time. He has stood for the

liberty of the individual, for equal opportunity and he has stood unrelentingly against corruption. Although he has retired from active politics he has definitely not retired from his outspoken role as critic and national conscience.

CHAPTER 21

SOME MALAYSIANS AND THE BUILDING OF MALAYSIA

HERE WE MUST DWELL on the great and decisive part played by the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Alhaj, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia. Before we were given independence the Tunku invited the Reid Commission to visit this country. It was in the early fifties and I remember the Labour Party prepared a memorandum to pursue it to Lord Reid. Not many parties were interested or active enough to present their views to the Reid Commission. Party Rakyat floated the idea of doing away with hereditary chiefs. This raised a hue and cry in the press and Party Rakyat very quickly withdrew that idea. The big issue before the Reid Commission was whether Malaysia was to be a secular or an Islamic state. The British with their experience of ruling this country and of other countries as well had opted for a secular state. The Muslims and UMNO as well had opted for an Islamic state and on this crucial issue Malaysia nearly became stillborn. At that time Mr Justice Hamid of Pakistan favoured an Islamic state but he was in the minority. The Tunku took great care to see that the new born independent country should be a democracy modelled after Westminster. He carefully selected the members of the Commission to prepare the constitution for the newborn Malaya. Heading the list was Lord Reid, a prominent jurist from Scotland, next was Sir Ivor Jennings, an academician from London, Sir William Mckell of Australia, Mr Justice Malik of the Alahabad High Court and Mr Justice Hamid of Pakistan. These commissioners were all from the Commonwealth, two were Muslims and they were all

prominent jurists. They did a good job and gave Malaya a good constitution. Their recommendation that the Senate should be a mixture of indirectly elected and appointed members to be followed later by a Senate that should be a fully elected Upper Chamber has not been followed by the Government. The Tunku, with his background of Cambridge, and the British decided that Malaya would be a parliamentary democracy and thank God we have followed that path since Merdeka. Finally I believe it was the Tunku himself who cut the Gordian Knot by proposing that Malaya should be a secular state but that Islam should be the official religion and that other religions should be free to be propagated.

In this task of bringing democracy and of nation building the Tunku had four lieutenants to assist him. The first of these was the late Tun Abdul Razak who at the time of Merdeka was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. He looked after rural development until later it was taken over by Encik Ghaffar Baba, at present the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural Development. Tun Razak also looked after the civil service and had the reputation of being anti-Chinese which from my personal knowledge he was not. Remembering that the Tunku was a happy-go-lucky Prime Minister who could not be bothered with details, he was lucky to have an able deputy as Tun Abdul Razak. He served loyally as the deputy to the Tunku until the riots of May 13, 1969 when he took over the reins of government as Chairman of the National Operation Council (NOC). In 1971 he formally succeeded the Tunku as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia.

He changed the direction of foreign policy to one of the open door to all. Under the Tunku, Malaysia was fiercely anti-communist. Razak softened the stance against the communists and very soon the socialist countries began to

open embassies in Kuala Lumpur. Contrast this with the vehemence I encountered in the Dewan Rakyat when in my maiden speech I proposed that we should have diplomatic relations with China, Russia, etc. For my trouble I was called a stooge of Peking and a traitor. When Tun Razak succeeded the Tunku as Prime Minister, he at once stepped up the pace of development but very soon, he was feeling the effects of a serious blood disease, leukaemia. Not a word of it leaked out to the press and until the day that he passed away the country did not know the cause of his death.

TUN DR ISMAIL

When Tun Razak became Prime Minister he made Tun Dr Ismail his deputy. In the later half of his career he was in poor health which forced him to leave his cabinet post but when the riots of May 13 took place he was recalled to the cabinet and to his old post of Minister of Home Affairs. He was well-known for his sense of fair play and justice. He was trusted by most of the people of this country, especially by the Chinese. In the dark days of May 13 he bluntly told Malaysians that "Democracy was Dead" and it was up to the Chinese to revive it. He told the Chinese that they were *Tak Hidup, Tak Mati*, neither alive nor dead! He did not suffer fools gladly and at times could be very blunt in his language. I tangled many times with him in the Dewan Rakyat. I believe I had earned his respect as a courageous honest politician. On one occasion when my election agent was detained under the ISA I accused him of taking undue advantage of me. He told me bluntly that he had nothing to do with that detention for at that time he was busy campaigning in Kota Tinggi and he was not even in K.L. The one post he hankered for was that of Minister of Foreign Affairs but the Tunku kept that post for himself. He was one of

the early Malaysians who brought democracy to our country and had a big hand in building the nation.

TUN TAN SIEW SIN

He was the son of a well-known and established Malacca Baba family. His father was the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock and was himself a great Malayan in his own right. Tun Tan Siew Sin followed his father into business, mainly in the rubber industry and in his younger days he was a firebrand at times tilting at the establishment and at the *Orang Puteh*. After the Alliance victory in 1955 he was appointed Minister of Trade and Industry. After the general election of 1959 he was elected president of the MCA and was appointed Minister of Finance by the Tunku. He remained in both these two offices for more than a decade and to this date he was the longest serving President of the MCA and the longest serving Minister of Finance as well. It was as Minister of Finance that we crossed swords in the Dewan Rakyat. He was a good Minister of Finance, very careful with the public purse. One mistake that he made in 1964 was when he introduced the Crown Cork Tax. That bill came under intense fire from all the opposition. They included such giants as Dr Goh Keng Swee. It was patently a very poor tax but he stubbornly refused to withdraw the proposal. At the next budget session when the Crown Cork Tax proved a failure he had to repeal the tax and I took the opportunity to hit again at the tax. Another mistake that he made was with regard to the Banking Act. This Bill contained many flaws and I pointed them out to him but he stubbornly refused to amend his mistakes. The result was that at the next meeting of the Dewan Rakyat he had to eat the humble pie and make the necessary amendments. As President of the MCA he was continuously under fire from the extremists. After the May 13 riots he had the courage to

resign from the cabinet. All the MCA ministers resigned together with him. He had no alternative as the MCA had lost all credibility with the Chinese. As Tun Dr Ismail said at that time, the MCA was *Tak Hidup, Tak Mati*, i.e. neither alive nor dead. As President of the MCA, I do not think that he had spoken enough for the rights of the Chinese in the cabinet. As a Chinese I do not expect him to speak publicly out loud and bold for the Chinese in this country and I do expect him to do so in the cabinet. Generally it can be said that the MCA cabinet minister has failed to speak up for the rights of the Chinese in the cabinet. In the Dewan Rakyat Tun Tan Siew Sin had often spoken out for the growth of democracy in Malaysia. Towards the end of his days as president of the MCA, he came under a great deal of fire from the Young Turks in the party and he had to expel some of them. Then he must have been disillusioned by his efforts that he resigned as president of the MCA and with it his cabinet post. He joined Sime Darby as Chairman and turned an ailing company into a financial giant. By their close and friendly relation with the Tunku they reduced friction between the two major communities in Malaysia and this contributed to the growth of democracy in this country.

