

Tun Tan Cheng Lock

Tun Tan Cheng Lock (President 27th February 1949 – March 1958)



QUOTATIONS (EXTRACTION FROM SPEECHES) BY FOUNDING FATHER OF MALAYSIAN CHINESE ASSOCIATION (MCA)

THE LATE TUN TAN CHENG LOCK (C.B.E., J.P) (1949 –1958)

FOREWORD:

“The Late-Tun Tan Cheng Lock needs no introduction except perhaps to the younger generations of Malaysians of today. The Founder member’s moderation, his sense of justice and fair-play, his sane and well-balanced outlook was in pleasing contrast to the mass of propaganda which was arousing the suspicion, jealousy and fear of the Malay for members of other friendly races. Although of necessity approaching problems from a Chinese standpoint, he had never been a mere advocate of narrow sectional interests. His criticisms and views were constructive and directed towards the general welfare of Malaya, as a whole. It was his sincere conviction that the interests of the various communities are co-related and that the Malay, Indian, British, the Eurasian and Chinese can live and work together in peace, concord and amity” (Unquote).

(Foreword by C.Q. Lee who edited publication, entitled: “Malayan Problems-from a Chinese Point of View” by the late Tun Tan Cheng Lock)

1883 Born in Malacca on 5th April

1902 Studied in Singapore’s Raffles’ College

- 1909 Worked as Assistant Manager at Bukit Kajang Rubber Estate. Managed the family's rubber estates at the same time.
- 1912 Appointed Justice of the Peace by the King of England. Appointed a member of the Malacca Municipal Commission.
- 1926 Appointed an unofficial member of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlement by the British Government. Advocated self -government for Malaya. Urged the Government to formulate policies to foster a true Malayan spirit and consciousness among the Malayan people with a view to the completed elimination of racial and communal feelings.
- 1928 Became the Straits British Chinese Association's Chairman (held the post till 1935)
- 1932 Appointed an unofficial member of the Executive Council for the Straits Settlement.
- 1933 Awarded the title of CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by King George V.
- 1934 Opposed at the Legislative Council the policy of Malayanisation which aimed to assimilate the non-Malays.
- 1937 Elected an official representative for the Straits Settlement to attend the coronation of King George VI
- 1940 Assisted the government in the drafting and implementation of the Civil Marriage Act.
- 1942 Fled to India during the Japanese Occupation. Met with government officials from England to discuss the future of Malaya.
- 1943 Presented the Memorandum on the Future of Malaya to the British Colonial Secretary, Col. Olivier Stanley, reporting the formation of the "Overseas Chinese Association" in India. Pledged to form a "Malayan Chinese Association " upon his return to Malaya, to assist the British Government in post-war rehabilitation. That was the first time the name and concept of MCA was mentioned. Constructive ideas and far sighted views on political, educational, social and economical subjects were raised in a memorandum.
- 1945 Embarked on the struggle for Malaya's independence.
- 1946 At a dinner party held by Malaccan Chinese on 2nd April in honour of the Governor of the Malayan Union, Edward Gent, and the Governor of Singapore, Franklin Gimson, he criticised the ex-proconsole for their anti-Chinese views and their idea of excluding the Chinese and Indians from participating in the administration and government of Malaya. Advocated fairness and equality for all races in Malaya.

- 1947 Became the Chairman of the Pan Malaya Joint Action Council. Directly opposed the discriminatory articles in the Federation of Malaya Constitution Report. Succeeded in getting the country to protest against the report.
- 1948 Planned to form the “Malayan Chinese League” and eventually organised the “National United Organisation” with other Chinese organisations with a view to protect the Chinese legitimate rights and to fight for Malayan self-rule. The plan failed to realise.
- 1949 Initiated the formation of Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and became its first President.
- 1951 Drafted the “MCA Re-organisation Memorandum” to transform MCA from a welfare organisation into a political party. Led a delegation to present a memorandum to the British Colonial Secretary, Reid, expressing the dissatisfaction of the non-Malays with the Federation of Malaya Constitution.
- 1952 Knighted by King George VI with a KBE.
- 1954 Attended and spoke in the third session of the National Convention held by the MCA-UMNO Alliance on 14th February in Kuala Lumpur. He advocated for a campaign of action to fight self-government and independence for Malaya.
- 1955 Participated in the Baling peace negotiations along with Tunku Abdul Rahman and David Marshall.
- 1957 Awarded the title of Tun for his distinguished service to the country.
- 1958 Defeated by Dr Lim Chong Eu at the MCA National Assembly. Announced his retirement.
- 1960 Passed away on 13th December at the age of 77 years.

1. Chinese And National Unity

Quote: “Dr. Sun Yat-Sen has likened the Chinese people to a sheet of loose sand, because we as a people have had too much personal liberty without any unity, and he has prescribed as a remedy for our weakness that we must break down individual liberty and become pressed together into an unyielding body like the firm rock which is formed by the addition of cement to sand. So let us be up and doing to band ourselves into a strong and solid body, actuated and cemented by a strong public spirit, so that we may be enabled to work together in endeavoring to achieve the worthy objectives we have set before ourselves” (Unquote).

