

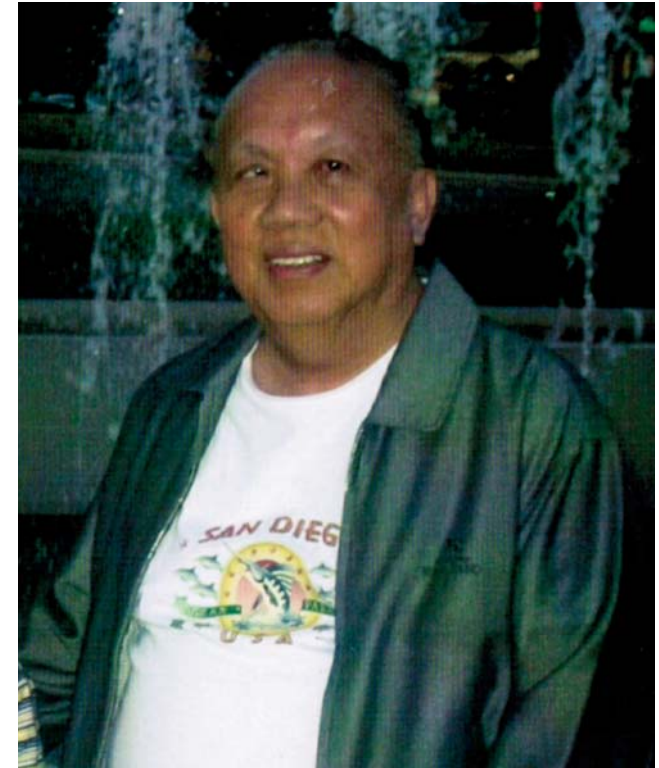


Jing Quee talking to Brian Haw in London on 3 September 2001. Brian, who died recently, started his one-man protest in 2000 against the sanctions imposed on Iraq where hundreds of children died. He continued his protest through 9/11, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan until his death. The 11-year non-stop demonstration drew world attention, sympathy and admiration for his dedication.

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Salute to our Socialist Warrior

COMRADE TAN JING QUEE



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An Irresistible Tide

LIM KEAN CHYE

Singapore is an island. Its language is the language of the thug. “Anybody who decides to take me on needs to put on knuckle-dusters” is a menacing sample. Its crude dominance purges the city of civilized culture and freedom. The island is a cultural desert but its soil is fertile enough, cultivated for factories operated by digits, churning out wealth for the velvet rich out West. So delighted are those out there with their fat purses that they have honoured the island’s controller with dinner with the Queen at Buckingham Palace. But except for money and the doubtful glamour of being controlled by the highest paid ministers in the world, the island has nothing to boast of, not even a Jackie Chan. Instead arrogant bullies wearing the insolence of the rich crowd the corridors of power.

Singapore is a tiny dot on the map but an oppressive weight on the life of its citizens. But its crushed residents are inexplicably resurgent.

Take Tan Jing Quee. No tub thumping leftist, he bubbled with scintillating insouciance. Highly civilized, he persevered in the atmosphere of barbarism presided over by the “deranged elite”. A practising lawyer, he stood out with a wide reading list which included English as well as Chinese works. It included Edgar Snow, Nehru, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer; biographies including that of Lincoln; Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Galbraith, and surprisingly Han Su Yin, but perhaps it was the story of a Eurasian who embraced her Chinese heritage that intrigued him. He also read Song Ong Siang,



Meeting up with Lim Kean Chye, on 23 May 2011, during the trip to launch *The May 13 Generation* in Penang. Jing Quee had promised Kean Chye that he would be well enough to visit him, and was gratified that he managed to do so.

Lloyd Fernando, Goh Poh Seng, Wong Pui Nam, Goh Sin Tub, Usman Awang, Shannon Ahmad’s early works, the poetry of Alfian Sa’at, Jack London, Oscar Wilde, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Matzuo Basha. He read whatever was published on Malaya about the men who made history whether communist, non communist or whatever else. And of course the list included Tim Harper, Brian Moynahan’s *Jungle Soldier* and Anthony Short’s *In Pursuit of Mountain Rats*. He taught himself Chinese and learned enough to read T’ang dynasty poetry as well as Lu Xun, an astonishing achievement considering the level of our Chinese secondary schools. And he enjoyed pantuns. He read any book that he got his hands on, especially on history, world politics, current affairs. He relaxed with the Beatles, John Lennon, Karen Carpenter, Anne Murray, Roger Whitaker, and the oldies.

Full of energy, he optimistically defied his illness. As Poh Soo Kai has observed, “his perseverance sparked the formation of the People’s History Centre in defiance of the

Ministry's warning: "ex-detainees will not be permitted to re-write history". He was last occupied with the writing of a play as well as a short story.

Marx wrote of politics as expressing "old memories, personal enmities, fears and hopes, prejudices and illusions, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, articles of faith and principles". But the totalitarian island denied Jing Quee this luxury. Even the tiny freedom of expression his predecessors of the Fajar group enjoyed had been obliterated when his time came to speak his views. But this successor to the spirit of Fajar faced a post-colonial totalitarian terror, a monstrosity that sought to impose a numbing unity of the graveyard, but failed to cow him.

Tan Jing Quee's bubbling insouciance impressed. It must have frustrated those Singapore bullies who imprisoned him in 1963 and again in 1977 but failed to break his spirit. Defiant he wrote:

How could I ever forget those Neanderthals
Who roamed Whitley Holding Centre,
Under cover of darkness,
Poured buckets of ice water
Over my stripped, shivering nakedness,
Slugged my struggling, painful agony
Circling, sneering, snarling
Over my freezing nudity,
More animals than men:
What induced this
Vengeful venom, violent score
To settle, not for a private grievance
But a public, democratic dissidence;
From whence sprang this barbarity?

What made men turn into beasts
In the dark, away from prying eyes,
Protected by a code of dishonour and lies
To ensure they survive and rise.

And always there is a threat of detention without trial
facing those who speak out:

What distortions can they trump up next,
To delude the tribunal of history
What causes can they plead to justify
This cruel, protracted incarceration?

And of those deprived of their homeland he wrote:

Exile is not a choice
But a lawless oppression
The ferocious, unbridled rage
Of a deranged elite.

But he is an incorrigible optimist, certain of people power.
He has passed on but left us these words:

Time like flowing waters
Moves relentlessly on. Never retreating
Until an irresistible tide shall rise
To propel the human will to overcome.

Tribute to Tan Jing Quee

LIM HOCK SIEW

It is with a very heavy heart that I write of one of my closest comrades, Tan Jing Quee. Our relationship dated back to his days in the University Socialist Club.

Jing Quee joined the University Socialist Club and became one of the prominent and very active members. Our relationship was based on our common socialist conviction and ideals. In the club's forums and discussions, he distinguished himself with his profound knowledge of philosophy, economics and socialist ideologies. I was deeply impressed by his knowledge of socialist ideals, its application in the political struggle at that time. He became the president of the University Socialist Club and the editor of the club's organ *Fajar*.

During one of the club's forums, Jing Quee was emphatic that the role of a socialist was basically different from that of a social welfare worker – the socialist's role was to struggle for a social economic system that totally eradicated the source of poverty and social injustice. The social welfare worker on the other hand, merely indulged in symptomatic relief of the illness of a capitalist society.