TUN V.T. SAMBANTHAN

He was the President of the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) for most of the fifties and sixties and for most of the time he was under fire from his own MIC members. He was a graduate of the Anammalai University, Madras. He struck up a friendship with the Tunku and this reduced friction between the Malays and the Indians in this country. Thus we can see that the common link between the three was the Tunku. The triumvirate held firm and steadfast despite the stress and strain to which the friendship was

subjected to. This friendship between the three was of extreme importance to the country for it meant that there was a marked absence of communal tension during the time that the Tunku was Prime Minister. This also meant that the government could devote all its attention to development. And it cannot be denied that in almost all fields of human endeavour this country has improved a great deal since Merdeka 34 years ago. This we owe mainly to the Tunku and his two lieutenants, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun V.T. Sambanthan.

OPPOSITION

Any democracy cannot grow and take care unless it has a strong and responsible opposition. In this country the opposition was provided in those early days by the Labour Party. Later it was joined by Party Rakyat and the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), now under the name of Partai Islamic Malaysia (PAS). After the separation with Singapore the main opposition was provided by Democratic Action Party (DAP).

I entered parliament as a member of the Labour Party in May 1964 and served for three terms till 1978. At that time there were two prominent MPs from the PMIP. One was Zulkifli Mohamed. He was a brilliant orator in Malay and had he lived he would have left his mark in the sands of history in Malaysia. Alas, he was killed in a car accident soon after the general election of 1964. The other was Datuk Asri, the Menteri Besar of Kelantan and later a Cabinet Minister. He was a good speaker in the Dewan Rakyat but did not shine so well as menteri besar and as a cabinet minister. Two other MPs who left their marks in the Dewan Rakyat were the Seenivasagam brothers, D.R. and S.P. Both are lawyers. The younger of the two was D.R. and both of them were good criminal lawyers. Both believed in taunting the Malay

MPs and this led to necessary rows in the Dewan Rakyat. When D.R. spoke, word would get round the corridors of the Dewan Rakyat and the chamber would fill up again. Both the brothers were very outspoken in their speeches and this offended a large section of the Malay MPs.

Coming to the present generation of members of the opposition, the main opposition is the DAP and the most outstanding of them is Lim Kit Siang. Unfortunately like the Seenivasagam brothers, Lim Kit Siang in the early part of his career as MP, took a confrontationist stance and this had reduced his value as MP.

As I have stated before, I entered the Dewan Rakyat in May 1964 as the Member for Batu. Fortunately for me the languages used at that time were Malay and English. I was at home in English and I could make myself understood in that language. Later when Malay was used I had learned enough Malay to be able to get by in that language. This is important if one is not proficient in Malay one's use as an MP is markedly reduced.

As I have said before, I became an MP, not with the idea of becoming a glorified cabinet minister or to get rich, but solely with the idea of serving the people. In order to achieve that goal I took part in most of the debates. I was fortunate in catching the eye of successive speakers of the Dewan Rakyat and hence was able to get the floor. And as I have said before, I was at home in English and was able to make my contribution to the debates. I did not adopt a confrontationist attitude but tried most of the time to be constructive. I was willing to support the government and pay a tribute when they deserve it. I have often spoken in the need to nurture and nourish democracy in this country. On one occasion when I became heated in the topic of democracy in this country I burst out with "And when the time comes for the bell to toll for the loss of democracy in

this country ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee!!" and I pointed an accusing finger at the ministers sitting in front of me. And I could see that my outburst had hit home at the hearts of the ministers sitting in front of me.

For all the time I was in the Dewan Rakyat I held aloft the flag of democracy in this country and I would like to be remembered for this contribution to the rise of democracy in this country.

CHAPTER 22

LOH HUNG LOON — THE MIRACLE MAN

INOW TOUCH ON Mr Loh Hung Loon – The Grand Old Man of Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur. He was born on 3rd January, 1902 in China, which makes him 89 years now. I shall right away explain why I call him a Miracle Man. In 1954 he had a right pneumonectomy done in Singapore. This means that he has survived a dangerous operation for 37 years, when one considers that after 5 years the survival rate is 11 year, and Mr Loh Hung Loon has lived 37 years after the operation and he is still going strong! Now you will understand why I have called him the Miracle Man and I have also called him the Grand Old Man of Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur. I have been a member of the church for more than forty years I have not known a member who is nearly four score and ten as he is still going strong! Only a few years ago he was still driving a car until he was stopped from doing so by his sons, James and John, both of whom have retired from government service. Two of the Grand Old Ladies of the church whom I know was the late Dr Soo Kim Lan and Mrs T.K. Cheong but I do not think both of them are older than Mr Loh.

Mr Loh Hung Loon arrived in 1916 from China not knowing a word of English but he soon enrolled in the Methodist Boys' School then known as amongst the Chinese as Ho Lee Soo Koon named after Rev. W.E. Horley. He was soon transferred to Anglo-Chinese School, Ipoh; and stayed in Tronoh. As can be understood he was too big for his class and made rapid progress. In Kuala Lumpur he

stayed with his second brother and had to move to Ipoh when his brother was transferred there. Here he became a Christian, being baptized by Rev. W.E. Horley at Tronoh Church. For this he was disowned by his third brother. He appealed to Rev. W.E. Horley for help and was put in M.B.S. once again. In 1924 he passed the Senior Cambridge School Certificate Examination and became a teacher. At that time it was a big achievement and I was then in pre-school in the Pudu English Girls' School in Jalan Pudu. I see that Mr Loh was already starting his professional life as a teacher when I was struggling to adapt myself to life in the kindergarten. Mr Loh has been a teacher from 1924 to 1957 and has taught in primary and secondary schools and has been promoted to be a headmaster. He has been promoted superscale and in another era he would have risen to the highest in another sphere of human endeavour, e.g. in politics. He studied under a number of good teachers like J. Appadury and T. Arumugam. There were some of the same teachers I had come across when I attended the Wesley Methodist Church, K.L. more than half a century ago. In the Senior Cambridge Class Mr Loh was fortunate to have two distinguished teachers Dr Ho Seng Ong and Dr L. Proebstel. Dr Ho Seng Ong was a distinguished scholar in Malaya and I have heard Dr L. Proebstel preach in Wesley Methodist Church.