(On the occasion at the Inaugural Meeting of the proposed Overseas-Chinese Association on 24th September, 1943-during the Japanese Occupation period).

2. Individual Interests Versus Public Spirit

(Quote): “Under the 20th Century conditions and in these days of dynamic modern civilization, the truth is brought home to us with ever increasing force that it is not enough for

us to be capable of looking only after our selfish individual interests, important as that is, and that it is imperatively necessary for our own survival and self-preservation that everyone of us must perforce exert himself with zeal to do his proper share of caring for and safeguarding our collective interests as well, to perform which function effectively we must unite ourselves and work together in close and hearty co-operation and with team spirit.

“A strong public spirit and sense of the need for individual sacrifice to protect and promote our public weal are the cement to bind ourselves into a firm body to make it possible for us to collaborate for our mutual benefit and for our collective salvation and security, without which we, as separate individuals, however capable, will be bound to be lost to wander in the wilderness of a dark future!” (Unquote)

(On the same occasion in September, 1943)

3. Memorandum On “Self-Government”

(Quote): “Malaya, under the British had a purely autocratic form of government, at the Head of which was the Governor of the Straits Settlements and High Commissioner for the Malay States, who assisted by a staff of specially selected British bureaucrats known as the Malayan Civil Service, ruled the whole country under the general direction of the Colonial Office in London. The general public had practically no voice and no direct representation in the government of the country, except that the British European Chambers of Commerce at Singapore and Penang had the legal right to elect their two respective members on the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements.

“It is the wearer who knows where his shoe pinches. So it follows that the wearer should choose his shoe and that he cannot afford to allow others to choose for him. The subject should have a voice in making the laws and in choosing the government under which he must live. The people of Malaya should after the war be given a measure of “self-government” of which they are capable of exercising, and in the shortest possible time be granted by planned and regular stages full responsible government under the Crown and as a unit of the British Commonwealth and Empire in all matters of internal and civil administration, and then march on progressively towards full freedom.

“The writer as a member of the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements made a strong plea in favour of a United Malaya, which the post-war should afford a golden opportunity to bring about.” (Unquote)

(Expressed in a Memorandum calling for national independence from British Rule)

4. On The Future of Early Malayan Chinese

(Quote): “The Chinese are by tradition and nature very faithful and loyal and a most grateful people. This is the testimony of “sinologues”, missionaries and other foreigners, such as Professor H. Giles and the American bishop, J.W. Bashford, who lived long among Chinese and knew them intimately. The writer has every confidence that if the China-born Chinese are given a fair deal in Malaya they will, like the Straits born Chinese, regard themselves in course of time as Malaysians first and Chinese secondly as long as they make Malaya their home—a safe and logical conclusion to come to on the basis of the actual past record of the Chinese community in Malaya.

“The best way of treating the Chinese is to trust them and to give an opportunity to those of them, who have resided in Malaya, especially if they have done so with their families, for a sufficiently long period and have become domiciled in the country, to acquire the right of Malayan citizenship by naturalization, so as to enable them to identify themselves completely with the interests of the land of their adoption. This is the wisest course to adopt by way of solving the so-called Chinese problem in Malaya in the humble opinion of the writer.

“It is the firm conviction of the writer that the ideal to be aimed at by every community in Malaya is that they should learn to regard themselves as Malaysians first irrespective of their race. This should not only for inter-racial unity and harmony such as has so conspicuously characterized, for instance, Switzerland, but would also contribute to the unity, strength and stability of the Malayan State, which would thereby enabled to raise itself (the country) to the rank of a worthy and important partner in the great British Commonwealth of Nations”.

(Unquote)

(On the occasion of drafting a Memorandum On “Self-Government” in 1943)

5. On Economic Development

(Quote): “...it is essential that in future a permanent local labor population of races other than Malay should be built up, so that Malaya may not be so dependent on outside sources for its labor supply. For this purpose Chinese and Indian laborers and small holders should be allowed and encouraged to settle down with their families in special reservations to produce food crops and contribute to the subsistence production of the country”. (Unquote)

(On comments relating to reconstruction of Malaya)

6. Aims Of Education

(Quote): “The Government should assume a greater responsibility than they have done in the past for the education of Chinese and Indians in their vernacular languages, if they are to be given an opportunity of developing themselves “along the lines of their own culture and tradition”.

“The aim of education should be to provide a person with the means of earning a livelihood and train him to function efficiently as well as to impart knowledge enabling him to appreciate the ultimate values of truth, goodness and beauty and live the good life.