A few weeks before I was arrested in February 1963 during Operation Cold Store, Jing Quee and a few other Socialist Club members came to see me at my home to discuss what they could do after our expected arrest. They were fully aware of their own arrest and detention should they take part in politics in that period but he displayed total determination to take up the challenge.



Chia Thye Poh (left), accompanied by Dr Poh Soo Kai (centre) and Dr Lim Hock Siew visiting Jing Quee during Chinese New Year, 2011.

While in prison I learnt that Jing Quee had graduated from the university and instead of taking up a lucrative job, he plunged himself into the trade union movement with a meagre pay. He became the paid Secretary of the Singapore Business Houses Employees' Union (SBHEU) and devoted himself to the improvement of the working conditions of the members of that union composed of mainly English educated workers. In September 1963, he took part in the general election as a candidate for the Barisan Sosialis and was nearly elected, losing by a mere 200 plus votes to a PAP minister. As expected, after the general election, he together with other Barisan Sosialis candidates were arrested and detained without trial.

When he was released in 1966, the SBHEU was already banned and Barisan Sosialis was rendered ineffective by

repeated waves of repression. Jing Quee decided to leave Singapore for UK to study law. In London, he helped to take care of Lim Chin Siong who was exiled from Singapore after he suffered a bout of acute depression.

After returning to Singapore as a lawyer, Jing Quee continued his interest in Singapore politics and in 1977 he was again arrested under the ISA together with about 20 other lawyers, graduates, trade unionists and political activists. During that detention, Jing Quee like most other detainees, was subjected to mental and physical torture which he had vividly described in his poem "ISA Detainee".

He was released three months later but Jing Quee became even more resolute rather than cowed by his detention. He devoted himself to writing the alternative history of Singapore. His research in the British Archives revealed shocking evidence of the degree of collaboration and conspiracy of the PAP leaders with the British colonial authority. All these evidence form part of the books which he had edited namely, *Comet In Our Sky* and *The Fajar Generation*. Subsequently in spite of his terminal illness, he struggled valiantly to complete the editing of *The May 13 Generation* and the translation of *The Mighty Wave* even though he was very ill. In fact he was totally blind and physically disabled. He remained mentally alert and his fighting spirit was very high. He took part in the launch of the two books in Singapore and despite the fact that he was under medical treatment for his terminal illness, he travelled to KL and Penang to help launch the books.

Even in the last days of his life, he was embarking on another book, on Operation Cold Store.

His untimely death has deprived us of an intellectual who had devoted his life to the socialist cause. I am proud to salute a brave and dedicated socialist warrior, Comrade Tan Jing Quee.

Pushing forward the democratic movement

POH SOO KAI

Tan Jing Quee bravely opened a space for an alternative look at history. Remember the Ministry of Home Affairs' warning: "...ex-detainees will not be permitted to re-write history". His perseverance sparked the formation of the People's History Center.

My admiration for JQ lies not in his length of detention or in his preparedness to risk a second imprisonment but in his dedication to correct history, to open a space in a tightly controlled police state and thus push forward the democratic movement.



Jing Quee with Said Zahari and Dr Poh Soo Kai in Kuala Lumpur, 8 March 2006, following the Detention-Healing-Writing forum

仁贵，一位和蔼可亲的同乡人，第一次见面是在2004年的夏天，虽然这么迟相识，但很早就从何标处闻到您的名声。

您的理想及执著，是永不可灭的，您是我们最尊敬的朋友，我祝您将未完成的理想及抱负再继续向前进，把光明带到未来的世界去，让它展开灿烂的花朵。

何标夫人

Jing Quee: A very friendly person, a fellow Hainanese. Even though I first met you in the summer of 2004, I'd long heard of your name from Ho Piao.

Your dream and passion will live forever. You are our most respected friend. I wish that your unfinished dream and ambition will be carried forward, that they will light up the world, and cause blossoms to spring forth.

Mrs Ho Piao



Jing Quee and Ho Piao were guests at the home of Francis Khoo and Ang Swee Chai in London on 3 September 2001

仁贵老弟，沉默已被击破，安息吧！

陈国相

我很荣幸，受陈仁贵邀请，参加他和孔莉莎编写《情系五一三》的工作。我读过仁贵发表的反殖、捍卫民主的文章，以及他参加编写的《林清祥与他的时代》和《〈华惹〉时代风云》，也知道他曾两次被无理扣留，出狱后仍不惧强权，继续光明磊落地讲正义的话，干维护大众利益的事。我是受到这种坚强的斗志所感动而欣然接受他的邀请的。

我长期居留国外，没能和他建立牢固的朋友关系，更深入地了解他。这一年的合作，总算给了我这个机会。这期间，仁贵的病情已开始恶化，但却精神抖擞，在夫人的精心协助下，就投来的稿子发表意见，每天还要在电话里讯问莉莎，我是否有发电邮来报告工作进程。这种一心要把工作做好的责任心，是我们能准时交卷的推动力。特别是在几个《情系五一三》新书推介会上，一般人不幸处在他当时的恶劣情况，都会选择住院治疗，但他不但坚持出席推介会，还在会上发言。在新加坡的推介会上，他用华英语说了一个小时，是当天发言最长的演讲者。

《情系五一三》是结束半个多世纪的沉默的标志，仁贵是多么心急要运用他的话语权，把长久压在心头的话快快地，完完整整地说出来！

在所有的推介会上，出席者都洋溢着对仁贵的爱戴和敬仰。有前来帮忙推他的轮椅的，有扛他上讲台的，更有要和他合影，请他签名，向他表达祝贺的。每一个镜头都说明他们领会了他的心意，清楚地听到他的心里话。我看仁贵脸上的表情，是疲劳但不显辛苦，却很舒畅、满足。

被剥夺了半个世纪的话语权，总算取回来了。但是话还得继续说，理还得不停地讲，直到那些英勇抗争的故事传入各个角落，占住制高点，使曾失去话语权的人普遍恢复自信。谎言重复太久，已经被视为没什么大不了的事了，反正“胜者为王，败者为寇”是历史上到处都发生过的事。问题是：“谁是‘败者’？”在争取国家自由独立的事业中扮演重要角色的人绝非“败者”。个别人也许愿意接受“败寇”的标签，但不能要求他们的同代人全跟着他们走那有损尊严的小道，更不能让后人继续接受谎言为真理。被抹黑事件的参与者们，我们必须乘有生之年彻底夺回我们的话语权，再犹豫不能清除“胜者”涂在我们身上的“污点”，更不能帮我们解脱心上的压抑。

陈仁贵不是“被抹黑事件的参与者”，但是他把参与者视为先辈，心紧紧地系着“五一三”。让我们承接他的声音，把真话说到底吧。

仁贵老弟，沉默已被击破，安息吧！

Brother Jing Quee, the silence has been broken, rest in peace!

TAN KOK CHIANG

I was honoured to have been invited by Tan Jing Quee to join him and Hong Lysa in editing *The May 13 Generation*. I had read Jing Quee's earlier essays on anti-colonialism and defending democracy, as well as the books *Comet in Our Sky* and *The Fajar Generation* which he had co-edited. I knew that he had been arbitrarily detained twice but undaunted by unbridled power, he had continued to speak up for justice and the people after being released. It was this admirable fighting spirit that made me accept his invitation.