Mr Loh Hung Loon has had a long and distinguished career as a teacher. He modestly told me, "a good teacher produces good students." The reverse is also true. "Good students also make good teachers." In his case, he claims, and this is true. He proudly says that amongst his students were Tun Tan Siew Sin, former Minister of Finance. The Right Rev. Dr Moses Tay, Bishop of Singapore, Dr Eddie Ho Guan Lim, ambassador to Moscow and Singapore High Commission to the United Kingdom and son of Dr Ho Seng

Ong, Tan Sri Wong Yoke Meng, Secretary-General to the Ministry of Health, Mr Lee Cheng Yon, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Human Resources and many lawyers, doctors and other professional luminaries. Mr Loh is no doubt proud of having such distinguished students and I have no doubt that they too are proud of having such a good teacher!

In 1929 he married Ling Hua Ing and the loving couple has just passed the diamond jubilee of their marriage, surely a record for any marriage and a tribute to their healthy, loving and harmonious life they have lived together.

After his retirement in 1957 he was given an extension of service for two years. But in 1960 he called it quits and retired for good in 1960.

Mrs Loh is a distinguished teacher in her own right. She was educated at the Methodist Girls' School, Malacca and passed the Cambridge School Certificate in 1924 the same year as Mr Loh Hung Loon. She became a trained teacher in 1923. She was a teacher from 1923 to 1945 and has taught in the Upper Forms. From 1945 to 1960 she was the Headmistress of Methodist Girls' School, Malacca. In 1950 she was made a Justice of the Peace and four years later Mr Loh Hung Loon was similarly honoured in 1954. It is rare for both husband and wife to be given the same honour, certainly this is so in the Methodist Church in Malaysia. I also wish to record that both Mr and Mrs Loh Hung Loon have been promoted to superscale, another rare distinction for the Methodist Church.

SCOUT

Mr Loh Hung Loon joined the scout movement in 1926 and he has been a life long scouter ever since. He joined as an Assistant Scout Master in 1926, Group Scout Master 1932, District Scout Master 1934 and District Commissioner

1949-1954. In 1949 he led the Malacca Scout Contingent to Australia. The Malayan Contingent was led by Rev. R.K.S. Adam, the Principal of St. Andrew's School, Singapore. He spent more than a month in Australia and thoroughly enjoyed the trip there. Mr Loh Hung Loon had a long and distinguished career as a scout culminating with the award of the *Semangat Padi* in 1982. Advancing years have forced him to give up any active office but as he has said "Once a scout, always a scout". I am glad to say that I too was a scout at one time when I was in Kajang High School but the highest I could rise was to be a patrol leader!

AWARDS

In his long and variegated life Mr Loh Hung Loon has served the teaching profession well and the Methodist Church both in Malacca and Kuala Lumpur. He has served in various boards and associations and has been honoured with various honours. I have referred to the award of Justice of the Peace to both husband and wife, JMN and *Semangat Padi* and made a member of the Public Service Commission, Malaysia. In the Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur, he has served as the Chairman of the Local Council Executive Committee. When I served as the Chairman of the Committee of Finance and Stewardship he too served in that Committee. He has served the Wesley Methodist Church in Malacca and Kuala Lumpur and at one time he served as Assistant Pastor in Malacca. In Wesley Methodist Church we are well endowed with talent especially amongst the Senior Citizen group and many of them have served the church well to relieve the Pastor of some of his duties. As I have stated before he has served the Wesley Methodist Church long and faithfully and has served in various capacities including that of Assistant Pastor in Malacca.

MIRACLE MAN

In June 1954 during a routine chest x-ray it was found that he had a growth in the right lung. He went to the General Hospital, Singapore where a series of tomogram showed that he had cancer and the decision was made to operate. Bishop Lee had made arrangements for him to be operated in New York but Dr Dorothy Khoo, a niece of Mr Loh Hung Loon made arrangements with Prof. Yeoh Ghim Seng for Mr Loh to be operated in Singapore in June 1954. Prof. Yeoh Ghim Seng was born in Ipoh and after I had graduated from the King Edward VII College of Medicine in 1949, he became the Professor of Surgery. He went on to be a successful Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore. In the medical fraternity he is best known as a good and successful surgeon and to Mr Loh Hung Loon he has been sent by God to look after him. The operation lasted three-and-a-half hours, the right lung was removed. The operation was successful. Mr Loh Hung Loon had an uneventful convalescence and by the end of 1954 he was declared fit for duty. Mr Loh Hung Loon's operation aroused great interest in the Methodist Church in Singapore and Malaya. Prayers were said in most of the Methodist Schools of Singapore and Malaya and in most of the Methodist Churches as well. With such strong support and prayers from the schools and churches it was no wonder that the operation was successful. Mr Loh Hung Loon has now survived the operation by 37 years and at the present state of his health he may well pass the half century mark!

Mr Loh Hung Loon does not look like a person who has undergone a major operation. When he was in his early eighties he was still driving a car. His eyesight is still good but his hearing is now deficient even with a hearing aid.

FALL

I have already related how until lately he has been driving a car until his children asked him to stop driving. Prior to that he had a great fall and he was fortunate in that he did not break any bone in his body. One day he climbed up a tree to pluck rambutans and he had a fall from a height of above nine feet! God must be with him for as I have related before he did not break any bone. Fancy a man of 80 years climbing a tree to pluck rambutans! But Mr Loh is no ordinary man. When he was three score and ten he toured China with his wife!

At the New Year Service of the Wesley Methodist Church Kuala Lumpur, I met Mr and Mrs Loh Hung Loon in Church. He was attending the evening service as a member of the Local Council Executive Committee, LCEC. Here is a church member who is nearly a nongenerian and is not only attending church but is a member of the LCEC!!

Praise be to God and may Mr and Mrs Loh Hung Loon have many years of healthy, full and Godly life before them.

