

Lessons on life from Tunku

Tunku taught us that if only we are united, we can shape our own destiny and take on the world.

By **TUN DATUK SERI UTAMA
DR LIM CHONG EU**

ACTUALLY, I only came to know Tunku in the early 1950s when I began to work with him after he was elected President of Umno. From the years of my friendship with him, I must say that Tunku was one of the most gracious persons whom I have ever known in my entire life.

I had established the (Penang) Radical Party (in 1951), which was to win the majority in the first elected Georgetown Municipal Council. I was a member of the Penang State Legislative Council and also the Penang State Executive Council. I also attended the Federal Executive Council meetings, where I first met Tun Abdul Razak, who served as the State Secretary of Pahang. And it was through him that I first met and became politically involved with Tunku.

When I was finally persuaded by the late Tun Leong Yew Koh to leave the Radical Party and join the MCA, I automatically became a member of the opposition in the Federal Legislative Assembly. By chance, I was allocated a seat at the back of the House between Tunku (on my right) and Tun Ghafar Baba (on my left). Of the three of us it was Ghafar Baba who was the most gifted orator.

Tunku worked on his agenda to fight for independence and to quell the communist insurgency through the mandate he enjoyed as the legitimate leader of the people on account of his electoral victory and the fact that he represented the voice of the different communities in the country.

I realised that he worked very well as the "captain of a team."

MERDEKA was a clarion call to freedom that was being taken up more and more passionately by the people throughout the country. They began to understand the Alliance concept of an independent Malaya as tirelessly expounded by Tunku.

This was important as the concept was itself new and untested. It was different from the nationwide call of "Hidup Melayu" that was initially promulgated by Umno under the leadership of Datuk Onn Jaafar.

Tunku himself had ridden on the wave of Malay sentiments. It was during this time that I began to appreciate Tunku's absolute com-

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Malaysiaku Gemilang

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Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu joined the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1954 and was elected president in 1958. He resigned from the MCA in 1961 to found the United Democratic Party (UDP). In 1968, the UDP evolved to become the Party Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Gerakan), which won the Penang state election in 1969. He was Penang's longest serving Chief Minister, from 1969 to 1990.

mitment and devotion to the national cause. He appeared simple in comparison with the other politicians. He made quiet, simple but decisive statements at official meetings. When he was with the people, he spoke to them from the heart with utmost sincerity. It was his spiritual aura and charisma that won us the day.

Historians will record the period when I broke away from him politically and even challenged his views about the Alliance. Although we drifted apart, as destiny would have it, our mutual friendship and understanding of one another blossomed once again when Tunku came to live in Penang following his retirement as Prime Minister.

In our younger days I would meet him with his friends at the races in Penang. He enjoyed the good fortune of being the co-owner, with Datuk Tan Chin Nam, of the famous horse "Think Big" which won the Melbourne Cup twice.

In those days, he would sit at the lower tiers of the clubhouse. Today, there is a special box named after him. In his last few years, it was here that Tunku used to sit and watch the races on TV because of failing eye-



Good friends: Tunku greeting Lim during one of their meetings. — National Archives

sight.

Tunku taught us that if only we are united, we can shape our own destiny and take on the world, and become a model of success for the rest of the world to emulate. He taught us that in a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious

nation such as ours, each individual Malaysian has a role to play in strengthening the nation through a sense of national unity based upon mutual understanding and respect for one another.

I learnt from Tunku that the essence of true understanding is the

dedication to try to know what the other person thinks or believes in. And respect can only become lasting and true if one tries to sympathetically understand what the other person thinks or believes in, although your own personal views may differ from his.