Due to my long absence from Singapore, I did not know Jing Quee very well prior to this. Working with Jing Quee over the last year of his life finally gave me that opportunity. Though Jing Quee's health had already deteriorated by that time, his spirits were high. With the attentive assistance of his other half, he was active in providing comments to the articles that were submitted. Each morning without fail, he would ask Lysa if I had e-mailed any updates on my progress. It was this strong sense of responsibility and commitment that allowed us to meet our tight deadlines. Jing Quee had subsequently insisted on playing a major role in the meetings we had for the launch of the book, even though any other person in his physical state then would likely have chosen to be admitted into the hospital. During the Singapore launch, he spoke the longest, presenting in both Mandarin and English for over an hour.

The publication of *The May 13 Generation* marked the breaking of a silence that had been held for more than half a century. One could discern the sense of urgency that Jing Quee felt to let what had long been unsaid finally be expressed in as complete a manner as possible.

At all of the launches, there was a palpable sense of affection and respect for Jing Quee among those present. People were rushing forward to help, whether this be pushing his wheelchair or lifting him up onto the stage. Many others lined up for his autograph, for photographs to be taken with him, or simply to personally convey their good wishes. Each scene communicated an understanding of his intention and an appreciation of its significance. By the end of each launch, one could see on Jing Quee's face a slight trace of exhaustion but no sign of discomfort; he looked relaxed and content.

Freedom of expression and the right to be heard, deprived for half a century, were finally regained. Still, justice must continue to be voiced and reason demanded, until the true and heroic stories of anti-colonialism permeate each corner and occupy the commanding heights they deserve, re-invigorating all of us with the strongest self-confidence.

Distortions have been perpetrated for so long that they no longer seem out of the ordinary, for after all, history is rife with examples of “the victor the king, and the vanquished the bandit”. But in this case, we must ask: “Who is the ‘vanquished?’”

Those who have played a crucial part in the struggle for independence and freedom shall never be seen as the “vanquished”. Though certain individuals may be resigned to that label, they cannot expect their entire cohort to follow their undignified example. Even less so, they cannot allow themselves to be complicit in letting future generations continue to be fed falsehoods as truths.



His son, Boon, guiding Jing Quee's hand in autographing a book at the Singapore launch, 14 May 2011

Historical actors long maligned should reclaim their freedom of expression and right to be heard in the remaining years of their lives. Reluctance to do so will not help remove the “dirt” smeared by the self-proclaimed “victors”, nor bring relief from the oppressive stifling of the spirit.

Tan Jing Quee was not a direct participant in the May 13 movement. But treating the historical actors as his senior, his heart was always tied closely to “May 13”. May his voice herald the eventual telling of the complete truth!

Brother Jing Quee, the silence has been broken, rest in peace!

His ideals and struggles reverberate in our hearts

MICHAEL FERNANDEZ

The University Socialist Club founded in February 1953 became a focal point for young idealists who entered the then University of Malaya. They were part of the anti-colonial movement which included the Chinese Middle School students, the leftwing trade unions known as the 'Middle Road trade unions' and the Nanyang University students. Tan Jing Quee was actively involved in the Socialist Club from 1960 till he left in early 1963, particularly during the anti-merger campaign. He was president of the Socialist Club in 1960 and editor of *Fajar*, its monthly organ. He was a regular contributor to *Fajar*.

In early July 1961, the Socialist Club organized the first public forum to discuss the Merger Proposals. The participants were Sidney Woodhull (representing the opposition group within the PAP), David Marshall of the Workers' Party, Devan Nair of the PAP, AP Rajah of the Liberal Socialists and Tommy Koh representing the University Socialist Club. Tan Jing Quee chaired the event.

Jing Quee also consolidated the Joint Activity Committee (JAC), initiated by the previous Central Working Committee under Gopinath Pillai and Tommy Koh and comprising the University Socialist Club, the Political Science Society of the Nanyang University and the Political Society of the Singapore Polytechnic. In 1962, Jing Quee represented the Socialist Club at an international conference in Copenhagen

sponsored by the International Union of Socialist Youth. Jing Quee managed to get the Conference to pass a resolution to condemn the "Malaysia Plan" as the plan was made without consultation with the people of the colonial territories of Sarawak, North Borneo, and Brunei. Jing Quee believed that the people of these territories must first be given the status of self-determination and through their elected representatives, decide their own political future.

The moment I told Jing Quee that I wanted to join the Socialist Club, he sponsored my membership. We thus struck up a life-long friendship which lasted more than 50 years.

My relationship with Tommy Koh was based more on personal chemistry while my relationship with Jing Quee was based more on politics. When I met Tommy in 1959 at the National Language (Malay) Seminar organized by Tommy and Gopinath Pillai at the University of Malaya, most of the former members of the Socialist Club were there too – James Puthuchery, S Woodhull, Albert Lim Shee Ping, Dr Lim Hock Siew, Dr Poh Soo Kai, Dr Philomen Oorjitham and Dollah Majid. Jing Quee took me to his home after the seminar. He encouraged me to become more active. As I had a motor-bike then, I assisted in the circulation of *Fajar* to the various tertiary institutions and news-stands. It was Tommy who tried to dissuade me from joining the Naval Base Labour Union (NBLU) in July 1963. He told me not to join the Union unless I was prepared to go to jail. He was then the Union's interim legal advisor. Of course I did not accept his advice.

After Operation Cold Store when more than 120 people were arrested in February 1963, Jing Quee joined the Business Houses Employees' Union as a paid Secretary. It was Jing Quee who called me down to Singapore. I was then teaching in a secondary school in Kuala Selangor. After meeting ST Bani, James D'Cruz and Jing Quee, I joined the NBLU as its

Secretary-General. We used to meet quite often to exchange ideas late into the night.

In protest against the de-registration of seven big left-wing trade unions, Singapore Association of Trade Unions (SATU) called for a 48-hour general strike in October 1963. Almost the entire leadership of SATU, including Jing Quee, were detained. He was incarcerated for about three years. I was detained for nine years. When Jing Quee was released in early 1966, he went to London to study law. He returned to Singapore in 1970.

On 15 February 1977, Jing Quee and I, along with several other former Socialist Club members, were rearrested and incarcerated at Whitley Road Centre.

Jing Quee was diagnosed as having glaucoma, and later prostate cancer as well. He underwent chemotherapy. The cancer however spread and eventually killed him. But his literary skills plus his indomitable spirit pushed him on to contribute and edit a collection of essays entitled *The Fajar Generation* with Dr Poh Soo Kai and Koh Kay Yew. He also published a collection of poems. His last scholarly pursuit was a well-researched book on the Chinese school students' struggles against conscription into the British colonial army called *The May 13 Generation*. This book was published recently.

Though Tan Jing Quee has joined our human-rights stalwarts of the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s who have passed on, his ideas, ideals and struggles still reverberate in the hearts and minds of the people of Singapore and Malaysia.

Helping others at great personal sacrifice

TAN GUAN HENG

It is an honour and a privilege to pay tribute to the memory of Tan Jing Quee. How many of us can honestly say that we can always be true to our ideals and principles? Tan Jing Quee was always true to his ideals and principles. Jing Quee or JQ as he was popularly known, was a man of many parts. A poet, author, student leader, sportsman, scholar, linguist and lawyer.