VALE – FAREWELL TO POLITICS

WHEN I HAD the stroke on 5th November, 1976 I knew that my days as a politician were numbered. Not that I regretted leaving the political arena. In fact, towards the end of my second term of office, I would have welcomed giving up politics but at that time I was the head of Pekemas and the party had depended on me to spearhead our campaign for the coming general elections. But my main concern was that I had not yet found someone to take over in Kepong. This was a workers' constituency and it would be a pity to let it fall into the hands of the Barisan. I had been too busy to groom someone to take over from me. However after I had fallen ill I did persuade Dr Tan Seng Giaw to take over from me in Kepong. Today he is the second-term Member of Parliament for Kepong and if he keeps up the good work he will be MP for Kepong a quite some time.

Finally in August 1977 I resigned as President of Pekemas and bowed out politics.

Here are some of the comments made on me by the Press.

The *Star* in its editorial of 6th August, 1977 said:

THE OLD WARRIOR BOWS OUT. Dr Tan Chee Khoon's decision to relinquish the Presidency of Pekemas does not come as a surprise. Ever since he suffered a stroke nine months ago, his political activities have been reduced to a minimum.

The old warrior has courageously sought to recover his physical fitness, and those who know how hard he has tried will understand how difficult it is now for him to say

no to active politics. Others in his position would have succumbed long ago to defeatism. But not this man. Certainly he will carry on, not actively as party leader, but as an elder statesman to his party and to the whole nation. His voice will continue to be heard. His counsel will be sought, by his constituents as by the Parliament he has served so well and so courageously all these years.

Indeed, Dr Tan has a special place in the hearts of all Malaysians - Malays as well as non-Malays. His humanism, his moderation, his courage, and that most rare quality among politicians, his example, stands him out as a leader of the highest calibre.

STATURE AND RESPECT

His health will not permit him to contest the parliamentary constituency of Kepong again in the next general election. There will be others to take his place, but none will achieve the stature or earn the respect now given to him. Kepong will be poorer when he takes a back seat. Dr Tan's decision to give the Presidency of Pekemas comes at a time when the party badly needs his guidance and leadership. He is the party's sole representative in Parliament, the only leader of national stature. Although formed six years ago, Pekemas has not been able to gather enough momentum as a mass-based party. Neither has a wider range of tested leaders emerged.

The recent decision of MTUC leaders to seriously consider setting up another labour-backed political party is another blow to the image of Pekemas, which in the past has boasted of affiliation with organized labour. The truth of the matter is that while Dr Tan Chee Khoo is not Pekemas, a Pekemas without him is not the same Pekemas. The party must certainly look forward to the next general election with trepidation.

The *New Straits Times* has this to say of Dr Tan, MP.

Dr Tan Chee Khoon has always paid his dues as a *wakil rakyat* should, never timing his ward rounds or presence in Parliament to suit his purpose. He is always there. His voting record in the Dewan Rakyat has been marked by the same concern to do right by the people and the nation. One remark ascribed to Dr Tan provides a measure of the high esteem in which he is held. "I do not believe it is the duty of an Opposition party to disagree *per se*," he observed once. Living by this principle has often pitted him against the Opposition or provoked ungenerous comments from some Government backbenchers, although the majority view that this doctor-politician's integrity, a sense of mission, has exerted a leavening influence on the legislative process. If that makes him look a maverick sometimes beyond the pull of party dictates, the conscience which orders his judgement has yet to be questioned by the voters. Three times they sent him to Parliament, each time on a different party ticket. There is no indication that his durability has been stretched. On Sunday, Dr Tan announced his resignation as president of Pekemas. There remains some doubt whether this means he has put himself out of the next elections yet inside the House or out, one suspects that Dr Tan's style of politics-by-conscience will endure as a model for young office seekers. Dr Tan has on occasion scolded the Press for "writing him off" politically before his time. Few career politicians are wont to quit at 57; he has said he will run for a fourth term if his health improves. But the resignation speech at the Pekemas general assembly carried a strong hint of tiredness. We are possibly witnessing the close of a spirited and worthy public career.

The *Utusan Malaysia* on 9/8/77 has this to say of Dr Tan Chee Khoon's retirement.

Jika tidak kerana paksaan keuzuran kesihatannya, persaraan Dr Tan Chee Khoon dari politik tentulah tidak mudah dilepaskan oleh penyokong-penyokongnya. Khabar mengenai keuzuran kesihatannya memang telah lama kedengaran dan alasan persaraan dari politik alasan ini tidak perlu diragukan seperti kemungkinannya terjadi pada setengah orang politik lainnya.

Tidak kurang dari suku abad Dr Tan berkecimpung dalam politik tanahair dan keistimewaannya tidak pula setakat terhad kerana lamanya sahaja. Beliau merupakan seorang ahli politik dan seorang parlimentarian yang dihormati oleh kawan dan lawan. Malah beliau memang selayaknya mendapat perghormatan yang pada tempatnya memandangkan peranannya yang dapat disifatkan sebagai "suara sederhana" dalam konteks politik Malaysia yang memerlukan banyak sikap toleransi.

Satu contoh sikap positifnya dapat dikesan beberapa tahun lalu apabila ramai ahli politik pembangkang yang menempelak kerajaan apabila ramai pelajar bukan Melayu terkandas dalam peperiksaan Bahasa Melayu yang pertama kalinya diwajibkan.

Sebaliknya Dr Tan memberikan nasihat yang tidak sahaja akan menguntungkan pihak yang berkenaan malah negara pada umumnya.

Sebagai seorang tokoh politik yang berdiri sebagai pembangkang, Dr Tan jelas menyumbangkan apa yang sememangnya diperlukan dalam sistem politik seperti di negara kita kerana pembangkang sangat diperlukan suaranya untuk mengawasi perjalanan parti yang memerintah.

Semoga contoh yang dicorakkan oleh beliau terus menjadi inspirasi kepada lain-lain orang politik atau kepada

mereka yang mahu menjadi orang politik agar sistem yang kita canangkan sebagai menjadi cara hidup kita benar-benar mendatangkan erti.

There was this bit about Dr Tan Chee Khoon in the *Malay Mail* of 26th October, 1977.

Thirty years in community service, seasoned in politics, and all of these years on the Other Side Dr Tan Chee Khoon was at last ready to talk of the times of his life. To the Petaling Jaya Rotary Club members, the retired Pekemas President, usually reticent when it comes to talking about himself, said yesterday: "All in all, I am glad to be able to contribute in a small way to the development of society."

