

IN THE ERUPTIVE STATE of Asian politics, several Prime Ministers and Presidents have been forced out of office. They have been either rejected by the electorate or deposed by ambitious rivals. Not so, Tunku Abdul Rahman, thrice re-elected Prime Minister of Malaysia. While still in the full flush of power, the Tunku stepped down from his high office with grace and dignity. A prince of the Kedah State Royal Family, he was nevertheless the common man's natural choice as their leader, both in their struggle for independence and in the subsequent stewardship of the nation for 15 unchallenged years.

Although the Tunku had gradually prepared his people for it, his resignation, when it came, cast a pall over them. From his counterparts in the Commonwealth, among whom he was the seniormost statesman, and from leaders the world over, came fond farewells and eulogies. Yet, the Tunku has not departed from the international scene. As the first Secretary-General of the newly-established international Islamic Secretariat, he is preparing for an aggressive international role as an spokesman, trouble-shooter and ambassador of goodwill for the Moslem world.

It was the Tunku himself who conceived the idea of a Moslem Commonwealth several years ago. Inspired though he was by the British Commonwealth model, he had a somewhat different purpose in mind. Although an international Moslem organisation would serve as a forum for discussion, the Tunku was specially interested in consolidating the human and material resources of Moslem brethren, in assisting newly-independent Moslem countries in enabling them to know one another and their problems better. Most important of all, he was eager to build an effective communication bridge between the Moslem and the non-Moslem world.

I spoke to the Tunku recently about his new job. "You know," he said, "although the common thread of Islam runs through all Moslem countries, most of the Moslem world today is still in disarray. Prior to the first Moslem Foreign Ministers' Conference at Jeddah in 1969, there was little or no dialogue amongst themselves on matters of mutual interest. Of course, the Middle Eastern Moslem countries are in apparent unity in their war against Israel. But what is so desperately needed is some kind of cohesion, some kind of permanent association, some definition and pursuit of mutually beneficial economic, social and political objectives."

The Tunku added: "There is a tremendous gap in wealth between Moslem countries, and there ought to be some sharing of prosperity. This is the whole basis of the teaching of Islam."

How did the Tunku come to be selected as the first Secretary-General of the Islamic Secretariat? More than any other leader, he had the credentials acceptable to both the Moslem and, the non-Moslem world. A staunch Moslem himself, he has done much for the religion in his own country. Moreover, his western educational back-

ground, his struggle for independence from colonial rule, and his continued harmony with the West, make him an ideal link.

The Tunku realises that his job as Secretary-General is quite different from that of Prime Minister. He has to reckon with a variety of countries and customs, problems and prejudices. For one thing, the clarion call of the Islamic Secretariat has so far been muffled in the Middle East by the drums of the battlefield.

Even so, the most important prob-

lem facing the Permanent Secretariat to be located in Kuala Lumpur is finance - to maintain the Secretariat and to carry out its various projects. While Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan have promised their full support, the response from some of the Moslem countries in the Middle East has been rather disappointing. Nevertheless, the Tunku is determined to push ahead, even if only with a few countries as a start. He says, "Like my other projects (ASEAN, the Malaysian Federation and the Asian Football Federation), I am not disturbed by prophets of doom or by the initial lukewarm support. My faith in God is undiminished. I know my objectives are right and I am confident we will overcome all obstacles."

The Tunku has already come up with several subjects for consideration

at a meeting of Islamic Foreign Ministers. Some of these are: the Palestine problem; propagation of Islam; an international Islamic bank for trade and development; and an Islamic news agency to bring about a better image of Islamic nations, train personnel, and exchange journalists among Islamic countries.

What manner of man is Tunku? What factors have influenced his life and thinking? He was born on February 3, 1903, the seventh son of Sultan Abdul Halim Shah of Kedah and

It was during his voyage back to Malaya in 1931 that he met the late Mr. Eugene Chen, then Foreign Minister of China and a bitter opponent of colonialism. "In the course of that voyage," the Tunku said, "we became good friends. I began to admire his ways and sentiments. My flair for politics took shape through knowing him."