He was a devoted husband to his dear wife, Rosemary Choong Gan Yin. A loving father to his 3 children, May Yun, Suan Jek and Suan Boon. A respected elder brother to his siblings. He was a generous host and we spent many happy hours at his house on festive and social occasions.

Jing Quee was two years my junior in Raffles. He represented Raffles in football and hockey. Our friendship grew in the University. We edited, produced and distributed *Fajar*. Like many of us, Jing Quee was inspired by the many intellectuals and luminaries of the University Socialist Club – James Puthuchery, S Woodhull, Poh Soo Kai, Lim Hock Siew, Tan Seng Huat, Linda Chen, Jamit Singh, Lim Shee Ping, A Mahadeva and Abdullah Majid. He was the co-author of *The Fajar Generation*, an inspiring book which is enshrined in Singapore's political history. A prolific writer, he has attained immortality, with his poems and short stories.

I will mention three instances where Jing Quee went out of his way to help others, at great personal sacrifice and cost to himself. He took great care of me when I was in London for treatment and neglected his law studies. After graduation, he declined a comfortable job and opted for a much lower salary with the Singapore Business Houses Employees' Union. He was greatly respected by both workers and management for his dedication and negotiating skills. He stood as a candidate in the 1963 general election when many of our colleagues were under detention. He lost very narrowly in Kampong Glam. He was aware that his own detention was imminent.

We respect, admire and are inspired by those who remain true to their ideals and principles and who sacrifice and suffer because of their ideals and principles. They epitomise the supreme nobility of self-sacrifice, honesty, courage and integrity. Tan Jing Quee was such a man.

We will always remember Tan Jing Quee with affection and gratitude. We have lost a very good friend. We have lost a great friend.

悼仁贵

文潘

仁心博爱 叹天妒贤才 撒手乘鹤赴九泉
贵恙难康 愿世留德范 长贯人间留正气

依 稀记得在1960年间的一个下午，由仁贵领导的新大社会主义俱乐部发函邀请了南大政治学会与工艺学院政治协会理事齐集于新大，举行一次别开生面的联欢茶会，旨在建立中英文教育源流大专里的三个学术团体的联系，及促进与加强同学间的交流与沟通。当天，与会代表非常踊跃，济济一堂，气氛融洽。会前大家先经过一番自我介绍，我们方相互认识。接着交流意见，最后由社会主义俱乐部代表倡议设立一个三团体共同组成的联合委员会，以便来日保持联系，沟通与交流，并且站在学术研究的立场上，对诡谲多变的时局共同研究和加以分析后，联合发表声明或举办学术活动和研讨会等等。这项建议立即获得与会代表的一致赞成而通过。随后就立即从各自团体中选出代表共同组成联合行动委员会。

上世纪五十年代末期，全民所开展的反殖民地主义运动风起云涌，争取国家独立的浪潮汹涌澎湃，政治局势动荡不安。以仁贵为首的社会主义俱乐部与另两个团体的代表皆深刻认识到国家

兴亡，匹夫有责的真谛，始终站在公正客观的立场上，一切以人民利益为考量，审时度势，相互切磋，提出各自的真知灼见，曾多次拟定与发表应时的共同声明。其时，颇受报章读者的关注与重视。

1962年，当全民正关注真假合并计划时，为了体察民情，了解民意动向，三个团体联合行动委员会在丹戎巴葛区进行破题儿第一遭的民意测验。数月后，旋又由政治学会继续在牛车水区主持另一次民意测验。两次测验的结果，均表明了这两个选区的绝大多数人反对当时的大马合并！

1972年，当我拟筹组一家银业公司时，仁贵毫不犹豫地与我联名申请注册，一俟批准就成为公司股东至今，已超38年。在这期间，凡在业务上遇有任何法律难题或困扰时，全由他协助处置与厘清，令我全无后顾之忧。

即使在他受病魔缠身而行动不便时，他仍孜孜不倦地为编写《情系五一三》一书而日夜操劳，甚至在临终前，仍眷恋和惦记着亲朋好友，曾数次广邀大家齐集他的府上聚餐叙旧。

仁贵秉性温文尔雅，平易近人，处事待人和蔼可亲。他生性重情义，淡薄名利，胸怀豁达，具有远大理想和崇高信念，常行仁义事。当他正踏入古稀之年时，不幸身染痼疾，药石罔效，几经折腾，饱受煎熬，痛于二零一一年六月十四日于世长辞。其高尚的人格和崇高的精神必垂楷范于人寰。

仁贵，安息吧！

在 Tanjong Pagar 的日子

—记陈仁贵参与领导的民意测验

甲生

在 Tanjong Pagar 的日子
就在那一天
华文教育和英文教育
三所高等学府学术团体
联手举办
一场民意测验

一场深入民间
关心民情的体恤对话
触摸民间的脉搏
征求他们的意见—
新马合并
是赞成还是反对？

在 Tanjong Pagar 的日子里
南洋大学的学生
新加坡大学的学生
工艺学院的学生
心连着心，手携着手
来到 Tanjong Pagar

到 Tanjong Pagar 来
到总理的选区来
到太岁头上来
穿街过巷
挨家挨户
登门造访
小贩，商人，三轮车夫
舞孀，妓女，知识分子
工友，小职工，失业者
三教九流，江湖好汉
一个个逐一攀谈
倾听他们的心声
感受他们的脉搏

到 Tanjong Pagar 来
从早晨到夜晚
街头巷尾
人头攒动
工友和路人，陪着学生哥
一路点头，一路拍掌
只是警察和警车
一路跟踪，一路拍照

阳光不见了
乌云出没无常
总理不见人影

执政议员低首不语
媒体报馆装聋作哑
便衣干探魅影重重

电台和报纸
都是总理的声音
从耳边到嘴巴
都是重复，重复再重复
新马合并的好处
为了人民为了民主
合并还有三种选择
只是不许反对不容异议

到 Tanjong Pagar 来
中英文源流的学生来了
义愤填膺的朋友来了
前首席部长马绍尔来了
律师 TT 拉惹来了
在野党代表来了
工会商团代表来了
农会乡联代表来了
外国媒体代表来了
热烘烘地聚集起来
要见证
这场 Tanjong Pagar 民意测验
结果揭晓

看哪，听哪
总理选区的民众
对新马合并的意见
像一道耀眼的闪电
明亮地划过天空
超过九十五巴仙的民意
一致反对
新马合并

呵呵，Tanjong Pagar 的日子
在阳光里
盛开
永不凋零

悼念仁贵

陈国防

2011年6月14日晚8时15分，我们敬爱的陈仁贵同学，同志与战友，在新加坡中央医院病危中，药石罔效，永远地离开了我们。噩耗传来，大家无不深感悲痛与惋惜！才在不久前，也就是5月14日，在《情系五一三》新书发布会上，我们还聆听他以多年来努力锻炼终于能运用自如的华语向与会者道出他与陈国相及孔莉莎共同编撰该书的原由与过程。当时那从容，诚恳与信念坚定，但有时又不失带点沙哑与微弱的声音至今犹如在耳，叫人深深不能忘怀。