Dr Tan recalls his entry into politics. He had been in politics for 12 years before he was finally persuaded to stand for the Batu constituency in 1964. He remembers not making promises to the people when the time came to canvass for votes, except that they would hear him loud and clear in Parliament if he was elected. And to convince the people that he could speak out for them, he displayed his Bahasa Malaysia language proficiency certificate at every rally.

The candidate for Batu before him, recalls Dr Tan, during his term in Parliament, spoke only on five or six occasions. As for Dr Tan himself, his maiden speech in Parliament was in Bahasa. When he decided to join the race, it was fairly easy for him because the people already knew him quite well as a general practitioner. They knew and recognised him for the help he extended to them, especially the poor who often received free medical aid or were charged very low fees.

Dr Tan believes that all doctors, by the nature of their profession, should involve themselves in community service one way or another. If a doctor is sympathetic to the

needy and does all he can to help, promises are never needed. People would remember him if he decides to try for public life, Dr Tan says.

The *Berita Harian* has this to say about his bowing out. *Senyum Pemimpin*.

Akhirnya Dr Tan Chee Khoon bersara setelah lebih 25 tahun berjuang dalam arena politik tanahair. Keputusan yang diambilnya memang telah diduga memandangkan keadaan kesihatannya sejak akhir-akhir ini.

Dr Tan sangat dihormati oleh kawan dan lawan. Dia seorang anak watan yang berjuang untuk kepentingan semua. Ini perlu diakui.

Dulu dia berjuang dalam Parti Buruh Malaya sebelum turut serta menubuhkan Parti Gerakan yang dipimpin oleh Dr Lim Chong Eu sekarang. Sebagai Setiausaha Agung Parti Gerakan dia berkhidmat dengan gigih dan penuh tanggungjawab.

Tetapi dia terpaksa meninggalkan Parti Gerakan dalam tahun 1971 setelah meletus krisis pucuk pimpinan parti itu. Lepas itu dia tubuh pula Parti Pekemas yang dipimpinnya hingga semalam.

Dengan lain perkataan selama berjuang dalam politik tanahair, Dr Tan telah berkhidmat kepada tiga buah parti – satu telah berkubur dan dua masih kekal.

Dia telah tinggalkan Pekemas, tapi tetap sebagai anggota Parlimen bagi kawasan Kepong. Kita masih boleh dengar lagi suara dan jeritannya dalam Dewan Rakyat. Dr Tan memang pandai bercakap. Dalam Dewan Rakyat sekejap dia cakap Inggeris sekejap cakap Melayu. Kadang kadang campur aduk dua bahasa sekali, dia tegur kerajaan mana yang taj jeba, dia hentam mana yang patut.

Kritiknya tajam dan dihormati. Maklumlah orang lama dalam politik walaupun dia bukan anggota Kerajaan. Mungkin dialah anggota pembangkang tulin!

Tapi sekuat-kuat Dr Tan pun tak terlawan En. Zakaria Haji Yahya bagi merebut kerusi Dewan Undangan Negeri Selangor kawasan Gombak dalam Pilihanraya Umum 1974 lalu.

Lat, in the New Straits Times of 31th August, 1977 pictured me as leaving the torch to others to carry on the track that I have lit over the years.

I am grateful for all the tributes that have been paid to me. I am also extremely grateful for the assistance that I have received from the many friends who have helped me in my political career.

DECADES OF MY LIFE

I WAS BORN on 4th March, 1919 soon after the end of World War I. I have not thought much of this, until one day in early 1969 a patient walked into my dispensary and after the consultation he asked to have a look at the palm of my hands and he told me the figure 9 is important to me. I was born in 1919 and ten years later, near to 1929 in 1930 I met with an accident wherein I lost the use of the left eye. The next decade in 1939 saw me enter the King Edward VII College of Medicine where I spent the next ten years. My studies were interrupted by the war in the east, the years of the Japanese Occupation. When that was ended I continued with my studies in medicine.

In 1949 I completed my medical studies and graduated as a doctor in 1949 and worked for two years in the government service and then launched into private practice.

1959 was the year of the first Malayan General Election where I took a prominent part, being the organizer of the Socialist Front which won five seats in Selangor and three in Penang. In 1969 saw the Gerakan captured the state of Penang and won 8 federal seats as well. In 1979 I had retired from politics and the next year I had been awarded the PSM by His Majesty the King. At the same time I launched myself as a newspaper writer in the Star. I have stopped writing in the later half of the decade in order to write my memoirs. Now that I have completed my memoirs and at the same I have retired from medical practice I have plenty of spare time for the first time in my life. I intend to write again for the press. I write my weekly column again. When I stopped writing for the press a few years ago in 1987, a good number of my readers missed reading my writings.

For that I am grateful. This time I will be waiting for my own pleasure and for the pleasure of my readers. I shall of course write *Without Fear or Favour* and with the experience of the past few years I hope I shall be more mature in my writing.

In the sunset of my life the thing I miss most is my ability to walk well. When I was young and before the advent of my stroke, I used to walk with big steps. When we went on tours I used to walk yards ahead of my wife. Now in my infirmity I literally have to crawl behind her and when we go on tours I often would sit behind in the car or bus while the others go and see places of interest. My disability has not stopped me from going places though. In August 1990, my wife and I together with my childhood friends, Mr and Mrs Chin Tet Tsoy spent a week in Ko Samui. We had to cross a short stretch of the sea to reach the island. And we had to rough it out. At the age of three score and ten I must admit I find it tough to cope with the primitive conditions but we managed to rough it out.

Looking back to my younger days I must admit I should have taken more holidays in my younger days. I have worked too hard with the result I did not take time off to travel. In my old age I have the time and money to travel but because of my infirmity I am unable to do so. The spirit is still willing but the flesh is weak. Fortunately I have met with a couple of childhood friends, Mr and Mrs Chin Tet Tsoy and together we made this trip to Ko Samui. I hope to be able to make many more trips in the near future.

Now after 1989 I face the nineties and like the poet I exclaim:

*O world, O Life, O times,
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at what I had stood before,
When will return the glory of your prime?*



Bishop Rev. Denis Dutton at Ming Court Hotel.



Tun Suffian at the 70th Birthday at Ming Court Hotel.



Photograph taken at the launch of the Author's Book "Malaysia Today - Without Fear or Favour".