After the war, when the late Dato Onn bin Jaafar conceived the idea of uniting the Malay people, the Tunku and Tun Abdul Razak, with several other leaders, joined forces, and formed the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO).

But it was not long before the UMNO faced its first crisis over the admission of non-Malays. When Dato Onn resigned over this issue, the Tunku was persuaded to take over the leadership. He accepted after resigning his post as a Deputy Public Prosecutor. He forged UMNO into a firm entity that could speak strongly for the Malays.

The first major achievement of the Tunku and his party was the formation of an alliance, of the three major communal political parties - UMNO, the Malayan Chinese Association and the Malayan Indian Congress.

The Alliance weathered many storms, thanks to his tact, his sincerity, and his perseverance. And when the first Federal elections were held on July 27, 1955, he capped his career by leading the Alliance to a resounding victory.

Of his many triumphs, one of the greatest was the success of the Merdeka (Independence) Mission to London in January, 1956. Britain agreed to grant Malaya independence by August 31, 1957, if possible, and self-government almost immediately.

The Tunku's finest hour must surely have been when, as the first Prime Minister, he proclaimed Malaya's independence at the break of dawn on August 31, 1957 in the Merdeka Stadium, Kuala Lumpur. His second major achievement was the formation of Malaysia on August 31, 1963. Speaking in Parliament a few weeks earlier, the Tunku declared: "We will not be swayed from our course by the cries of those who are out to wreck Malaysia for their own selfish ends. We sincerely believe in the correctness of our decision and the wisdom of our action. Let posterity judge for itself."

Understandably, therefore, an event that shook him was the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in August, 1965. "To me it is the most painful piece of work that I have had to do in the 10 years I have been the executive head of the Government," he said in a message to the nation on August 9, 1965. But, he added, "I am convinced that an amicable settlement this way was the best. So we separate on terms of friendship."

Unruffled, the Tunku inspired the formation of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) with a view to promoting better understanding and greater regional co-operation. The Tunku was unwavering in his determination to safeguard Malaysia when President Sukarno started his



Family portrait shows the Tunku with his wife, Puan Sharifah Rodziah. The children seated on the floor were all adopted. Standing, (carrying a child), is the Tunku's son, Tunku Ahmad Nerang, formerly an Army officer.

## MAN OF ALL THE PEOPLE

The sagacity of Tunku Abdul Rahman will now benefit the Moslem world

lem facing the Permanent Secretariat to be located in Kuala Lumpur is finance - to maintain the Secretariat and to carry out its various projects. While Malaysia, Indonesia and Pakistan have promised their full support, the response from some of the Moslem countries in the Middle East has been rather disappointing. Nevertheless, the Tunku is determined to push ahead, even if only with a few countries as a start. He says, "Like my other projects (ASEAN, the Malaysian Federation and the Asian Football Federation), I am not disturbed by prophets of doom or by the initial lukewarm support. My faith in God is undiminished. I know my objectives are right and I am confident we will overcome all obstacles."

The Tunku has already come up with several subjects for consideration

his Thai wife. After early education at a Malay and an English school, he went to England. He enrolled at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, only to find that he could not live at the College because he was not British.

Another incident upset him during his stay in England. He was interested in soccer and was good enough to play for his university. But because he was non-white, he was excluded from the team. All this strengthened his determination to free his people from British rule.

Though the spark of anti-colonialism was so kindled in him, the Tunku persevered at Cambridge and became the first Malay to graduate from an English University. (Years later, he returned to England to read Law and emerged a barrister in 1949 at the age of 46.)

confrontation.

That, too, he weathered. But the saddest setback in Malaysia's history was the outbreak of racial violence following the 1969 General Elections. It shook the very foundations of Malaysia. Undaunted, the Tunku, as Chairman of the National Goodwill Council, toured the country in search of peace and goodwill.