擅长写作，又关心时事的他，在1962年是新加坡大学学生会学生报的编者。同时也曾经是大学社会主义俱乐部出版刊物《华惹》的编者。1960至63年，他被选为社会主义俱乐部的主席。这期间，正是新加坡自取得自治地位以来政治斗争最激烈与最纷扰的时刻。执政的人民行动党为了挽救其岌岌可危的政权，一边挖空心思，编造神话，企图把英殖民地统治者阴谋设计，马来封建集团暗自苟同的所谓“马来西亚”计划强加在新加坡人民的头上，一边又向反对党与异议份子展开规模空前的大逮捕行动，试图消灭异己与反殖力量。

这时，在以仁贵为主席的星大社会主义俱乐部的领导下，新加坡三所高等学府的学生团体，即星大的社会主义俱乐部，南大的政治学会，与新加坡工艺学院的政治协会联手成立了一个联合行动委员会，就当前纷纷扰扰的政治形势中的诸多课题进行客观的研究与探索。在他们展开的多项活动中，其中一项就是在丹戎巴葛选区针对星马“合并”的课题进行一项民意测验。这项民意测验的结果在前首席部长马绍尔，已故名律师TT拉惹，以及众多国际媒体的见证下揭晓时，有百分之九十五的该区民众对“合并”不表赞成。这项调查结果，向世人昭示了即使在总理的选区，反对“合并”的声浪都已经如此明显高涨，那么其他选区的反应会是怎样，人们应该不难作出正确的推断。然而，这个昭然若揭，不容置疑的结果，却迎来了官方媒体“一不知，二不提”的新闻封锁，妄图把事实真相加以掩盖，开了阴谋诡计可强势得逞的阴险丑恶先例。

1963年2月2日施行的所谓“冷藏行动”大逮捕事件发生之后，仁贵与一批代表当时最强大的独立职工会——新加坡职工总会(SATU)与南洋大学的爱国毕业同学在社会主义阵线的旗帜下参与了该年九月举行的国会大选。尽管面对实力已经遭受2月大逮捕行动重创的劣势，以及阴深的白色恐怖，左翼反对党候选人仍有13人中选，受到人民寄予的神圣委托。当时，仁贵仅以237票的微差，败给行动党的重量级人物拉惹勒南。而且不久之

后，还是逃不出魔掌，在内部安全法令下被捕，在未经法庭审判的情形下打入牢狱，至过了三年之后才获得释放。出狱后，他决定前往英国攻读法律，直至1970年才回返新加坡当上律师。可是1977年，他又再次成为当权者的阶下囚，不明不白地被关了3个月。

从小就爱阅读的他，博学多才，视野开阔。让他不期而然地在心中培育了强烈的人文主义情怀。这对他的人生道路与奋斗趋向产生了不可磨灭的影响。从中学甫进大学，身处在一个全球被压迫人民群起，为了争取自由解放与平等独立而展开激烈斗争的大时代中，他接受了社会主义思想的熏陶，应时代的感召，投身到反殖，反压迫队伍的最前列。在学运与工运中，大义凛然，发挥了举足轻重的领导作用，成为那个时代优秀进步青年的楷模。

两次冤狱的折腾，熄灭不了他心中那追求自由，平等与正义的烈火。忧国忧民的情怀，就是教他不能把国家社会中的不平与愚昧视若无睹。在他眼里，当权者对国家历史的刻意扭曲与掩盖令他愤愤不平。于是，他义无反顾，再次奋勇挑起要人们正确对待历史，还给历史真实面目的重担。于是，在他的积极推动下，广邀同道，收集资料，精心编撰，竭尽所能，把国家人民反殖反压迫斗争的原由，经过等来龙去脉编写成书。在他和同道的努力之下，先后出版了：《天上闪烁的彗星——林清祥在历史上的地位》，《我们的

思想自由翱翔--囚禁与流放诗集》,《“华惹世代”——大学社会主义俱乐部与马来亚,新加坡战后的政治》,《情系五一三——一九五零年代新加坡华文中学学生运动与政治变革》等书集。此外,不缺文才与想象力的他,也出版了一部诗集和一本短篇小说集。

编写这系列书集的工作,迫使他付出了无可估量的辛劳,给他的健康带来了巨大的耗损。多年前因高胆固醇造成的眼疾,导致视觉模糊本来已经令他的写作进程遭致重重困难,加上后来又罹患癌症,更使他的写作难上加难。是什么力量使我们这位敬爱的战友在那令铁汉都要折腰的逆境中坚持不懈,鞠躬尽瘁呢?朋友们都知道,仁贵格性温文尔雅,平易近人。可是,就在这亲切温顺的外表下面,蕴含着的是铁一般的意志,火一样的热忱。即然是干祖国的正义事业,就有决心把神圣的任务完成---相信这就是在漫长的写作过程中,他能以坚强的毅力跟病魔展开斗争,从不言弃的原因。

眼看着他把《情系五一三》新书的发布会在新加坡圆满结束之后,他便马不停蹄北上吉隆坡去办另一场发布会,接着,又赶到檳城去办一场。长途的奔波,身躯本来就已经虚弱的他,再次面临极大的损耗。但在另一方面,一路上各界对新书给予的热烈欢迎,的确给他带来无比的鼓舞与安慰。蜂拥上前来见面道贺,并给予大力支持的老雨新知,也强化了他的信心,让他感到无限的

满足与快乐。或许,在他心中,他已经知道他来日无多。或许,在他心中,他感觉他的任务已经初步完成。或许,他要做这次全马之行,是为了向各地战友做最后一次道别,是为了能最后一次踏上自己热爱的土地,呼吸着那里别一样的空气。现在,仁贵虽然是永远离开了我们,但相信他带走的是一颗完成了阶段性任务之后的喜悦与满足的心。不是吗?他参与编撰的几部分量不轻的书集不就是给世人昭示了历史的事实真相到底应该落在那里吗?偏离了正轨的所谓“新加坡故事”还有待作出好多好多的修正才有望世人信服与接受。还有,仁贵临走前的5月7日,在这块土地上,不是发生过一场李氏六级的震荡吗?熬过了黑夜,黎明还会远吗?仁贵,安息吧!

In memoriam: Tan Jing Quee

TAN KOK FANG

On June 14, 2011, our friend and comrade Tan Jing Quee left us eternally. When news of his demise reached us, we were all deeply saddened and overcome with sorrow for our loss. Indeed, not too long ago, on May 14, we had been glued to our seats listening to his speech at the launch of *The May 13 Generation*, a book which he co-edited with Tan Kok Chiang and Hong Lysa. The steady, sincere and sure-footed speech made at times faintly, with a tinge of hoarseness seems to resonate in our ears even now. It shall be remembered for a long time to come.

Skilled in writing and attentive to current affairs, Jing Quee was elected as the editor of the *Malayan Undergrad*, the monthly publication of the University of Singapore Students' Union in 1962 while he was pursuing an arts degree. He had also been an editor of *Fajar*, the monthly organ of the University Socialist Club (USC). In 1961/62, he was elected president of the USC. The political milieu of Singapore since attaining self-governing status was one of acute turmoil, as the ruling PAP, realizing that it was losing popular support, racked its brains to concoct myths to tarnish its opponents, so as to save itself from imminent collapse. It chose to conspire with the British colonialists who had conjured up the idea of "Malaysia", while also colluding with Malay feudal interests from across the causeway to force the Merger plan on the people of Singapore. At the same time, a heinous plan dubbed "Operation Cold Store" was hatched to try to arrest and demolish dissidents and anti-colonial activists.