Now that I look at the last decade of the 20th century I tremble at where I have stood before but I thank God for being with me. I thank God for having been with me all these seven decades. Soon after I had my stroke in 1976, I asked myself, why I have been made to suffer. Now almost 15 years have gone by and I have become more mature. As I look back on these fourteen years I am thankful and grateful that despite my disability I have been able to live a useful and quite busy life. I have been able to lead a semi-retired medical life. In May 1980, I started life as a columnist in the *Star* and *Nanyang Siang Pau*. I have carried on as chairman of several school boards. It was only when I reached my seventies that I resigned from all these boards. Then a few years ago I was invited to join ISIS and I have served on the Board of ISIS. Then when the Aliran Trust Board was founded I was elected to be its first Chairman. I have spent nearly two years in writing my memoirs. I am glad that God has given me the strength and the energy to write my memoirs. With advancing age memory fades, eye-sight fails slightly and the job of writing one's memoirs becomes harder. I thank God that my memory has not failed me much and my eyesight is pretty much the same despite being a diabetic for the last 15 years.

Apart from spending my spare time listening to radio and TV, I enjoy my spare time watching sports events and stories in video. I have a small collection of cricket tapes and films of other stories on video. And of course I have a small collection of 5000 books, quite a number of which I have not read. Now that I have retired I shall have the time to read them at my leisure. Meanwhile I continue to order about 20 books a month to ensure that I shall continue to have a steady stream of books to read. My wife unfortunately has not understood my love for books. She is al-

ways grumbling about the books in the library and she grumbles when I take books with me on my travels.

Of late I have taken an interest in looking at video tapes especially those on cricket, West Indies cricket and those on England vs Australia. And to add variety, I buy tapes on historical romance, *El Cid*, *Ivanhoe*, *Ten Commandments* etc.

This way I hope to spend the evening of my days listening to radio and TV, seeing video tapes and reading books. Books are my life stream. When I am tired of some or the other, I turn to a new one without arousing jealousy among the numerous books that I possess.

CHAPTER 25

THREE SCORE AND TEN

WHEN A MAN reaches the age of three score and ten, he should thank God for looking after him for seventy long years and be glad he has reached that venerable age. In our family we are glad that God has been kind to all of us. My father reached the age of 75 years and my mother reached the age of 83 years. My paternal grandparents reached the age of seventy plus. My father's third brother Tan Chin Kai reached the age of 73 years before he passed away and his wife is still alive at the age of 98 years. These hardy folks from Chan Tow in South China have a history of longevity. My elder brother James Tan Chee Wan is now 72 years and is still going strong. The first time I attended a 70th birthday dinner was that of the late Kok Chin Yin, an old friend, patient and a lawyer. That was about 2 decades ago and little did I dream that in the course of time, I too, would be holding such a dinner. My friends in the Labour Party held a dinner for me last year. That was according to the Lunar year but this year I had actually reached 70 years on 4th March, 1989. I decided to hold a dinner, not with the idea of making jolly or making myself feel important, but for giving thanks to God for caring for me all these years. Then over the years especially after I started practice in Batu Road in 1952, I must have been beholden to many people especially to those who not only brought themselves but also their children to see me as a doctor over the period of a generation. I am always grateful to such people and I felt that I must *membalas budi* i.e., return their kindness. Besides, in the course of my political career I have over the years asked people to help me especially during elections and

did not have the opportunity to say thank you to them. This dinner provided me with the opportunity to thank them. I began preparing for this dinner in December 1988 three months before the actual dinner. The first thing I did was to draw up the list of guests. This task was not as simple as it looked. Fortunately in this task, I had the assistance of Miss Wong Mui Keow, my nurse. She has worked for me for nearly twenty years and knew most of my patients and most of my friends as well. For nearly three months we sat down to draw up a list of my old patients. We looked up the patient's cards but unfortunately some of them were out of date and we did not know whether my old patients are staying there or whether they were still alive! In some cases we went to their homes to invite them. In most cases their addresses present a most difficult problem. Another problem was the task of looking up my old comrades from the Labour Party. I had known most of them about three decades ago and have not renewed my contact with them. Now I do not have their addresses and with the passage of time I have even forgotten their names! Fortunately Tan Kai Hee, my old friend from the Labour Party days was a great help as he was able to fill in the gaps in my memory. It was much easier to locate the doctors but some of them were not listed in the directory. After we had sent out the cards I found out that some had not received my invitations and I had no means of knowing that. As the day drew nearer for the dinner I got some of my staff to ring up every one in the list and to my horror I was told that some had not received the cards that I had sent!! Then on the day of dinner I found out that friends who had replied that they could come did not turn up. They had good reasons not to turn up. In one case, there was a tragedy in the family and the doctor obviously could not turn up. In another case, another doctor had received a telegram from his daughter in India saying

that she had passed the final MBBS (final medical examination) and he and his family decided to celebrate on their own.

Prior to the dinner I had decided to hold a Thanksgiving Service in a room adjacent to the Banquet Hall. I invited some of my Christian friends to this service and I am glad that the room was full and many of my church friends attended the service. The service was conducted by Rev. Yu Chee Huat, the Pastor of Kuala Lumpur Wesley Church and the message was delivered by Bishop Denis Dutton.

MESSAGE BY BISHOP DENIS DUTTON

“Seventy years ago a male child was born to the couple living in Cheras. Little did the parents of this child realize that he was destined to greatness – a true patriot and a champion of justice. This child was named by his parents, Chee Khoon.

This young child grew up like any other children of his time. He first schooled in the Kajang High School and later at the Victoria Institution and then the Medical College in Singapore. Upon graduation, he returned and began a medical practice in Kuala Lumpur.

I first knew him when I was a youth in the Wesley Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur. Dr Tan Chee Khoon and his family were also regular in attendance. At that time I watched him at a distance but never got to know him because he always looked so fierce. He and his handsome family came to church regularly, and soon established himself as a leader in the church. In the early sixties he entered politics and encouraged by his religious conviction he developed a passion and compassion for the poor and the marginalized people. His medical profession brought him close to the people, especially to the poor. He often offered treatment *gratis* to those who could not afford to pay.

When he entered the arena of politics he went in with zeal and conviction to lift the lot of the people often neglected by the mainstream of society.

I dare say that the convictions he developed in the church he put to practice in his political career. He feared no one save God. Dr Tan was not easy to get along with because very often, he stuck to his convictions. Enticed to a more lucrative practice in medicine and by his political opponents to switch sides, he never gave in.