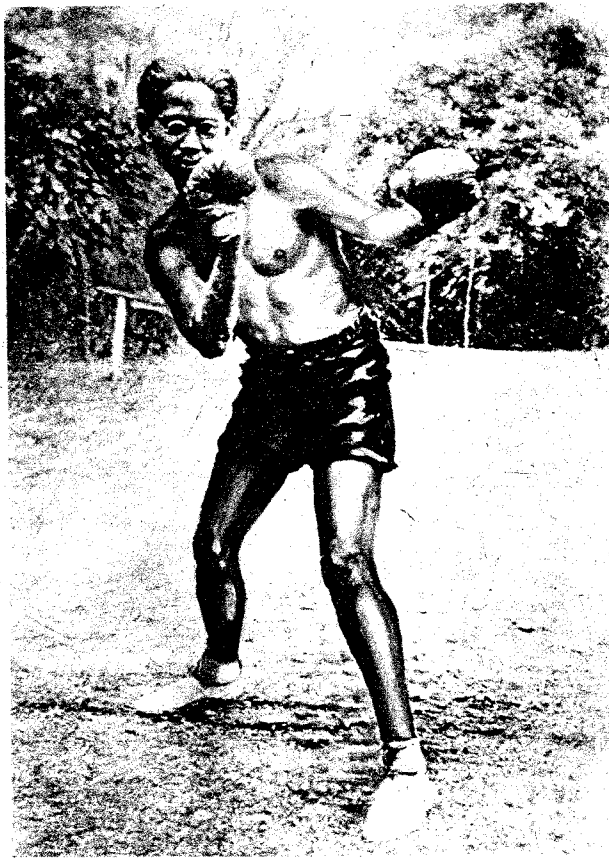
"Don't worry. All will be well soon," he assured the people. And he and Tun Abdul Razak, now Prime Minister, gradually steered the country back to calm.

"First things first," he told those who criticised him for shelving rather than solving problems. He was outspoken about what he believed to be right. He was not always correct in some of his decisions and actions. And he has admitted this.