As its president, Jing Quee led USC to form a Joint Action Committee with the Political Science Society of Nanyang University and the Political Society of the Singapore Polytechnic. As part of its joint study programme, they conducted a mass opinion survey in the Tanjong Pagar constituency which turned up a result of 95% of the residents expressing opposition to the official Merger proposition.

Jing Quee stood for the general election together with a group comprising leaders of the largest independent trades union then existing on the island, the Singapore Association of Trade Unions (SATU) and scores of Nanyang University graduates, including Chia Thye Poh. This was after the major round of arrests in the infamous "Operation Cold Store", carried out by the PAP government on 2 February 1963 which served to deplete the ranks of the opposition. Jing Quee lost by a narrow margin of 237 votes to S Rajaratnam, a PAP stalwart.

Not content with defeating him at the general election, the vindictive slant of the victor soon had him arrested and jailed without trial for some 3 years. He decided to go to England to study law after his release. In 1970, he returned to Singapore and started practising law. But in 1977, he was to be taken in again. This time it was for some 3 months.

A well-read man with a wide field of vision, he was deeply endowed with a sense of fairness and humanistic compulsions. This, together with his socialist ideals imbibed as an undergraduate was to act as a strong influence on him in opting for the road he took and much of his political inclinations. He readily answered the call of the times which were characterised by an upsurge of demand for freedom, justice and dignity across much of the underdeveloped world and colonies.

The torments of being imprisoned twice failed to extinguish the fire in him in his pursuit of freedom and justice. His concern for his country and people decreed that he could not turn a blind eye to the injustice and ignorance around him. He was indignant at the unfair treatment of Singapore's recent history as narrated in the so called "Singapore Story". This led him and his friends and comrades to start writing, to recall, revisit, retrace and even to re-evaluate events and characters in the not too distant past, with a view to giving the world as true a picture as they possibly could of what took place and why.

Thus, we are fortunate to see *Comet in Our Sky – Lim Chin Siong in History, Our Thoughts Are Free, The Fajar Generation, The May 13 Generation and The Mighty Wave*, (a translation of He Jin's original work) rolling out of the printing press within a matter of a few short years.

But as we can see, these efforts put in by Jing Quee exacted a heavy toll on his health. In launching what turned out to be his last work, *The May 13 Generation*, he travelled from Singapore to KL and further on to Penang. The intense activity during the trip plus the long distance traversed further drained his already feeble body. But his spirit was high as he derived satisfaction and delight from the outpouring of support and appreciation from friends new and old for a job well done. He probably knew deep down that he was approaching his journey's end; he probably wanted to use the visit to bid his final farewell to his comrades, or he probably yearned to step on that beloved earth he dearly loved for the last time.

I am sure that Jing Quee departed with a great sense of satisfaction and happiness for all that he had accomplished right up to his final days.

May you rest in peace, Jing Quee.

His place in history

G RAMAN

THE BACKDROP

Jing Quee was a product of his times. He was born in 1939 when the Second World War had broken out in Europe. Japan had invaded China. India declared independence in 1947 and after the epoch-making Long March, Mao Tse Tung made the rousing call to his compatriots in October 1949, "Rise up!"

After the War freedom movements were gathering strength everywhere. Sukarno ousted the Dutch in 1945 but the British colonialists resisted any demand for self-determination. They adopted repressive measures to destroy any organization that sought independence. Malaya with Singapore as an integral part did not escape the brutalities of colonialism.

Singapore was made a crown colony in 1946. Malaya with its 9 sultanates and 2 former Straits Settlement territories of Penang and Malacca, was ruled by the British as a separate Federation. Malaya was "granted" independence in 1957 but Singapore continued to be a crown colony. Singapore was too indispensable to be released from the clutches of the British masters because they had strategic bases in the island.

FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN SINGAPORE

1955 to 1959 was a period of intense political activity. The PAP which was formed in 1954, together with trade unions and student associations formed the vanguard of the movement for freedom. The PAP in its early days comprised professionals,

academics, writers, journalists and intellectuals, a number of whom were left-leaning. It was not long before the party was seized by the right wing and the progressive forces were destroyed. A key weapon used was detention without trial for an indefinite period. Some of the activists were exiled, trade unions and student bodies were proscribed and their publications banned.

Jing Quee was a student at Raffles Institution during the years 1954 to 1959. He was acutely conscious of the political forces at play and stood for an independent Malaya including Singapore. This was also the platform of the PAP initially but which it abandoned when the right-wing leadership chose to collaborate with the British. A measure of self-government was granted in 1955 under the Rendel constitution and in 1959 further concessions were extracted from the British. The PAP captured 43 of the 51 seats contested in the May 1959 election but total independence was yet to be.

JING QUEE'S POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Jing Quee entered the University of Singapore in 1960 and graduated with a B.A. degree 3 years later. While at the university he joined the Socialist Club, becoming its President and editor of its journal, *Fajar*. He wrote extensively for the journal, organized talks and forums and forged links with other student bodies. He was a voracious reader and plunged into the great works on philosophy, economics, politics, history and sociology. He was well-equipped intellectually to expound on issues of the day.

In 1961 the PAP went through internal party struggle. The left was expelled from the party and accordingly formed the Barisan Sosialis. The Barisan had the best brains and the

ideals which the PAP stood for at its inception. These ideals were betrayed by the right wing which went to ruthless extent to destroy the left.

The infamous Operation Cold Store of February 1963 saw the detention of Barisan's top leaders including Lim Chin Siong, Dr Lim Hock Siew, Dr Poh Soo Kai, James Puthuchery and a host of trade union leaders and student activists. Senior journalists like Said Zahari and A Mahadeva were also detained. The weak-kneed in the trade unions abandoned the workers' cause and collaborated with the PAP.

Despite the severe odds, the Barisan carried on their struggle and in September of the same year contested the elections. A number of the candidates were successful but some of them like ST Bani were detained even before they could take their oath as MPs. Chan Sun Wing escaped arrest and went into exile. Jing Quee contested in the Kampong Glam constituency, losing to S Rajaratnam with a slender margin of just over 200 votes. He would have trounced Rajaratnam if the anti-PAP votes were not split by a third candidate who polled about 2000 votes.

Jing Quee had to pay a heavy price for his beliefs. He was detained in October 1963. Only a rump of the Barisan was left but it continued to be active until 1965 when it chose to give up the parliamentary struggle. The Barisan's demand for convening of Parliament to discuss the ouster of Singapore from Malaysia on 9 August 1965 was not acceded to. The PAP only convened Parliament in December of that year because it had to pass the budget for the ensuing year. The system of parliamentary democracy was totally abused. The Barisan decided at that time not to lend credibility to this political farce.

JING QUEE'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Jing Quee was released in 1966, after 3 years in detention. Upon release he had to decide on what to do as politics in Singapore was dead. Singapore had separated from Malaysia and oppression was the order of the day. The people had become passive if not cowed by the repressive PAP regime. Anyone who dissented was a “communist,” “pro-communist” or a member of “the communist united front.” Whatever these words meant!