His sense of justice and his fight for the rights of ordinary people made him unpopular with the establishment. In spite of his heavy commitments to his family, his medical practice and his political activities he always found time for the church. He enjoys the distinction of being the longest serving Chairman of the Finance Committee in the Church (20 years to be exact).

When he planned to call it quits in politics and was ready to announce his retirement from politics, after advice from his children, a couple of whom are also doctors, he was struck down by a stroke. I recall, vividly the day when that happened. I was called to the University Hospital to minister to his needs at that time. I can also remember how broken he was, justifiably so, and feeling disappointed because his plans to retire to a farm and to a quiet life seemed to have been disrupted.

Calling upon all the resources of my training as a minister of the church and silently appealing to God to be with me, I became bold enough to tell him sincerely that God could not abandon him in his time of need. I even suggested to him that even in the situation he was in, God still has a purpose for his life. When he was discharged from the hospital and went home, I organised groups of church people to go to his home to pray with him to God. We prayed that God would reveal to his servant what must be

done. I am no literary artiste but I had suggested to him that it may now be necessary for him to write his convictions and his thoughts for others to read about. Most of us now know that he has done exactly that and his column in the Star "Without Fear or Favour" was something many people looked forward to reading every Wednesday. This has now been reduced to a column called Issues. As a man who believed in the rights of people, no one dared to tell him that he was wrong. In a recent article on the Methodist Church and how it elects its Bishops, there was a part which appeared to "wash dirty linen in public". This was not well received by some quarters within the church. But who was to tell the great Tan Chee Khoon this?

Though often appearing to be a hard and fierce man, seldom smiling, this man born seventy years ago is a man with a heart. Anyone who had a problem or need could approach him and he has assured them of hope. If he could not help them directly, he would point them in directions where help could be found. This I know because he often spoke to me about these things on the phone.

Now, as he celebrates his 70th birthday, we are glad to be part of his life and this celebration. I am sure you would want me to wish him many happy returns of the day and that God would give him continued blessings to pursue that greatness which is already self-evident.

There is something that I often do on occasions such as this. It goes something like this:-

From Age 1 - 9 - are the infant years

10 - 19 - the adolescent years

20 - 29 - the formative years

30 - 39 - the searching years

40 - 49 - the fiery years

50 - 59 - the reflective years

60 - 69 - the settling years

Life and living begins at 70.

So, Tan Sri Datuk Dr Tan Chee Khoon, we wish you a Happy Birthday and may you have many more years to do what you want to do with your life. Live it up and may God bless you."

We had hoped to start the dinner at 7.30 p.m. sharp but because of the late comers we could not start till 8 p.m. At the main table were Tun Suffian B Hashim and Toh Puan Bunny, Tan Sri Archbishop Vendargon, Bishop C.N. Fang, Bishop Denis Dutton and his wife, Ms P.G. Lim, my wife and I. The Master of Ceremonies was Mr Tan Kai Hee who had been with me in the Labour Party of Malaya and had been detained for about 8 years. When he came out he went into business and today he leads a conglomerate of businesses and is a millionaire. This shows that to succeed in business one need not have a higher education but hard work, honesty and a little luck. The dinner started with Bishop Denis Dutton saying Grace and the MC announced that liquor would not be served. A number of my guests were Malays and in any case many of my guests were from Kuala Lumpur Wesley and to them liquor is taboo. I am glad that none of my guests grumbled at the lack of liquor. During the dinner I was asked to make a speech. I was of course glad to be given an opportunity to say a big thank you to my guests. I remembered the message by Bishop Denis Dutton when he reminded me that life began at 70! I thanked all those who were present that evening. I was glad that Kong Siew Hock, my classmate, a rival in Kajang High School was present. Others from Kajang were Dr Low Nan Hang, Datuk Dr P.T. Arasu and Mr P.T. Samanther. There were a number of doctors including Dr Ng Chuan Wai, Dr Mohan Arasu, Tan Sri T.J. Danaraj and Puan Sri Dr Hee Ong, Dr Lim Teik Ghee, etc. Among my political associates were Tan Sri Lim Thiam Leong, Tan Kai Hee, Dr and Mrs Tan Seng Giaw, Ms Liew Kooi Mooi and son. There

was a big contingent from the Senior Citizens' Fellowship of the Wesley Church. These included Mr and Mrs Loh Hung Loon both of them octogenarians, Datuk and Datin Lim Tuan Siong, Mr and Mrs Lim Ewe Hoe etc. Amongst the guests were Datuk Mahima Singh, the MP for Port Dickson when I entered Parliament in 1964. I believe he served two terms but he did not shine as a parliamentarian. When your constituents do not see your name in the papers you may find it difficult to retain your seat. Datuk Mahima Singh used to send me a Birthday Card every March and in return I used to send him a Deepavali Card every year.

Another guest was Prof. Syed Husin Ali and his wife. I had met him in the late fifties when he was working for his master's in the University of Malaya. Later he got his doctorate and joined the Party Rakyat. For his political activities he was detained under the Internal Security Act. But this did not deter him and he is still active in politics. He is an internationally renowned sociologist.

I gave thanks to God and my parents for all that I had received from them. I also thanked all my friends who were present that evening and also those who were not able to be present at the dinner. Tun Suffian Hashim made a speech on behalf of the guests. I reproduce below the speech by Tun Suffian.

"Tan Sri Dr Tan Chee Khoon and Puan Sri, Your Grace Bishop Vendargon, Bishop Fang and Bishop Dutton, Ladies and Gentlemen, It was true I was Lord President - I left just in time. My wife and I and all others are delighted to be here to celebrate our old friend David's 70th birthday. I am very pleased to see that he has so many friends. In contrast, we lawyers who have reached the age of 70, have few friends left. This is because ours is a contentious profession much given to disputations, arguments and gladiatorial contests; and in the heat of the moment, unlike doctors who

always mind their bedside manners, we sometimes forget our forensic behaviour.

It isn't only our work that is different, also the way we studied. Only the best students go for medicine, that was why I chose law. Some medical students who failed their first or second year switched to less demanding law. Those of us who read law pre-war at the Inns of Courts didn't even have to attend lectures, and an important part of our training is Eating Dinners six times a term – formal occasion when we had to wear a lounge suit and to be on our best behaviour in the presence of judges, QCs and our seniors. In my time there was no time limit during which we must complete our thrice-a-year exams which we sat when we were ready, but even when we had finally made it – one of us did so in his 40s and went on to become Prime Minister – we were not called to the Bar until we had eaten the prescribed number of Dinners. Much of our life is spent eating and our professors considered proper training in the art essential, so that in polite company we get to know how to engage in civilised conversation and don't consume our food like ducks.