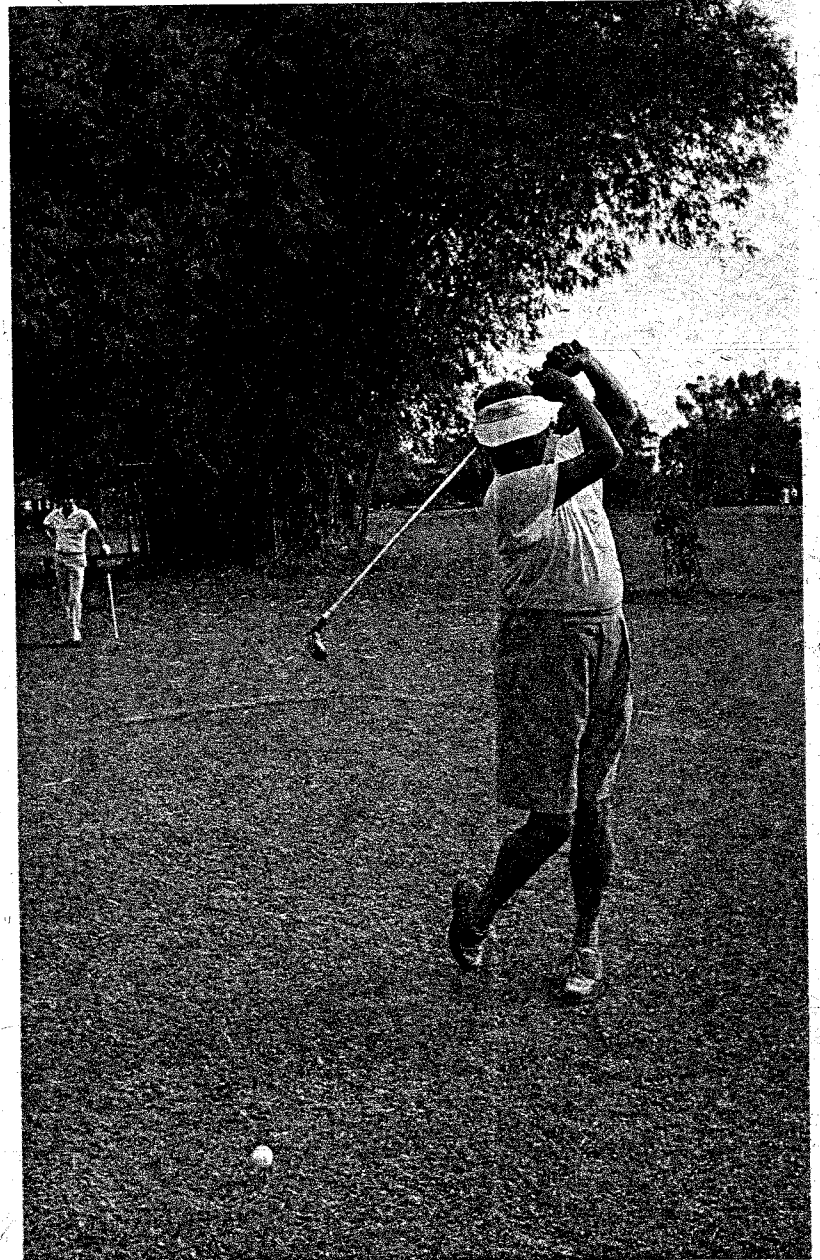


*Tunku, dari muda lagi pun, sangat gemar kepada sukan. Beliau kelihatan di-sini (nombor dua dari kanan baris tengah) bersama dengan lain-lain ahli Kesabelasan yang ketiga, pasukan bola sepak Penang Free School dalam tahun 1916.*

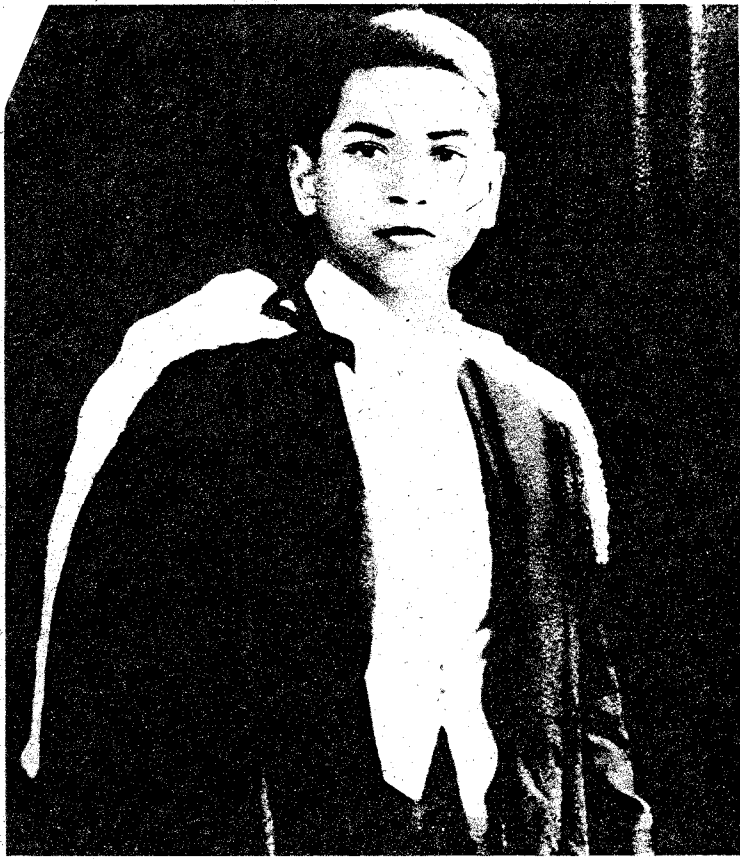
*Football team of the Penang Free School in 1916. The Tunku is seated second from right.*