“A comprehensive plan of educational reconstruction for Malaya should be prepared (a) to provide universal compulsory primary education for all races through the medium of their respective native tongues; (b) to provide secondary education; (c) to provide vocational, technical and agricultural instruction; and training and (d) to establish a university for higher and professional education” (Unquote).

(In 1944, comments to reconstruction of early Malaya)

7. Against British Rule And Divide Policy

(Quote): “If a policy of “divide and rule” were attempted in Malaya, and Malays, for instance, were encouraged to dislike Chinese through preference given to one community at

the expense of the other, or vice versa, an attempt of this nature would, as experience has proved elsewhere, not only be sterile but also bring about such a state of affairs as would prepare the breeding ground and sow the seeds for the eventual growth of an anti-British sentiment in both communities to the detriment of the whole country.

“We are strongly of the opinion that the only safe, sound and wise policy for the future Government of Malaya should be to rally to its support those true Malayans, who passionately love the country as their homeland and those who intend to settle there, and who are united by the legitimate aspiration to achieve by proper and constitutional means the ideal and basic objective of Self-Government for a united Malaya within the British Commonwealth and Empire, in which the individuals of all communities are accorded equal rights and responsibilities, politically and economically, including a balanced representation of the various communities in the Government to ensure that no one community will be in a position to dominate or outvote all the others put together”. (Unquote)

(On the occasion of submitting a memorial relating to Malaya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, in 1945)

8. Malayan Citizenship

(Quote): “The question of Malayan citizenship is a matter of great concern to us. The status of the Chinese and other non-Malays born in the Malay States is highly unsatisfactory. In the new Constitution, which we trust will be formulated for Malaya, we hope Malayan citizenship will be created and defined. It has been a long-standing grievance of the non-Malays born in the Malay States that they have no proper political status, though those born in the colony are British subjects.

“If Malaya is to become ultimately one country and one nation, the people born within its confines should have a common citizenship. This problem has sooner or later to be faced, and we would urge upon His Majesty’s Government the necessity of establishing a common citizenship for all those born on Malaysan soil, who are virtually British subjects. Inter-related with this Malaya-born Chinese, which has been used in the past as a weapon and a taunt with which to attack them when they asked for their rights as Malayan citizens. We trust that His Majesty’s Government will focus attention on this question and come to an understanding with the Chinese Government and be determined to settle it on right lines, in which they can be assured of the hearty support of those who desire to make the country their permanent home”. (Unquote)

(On the same occasion of submission in 1945)

9. Building A United Nation

(Quote): “This is a young country, a land of great potential wealth and full of magnificent promise. If all sections of its cosmopolitan population will unite and work together in a true spirit of amity and co-operation and with a single-minded devotion to its good and prosperity as a whole its future greatness is assured. Our ultimate political goal, though it still lies in the distant future, should be a united self-governing British Malaya with a Central Government and Federal parliament for the whole of it, functioning at a convenient capital with as much autonomy in purely local affairs as possible for each of its constituent parts, in which every

section of its locally-born domiciled population should be allowed equally and fully to participate”. (Unquote)

(On the pre-war occasion, memorandum to Governor Sir Samuel Wilson in 1932)

10. Defending Loyalty Of Malayan Chinese

(Quote): “Before the war, the accusation levelled at the Chinese was that they wanted to make Malaya the 19th province of China. This myth, for which the Chinese are nor responsible and which was originally concocted in the imaginative brain of some European writer of the globe-trotter type, has since been used as a weapon with which to attack the Chinese. I affirm that it is a lie and a slander reiterated maliciously to injure the Chinese out of jealousy and envy of Chinese economic success in Malaya, which has been won by sheer dint of hard work, by their industry, enterprise and initiative as well as by untold sufferings endured by them in the past, without any outside help and without any protection or aid from the Chinese Government throughout the period of Malayan history.

“The Chinese have inherited a tradition of self-reliance and self-help. A Chinese proverb says “Nothing is difficult in this world and nothing is easy in this world. Help comes to those who help themselves; with our own strength we shall live again. Dig within; within is the foundation of the good, ever dig, it will ever well forth water”.

“When I reflect on all this anti-Chinese sentiment, it recalls to my mind the true words of Shakespeare who says:-

***“Know you not, master, to some kind of men
their graces serve them but as enemies?***

***No more do yours; your virtues, gentle master, are sanctified and holy traitors to you.
O, what a world is this, when what is comely envenoms him that bears it!”***

“Chinese philosophy and history for centuries demonstrate that she is not a nation which harbours dreams of world conquest and expansion at the expense of her neighbour nations. I plead with your Excellencies, with His Excellency the Governor-General of Malaya, with His Majesty’s Government and the British Parliament and public not to give the slightest credence to this nonsensical, impossible and impractical fairy tale of Chinese nefarious intention to absorb Malaya, which they are too sane and intelligent to contemplate”.
(Unquote)

(On the occasion of a speech at a dinner on April 2nd. 1946 attended by the Chinese Community of Malacca)