All the world is a stage and in his 70 years on it David has played many parts.

He has been a husband (since 1944) for 45 years during which he has managed to keep his wife a serene and contented lady, always kind and smiling. I don't know the secret of the success of their marriage. But I can tell you that my wife and I have been happily married for 41 years because my wife is blind – and I am deaf.

As a father, David heads a wonderful family – blessed with three daughters (all lawyers) and three sons of whom two followed Father's footsteps into his medical profession and one is a civil engineer; all brought up as upright and responsible citizens like Father himself.

Because he has two languages, especially English, and because of his clear thinking as evidenced by his writings and speeches on public issues, David would have made a wonderful lawyer. But it was most appropriate that David chose to become a doctor – which gave him full opportunity to serve the poor and disadvantaged by giving them free medical treatment and generally acting as an honorary social welfare officer. His philanthropic and caring nature is well-known all over Kuala Lumpur.

His medical interest goes beyond ministering to the sick. He was most active as an educationist which his election by the Guild of Graduates to the Council of the University of Malaya for 19 years (until 1978) gave him ample opportunity for showing his concern for the young.

He was also most active in the affairs of the medical profession. For 24 years he was a member of the Malaysian Medical Council (from 1965). He took great interest in promoting and maintaining standards and ethics in the profession.

The best known part played by David was as a politician.

He was for 10 years (1964 – 1974) an elected member of the Selangor State Legislative Assembly and for 14 years (1964 – 1978) a Member of Parliament. All that time he was truly an honourable member, not just as a matter of convention. For 10 years, until struck down by a stroke in November in 1976, he was a leader of the Opposition. During his political career, true to his name, he took on Goliath so often and so effectively that the whole country simply referred to him as Mr Opposition. His political perceptions and talents were such that if he had joined one of the ruling parties, he would have been a minister – and a fine one at that, determined to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity

in public life – a quality, alas, not found in abundance these days.

David opposed not simply for the sake of opposing. He opposed injustice. He opposed whenever he saw things that should or could have been done – or done better – for all Malaysians, regardless of race and religion. He did not rave and rant. He was well-briefed on many matters and received much information from many reliable and anonymous sources – information which was not publicly available. David did his homework and his speeches and criticisms in and out of the legislature were well reasoned and supported by hard facts and difficult to refute. He was a thorn in Goliath's side.

As a good Christian David was – and is – truly a Good Man – the Sworn Enemy of Evil and Wickedness. He does not hesitate to speak out against Corruption and Misconduct, against Waste and Extravagance. Parliament has been designed to check Abuse of Power by the High and Mighty who control finance, the Army, the Police and the entire public service. David fearlessly spoke out on behalf of the Man in the Street against Hanky Panky in any shape or form, and in those liberal days no Prime Minister stopped him from using Parliament as a forum for the ventilation of public grievances and the Constitution as an instrument for the protection of the people from the Government, as it was intended to be.

He was – and is – the Champion of Racial and Religious Toleration.

He commanded the respect of all our first three Prime Ministers who saw the goodness and sincerity in the man – and recognised the important part played by a responsible opposition in a democracy. Indeed one of them had remarked that but for the Opposition he would have had

more trouble curbing the unrealistic demands of his own backbenchers.

Indeed, rumour had it that because of his ability and integrity David was approached – more than once – to join the Cabinet and the Government. But David was a man of principles. He was not in politics for personal gain. How often have we not seen lesser men crossing the floor for power and glory?

When he was felled down by a stroke and was lying in hospital, the Prime Minister Tun Hussein Onn was among the first to visit and comfort him and his grieving family. Would that ever happen during these days of ungracious leadership?

During his retirement from active politics, David continued to show his interest in and concern for the public good by his writings especially his weekly column in the *Star*. His comments and observations were blunt, often trenchant – but always fair – giving credit where it was due, but sparing nobody and nothing that he considered illegal, against the public interest, unfair, unethical. Like his speeches in the legislature, his writings were carefully prepared and rational, well researched, based on reliable information, lucidly written, displaying the clarity of his mind and reasoning, and always written as a responsible citizen and a loyal Malaysian. They earned him public respect and admiration. As a political and social commentator, David's in the same class as the Tunku. The writings of these two must have sold thousands of extra copies of the *Star*. It is a great pity that during the present regime when judicial, press and individual freedom has been curbed, the *Star* fears losing its permit and no longer dares publish the other side of the story. While the constitution guarantees freedom of speech, none is sure that there is freedom after speech.

In recognition of his outstanding service to the nation, His Royal Highness the Sultan of Selangor honoured David with a Datukship and the Yang di-Pertuan Agong with a Tan Sri ship – both honours which would not have been achieved without the constant love and support of his wife and children.

What a contrast from the position today! Times have indeed changed. Far from receiving a visit from the Prime Minister in hospital and being recommended for high royal honours, David's successor in Parliament – not for the first time – languishes in Kamunting where he has now been for many months.

Fellow guests, let us join all Malaysians in saluting David as a very fine citizen – and may God spare him many more years to be with us, to uphold Justice, befriend the underdog and to serve his country and fellowmen."

I first met Tun Suffian Hashim when I first served as a Member of the Council of the University of Malaya and he was the Pro-Chancellor of the University. He has served in that capacity for nearly two decades. He was born of poor and humble parents by the banks of the Perak River. He won the Sultan Ibrahim Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where he earned a law degree. On his return to Malaya he was appointed as Harbour Master in Malacca. Later he joined the Legal Service and reached the pinnacle of the Judiciary and was appointed Lord President but as he stated he got out just in time! With the sacking of Tun Salleh Abas, the judiciary has become a precarious profession!

The dinner party was further enhanced when David Hu Tching Ming, my nephew from Singapore, sang some favourite songs followed by Mrs Lucy Tan, a member of Kuala Lumpur Wesley Church. Following the custom for all "Big Birthday", the dinner ended with the distribution of longevity bowls and chopsticks to all the guests. When

the dinner ended, I walked to the entrance of the hall and thanked all the guests as they left for home. It was an enjoyable dinner for them and it gave me the opportunity to thank them for all the kindness that I had received from them all these years.

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