*The Tunku was a keen boxer in his student days.*



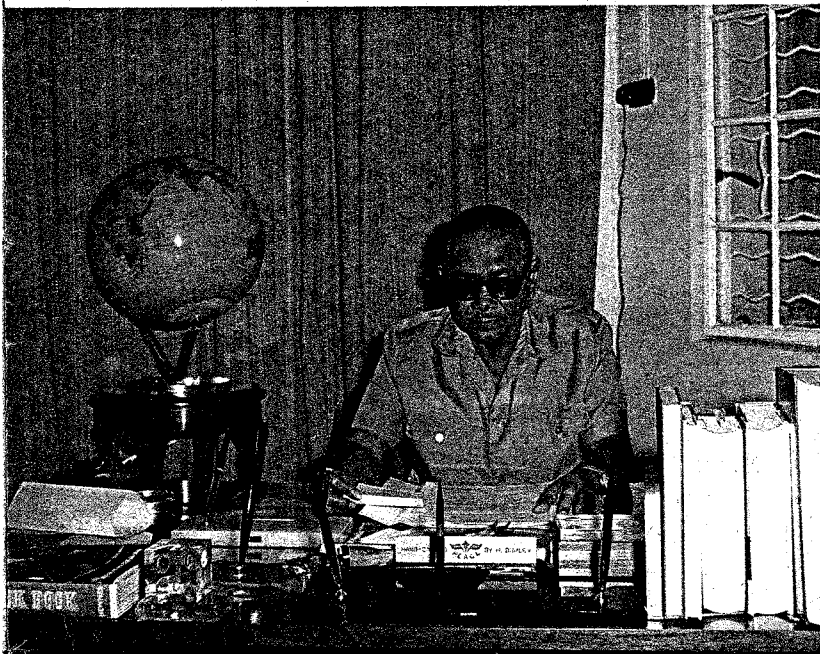
*Today, golf is a favourite relaxation of Tunku Abdul Rahman.*



*The Tunku graduated from Cambridge.*



*A diversion from the burdens of office.*



*The Tunku was at his desk through times smooth and rough.*



*The Tunku with his adopted daughter.*

There have been occasions when his candid statements caused a good deal of embarrassment and disappointment to his colleagues. He has held his convictions even when they were far from popular. Whatever one may say about him, no one can question his integrity of thought and his integrity of action. Some of his critics have accused him of being too pro-Chinese and too pro-Indian. But the real truth is he is pro-Malaysia, pro-Malaysian, and pro-peace.

In recognition of his services he has received many honours — the Magsaysay Award for community leadership in 1960, an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Cambridge University in the same year, and similar honours from the University of Malaya, Sydney University, Araneta University of the Philippines, Saigon University and Aligarh University in India.

The dominant theme of most of his utterances has been the paramount need for goodwill among all races. He has often said that, "In a multi-racial society like ours we must all learn to live with one another, to understand one another, to respect one another's rights, religions and customs." He has declared open places of worship for other religions in Malaysia. "I recall with warmth the many donations, aggregating millions of dollars, that came

in from people of all religions when I launched an appeal to raise funds to build the National Mosque," said the Tunku.

His sincerity was all too evident in his farewell broadcast on August 30, 1970, when he announced to the nation his decision to resign. He said, "I am happy to make way for a younger man who is good, honest, and impartial, absolutely tireless in his devotion to this country, a man with 15 years' experience as my deputy. Fellow Malaysians, I say without any doubt at all that you could not have a better man than Tun Razak to follow me as Prime Minister; so give him your wholehearted support."

The Tunku, and his wife, Tun Puan Sharifah Rodziah, have a son and a daughter, two adopted daughters, and an adopted son. A popular patron of sport, he was the President of the Football Association of Malaya and the Asian Football Federation. In appreciation of his services, the Malayan Racing Association has decided to sponsor the building of a turf club in Alor Star.

The Sabah Government is building a monument in Kota Kinabalu in his honour. But the most enduring monument to his patriotism and sagacity is the one he himself built: a free Malaysia that promises to create a just, multi-racial Society. — VICTOR MORAIS. ■