Jing Quee decided to leave Singapore and went to England to study law. He was in London from 1966–1970. London was a hive of political activity then. There were workshops, conferences, demonstrations and protests almost every week. Anti-apartheid and anti-Vietnam rallies were regular. 1967 saw the Tet offensive when the Vietcong almost overran the US embassy in Saigon. China had just launched the Cultural Revolution. Politics permeated all activities. The atmosphere was stimulating and to an idealist like Jing Quee, Wordsworth’s famous lines on the French Revolution would have echoed in his ears:

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very heaven.”

It was this milieu that Jing Quee found himself in. It was his terrain. He absorbed all that he could at a speed which Jing Quee was known for. He would have pondered during those exciting times what the future held for Singapore and what he would do upon his return from his studies.

As the oft-repeated saying goes, no one is an island by himself. We are an integral part of the society in which we live. People with a conscience recognize the contradictions

and inequalities that exist in any society. The braver among them will take steps to remedy these.

Jing Quee was such a person. His detention did not weaken him. In fact he became more resolute. But he devoted himself initially to earning a living and providing for his family. He had returned to Singapore with his bride and fathered 3 children. He had a successful practice and chose to retire after 30 years at the Bar. He wanted to spend time nurturing his “heart and mind” as he put it so beautifully in the poem he wrote upon his retirement. How many of us can release ourselves from the clutches of materialism and pursue nobler causes?

A study of Jing Quee’s life is a study of Singapore politics during the half century from 1960 to 2010. He was not only a keen observer of the political scene but an active participant. Retirement gave him more time and space to pursue his first love – writing on issues close to his heart.

He travelled extensively meeting people who had earned a place in history including men like Namboodiripad, the first elected communist chief minister of Kerala. He travelled all the way to Kerala to meet him.

History has a flip side. It is not what the oppressors tell us. The other side presents the stark truth.

It is the truth that Jing Quee chose to present in all the books he had written or edited. His short stories and poems have a social relevance. Even when handicapped by blindness and ill health, he pursued his goal of documenting history with great ardor.

People like Jing Quee perform a historical role. He may have functioned as a private person in his later years but he attracted people imbued with the same ideal – in establishing a more equal and just society.

Political agendas need a blueprint which provide a guide to action. Jing Quee's books which bear his imprimatur like *Comet in Our Sky*, *The Fajar Generation* and *The May 13 Generation* set history right. His untimely death has robbed us of a great intellect who had contributed so much and was passionate about contributing more.

It is up to us to carry on Jing Quee's mission so that what he has done would not be in vain. He fought a great battle, bearing tremendous strains. It would be apt to end this tribute with the closing lines of Pablo Neruda's poem "Song of Protest,"

"I exist not if I do not attend to the pain
of those who suffer: they are my pains"

Jing Quee, we promise to ease the pains and strive for a new dawn.

Remembering Jing Quee – The Socialist and the Poet

R JOETHY

When a good old friend dies, a part of you dies. Shared memories become desiccated, sequestered, and less dynamic. Most of you here today, will have cherished memories of our dear friend Jing Quee.

As Jing Quee's political contributions are well documented elsewhere and by other speakers today, I will try and confine myself to a personal reminiscence.

Let me invite you to walk down memory lane with me.

IN SCHOOL

Jing Quee, Raman, Aravindan and I were in the cohort of students who entered Raffles Institution in 1954. Those were tumultuous but interesting times. Malaya was in the throes of an intense anti-colonial struggle.

At Raffles, he demonstrated his flair for the English Language and there were expectations that he would emerge as a respected member of the commentariat or as a poet. He did not disappoint.

Some of you who remember him as a golfer may be surprised to know that he played soccer for the School's first XI. Jing Quee was not confined to school texts and the playing field. He read widely and intensely. Like many of his generation, his imagination appears to have been infected with a heightened sense of injustice and an impatient

yearning to change the world. The combustible spirit of the time consumed many youths in Singapore.

I remember persuading him to go for long walks from Bras Basah Road to Johore Bharu during school vacations, just for the fun of it. It was no Long March. We saw much of rural Singapore of the 1950s. A special political and personal bond was forged between two idealistic Malayan youths.

UNIVERSITY SOCIALIST CLUB BECKONS

Both of us entered University of Malaya in Singapore in 1960, Jing Quee doing Arts and I, Law. We joined the Socialist Club with alacrity. Jing Quee's passage to the club was smooth. He met Senior Gentleman, S. Jayakumar at a freshmen's tea and indicated that he wanted to join the Socialist Club. Jayakumar pointed towards Gopinath Pillai, the then President of the Club. The rest, as they say, is history.

Members of the Socialist Club tended to punch above our weight. Since its establishment in February 1953, the club took positions on numerous local and international issues. *Fajar*, a student journal, enjoyed a wide readership. Some people think that the Club had very limited support. The active membership may have been small but support was much more widespread. I think two members, Wang Gungwu and Philomen Oorjitham held the offices of President of Socialist Club and President of Students' Union concurrently. The Club's support in the student population depending on the issues fluctuated generally between 40% to 70%.

In 1959, the Club had conducted a very successful seminar on Malay as the National Language, which was open to the public.

I will try to give you a flavour of the activities of the Club in the early 1960s. The main political issue was, of

course the merger between Singapore and Malaya within the Malaysian framework, incorporating Sabah and Sarawak. I will recall from memory some of the other activities the club was involved:

Bukit Ho Swee Fire relief work, remembering the Sharpeville massacre, the visit of Ferhat Abbas of Algeria, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the installation of Moise Tshombe, the Enright Affair, Academic Freedom, Suitability Certificates, culminating with the resignation of the Vice Chancellor B.R. Sreenivasan, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and of course the Vietnam war. In many of these instances, we worked together with the Nanyang University Political Science Society and the Singapore Polytechnic Political Society.

"BASIS OF MERGER" FORUM

The Upper Quadrangle of the NUS (Bukit Timah) campus was probably designed to create a cloistered atmosphere where scholars in academic regalia were expected to communicate in hushed tones so that they did not disturb the other students studying.

However in July 1961, the Socialist Club used the Quadrangle to organise a forum on 'The Basis of Merger'. The hottest issue of the times was brought right into the heart of the campus. It was open to the public and a crowd of about 5,000 heard the views of David Marshall (Workers' Party), C.V Devan Nair (PAP), A.P Rajah (Singapore Alliance), S. Woodhull (Trade Union Congress) and Tommy Koh (Socialist Club). Jing Quee took the chair.

I will not detain you with the details of the speeches made. Tommy Koh made the important point that everyone appeared to accept the "desirability" of merger and that that

mind-set had to be changed. Was the emperor wearing no clothes after all? The official line then was the “inevitability” of merger, with the jingle “Malaysia, as sure as the sun rises”. There was also no shortage of jangle and a rumble of a gadarene rush could be heard.

In that historic forum, Devan Nair’s speech indicated a “parting of the ways” between the PAP and the trade union leaders. I think that soon thereafter, the Barisan Sosialis was formed. Some commentators accept that the Socialist Club played a useful role in the foundation of the PAP. Did this Socialist Club forum facilitate the foundation of the Barisan Sosialis?

Jing Quee led a fairly active life outside the Socialist Club. He was also persuaded to contest the Student Union elections in 1962. It was a keenly contested one and students were acutely divided, reflecting a societal divide in Singapore in general. Jing Quee ran for the Presidency and although we knew that it would be keenly fought, we did not consider vote-splitting tactics. In the event, he lost by the narrowest of margins. Perhaps, it was just as well, because had he won, he could have been detained earlier, together with Nantah student leaders who had their studies interrupted.

After graduation, he worked briefly as a journalist and then joined the Singapore Business Houses Employees’ Union. As you all know, Operation Cold Store in February 1963 was meant to decapitate the Barisan. In September 1963, General Election was called and Jing Quee stood against S Rajaratnam, the then Minister for Culture, in Kampong Glam. ST Bani stood against KM Byrne, the then Minister of Law, in Crawford. Bani won creditably, but Jing Quee lost by a little over 200 votes.

CONTRA-FACTUAL CONTEMPLATION

Permit me, the luxury of some counterfactual (and therefore odious) contemplation. Should Bani have met Rajaratnam at Kampong Glam and Jing Quee contested Byrne for Crawford? More importantly, why the split-vote over Kampong Glam? The candidate who split the vote garnered about 1200 votes was, I believe, a member or supporter of the Socialist Club!

All this is thoroughly irrelevant, but the point we may note is that in an election polling the First Past The Post system, you should get 50% + 1 votes to win. If votes are split, a candidate getting less than 50% can win. These are some of the rules of the game. However in the Singapore 1963 General Election, some candidates having won their seats against heavy odds, found no seats in Parliament but stone slabs for beds in detention centres. This is surely a unique development for parliamentary democracy. Jing Quee together with many of his fellow candidates and others were detained in October 1963.

JING QUEE RE-TYRES

After retirement from law practice in the late 1990s, Jing Quee travelled widely meeting all manner of people in various countries. He kept friendships in constant repair. Jing Quee also found time to return to writing short stories, poetry and political commentary. You should read *The Chempaka Tree* for apt descriptions of the country in the 1950s and 1960s. There was always an underlying story being told with a deft light feather touch, quite unlike the strident political pieces he wrote. His poems, particularly those concerning his family came in a charmingly endearing tone. Such was the man’s versatility with words.

THE LAST LAP

Having secured his and his family's comfort, he scaled Maslow's pyramid to reach the top – self-actualization. As a politician, he had to be political. He has inspired many young people in Singapore and elsewhere. He has written on politics, attempting to set a balance in published history. He has written prose and poetry despite his failing eyesight. Unlike Milton, Jing Quee did not give his daughter (or sons) hell. For Jing Quee, his children and grandchildren gave him Paradise (and sight!) Regained.

"FEARS THAT I MAY CEASE"

Keats did fear that he may cease. He died young. Jing Quee must have known in the last two years that he was losing his battle against cancer. He did not whine. He entered a phase of prolific writing, *The Fajar Generation*, *The May 13 Generation*, and translation of a Chinese novel into English. In all this, he was ably assisted by co-editors and friends. He self-actualised himself and did what he wanted to do. He worked as if he was "high". Indeed, he went off on a high note.

In all this frenetic activity, he was sustained by the love of Rose, his dear wife for more than 40 years. His children, May Yun, Boon and Jake and grandchildren gave him enormous pride, and joy. His siblings including Jing Hee and Jing Poi gave him exemplary emotional support. To all of you, you may have lost him physically, take some comfort that he lives within you and in the minds of his so many friends, both here and abroad.

The Wake

TEH SAW IM

The large wooden coffin lay shimmering in the middle of the lounge of considerable size. All the furniture had been moved back. What remained, were sofa chairs lining the walls on both sides of the enormous room. The family had put white drapes on the walls; in between, some of the dead man's collection of paintings came peeping through. They had been accumulated over the decades. Pictures of people and places, mostly in oil. Reminders and reflections of the taste of the man in the coffin.

The family had turned on the air-conditioners. In the background, there was soft music playing, mostly songs of the 60's, featuring prominently, the Beatles. I had not known of this interest in such songs. The realization dawned, that we were parallel products of the sense and awareness of those times. I felt an immediate consciousness of further connection. Also of loss. Regret that I had not sought to have learnt the man better.

When I arrived at the house on the first evening of the wake, I removed my shoes before I entered the building, took one step into the lounge, and with bowed head, stood before the coffin, where a small table had been placed. I lay a single white rose on it, next to the photograph of the deceased. There were a couple of wreaths, one on each side of that table.

After this, I offered my condolences to the family, especially to Gan Yin, the wife, a long-time friend. I had remembered how Gan Yin's husband had liked the cards I had always given him, from the time he was near losing his sight completely, to the last couple of years, when he had become

totally blind. JQ had always appreciated the cards I had for him, and had asked for them to be read out to him each time. I thought it fitting that I should write him one last card, which the family immediately placed on the table in front of his coffin, next to the single white rose.

In the following three days and evenings, as more eulogies were produced at intervals at the wake, people in attendance ventured forth, to inform others of their recollections and reflections of Jing Quee, or JQ, as he had preferred to be called. Always, I had seen him as my childhood friend's husband, a somewhat temperamental person, yelling at her unnecessarily at times, but soft and gentle on many other occasions. Both in everyday family life, and in writing love poems of her, to her. Rose (Gan Yin) is the oldest in a huge family of 11, always carrying a lot of responsibilities. JQ had been the oldest in a family of 7, someone the family had all looked up to.

As allocations of opportunities were provided for people to go up to the microphone, almost everyone spoke well of this man who had been placed in this shining wooden coffin, encased within a container with a glass lid, and placed in a central spot in the house. Many wishing to pay their last respects would proceed to either side of the wooden case to have their final look.

Mourning was calm, but the tears were frequent. That first evening of the wake, though I sat in the lounge within five feet of this container with JQ in it, it was not difficult to avert my eyes from the content within it.

Not long after I met JQ, I realised that much of his having appeared vexed at times, perhaps, had to do with his having lost the sight of one eye to glaucoma. He was also going blind in the other eye. He had been clasp at the final opportunities to see and experience as much as he could, of his

immediate surroundings, and outside it, with this remaining eye. Eventually, the haze within it too, disappeared, overtaken by a total darkness.

Those he knew realized his condition, and the range of handicaps he had had to grapple with. Strangers he met, initially, when he had been physically far stronger, saw a man inquisitive about his environment, and always asking questions about the interests of others – their pursuits, cultural habits and practices – constantly, wanting to know more. As his body weakened in the last couple of years, his mind remained eminently strong. At times, while in a wheelchair, placed near the beach, JQ might be asking some visitors to Singapore he chanced upon about their work, their customs, cultures, observations and practices. He could talk for hours with strangers. Some were even clueless of the totality of his physical disabilities.

At JQ's wake, his family had placed microphones just outside the building for those in attendance wishing to voice their recollections. As they spoke, others got to hear of his schooldays, his work experiences, personal relationships, times when he had helped others, and how he had given up his law practice in order to travel and see as much of the world as he could, with his wife. He wanted to re-visit places which he had been to, in his youth, and throughout his life-time. There was this necessity to explore and discover. Experience for himself, the many aspects every place had to offer, for greater depth and understanding. There seemed to be no limits to this thirst, this urgency to grab at every opportunity to expand his mind on yet more journeys.

When he was not away from home, he would be attending talks, whenever he felt that these would offer some intellectual interest and stimulation. He was particularly interested in politics, as well as all matters of history and

English Literature, though his fields of interest went beyond these, to art, and any subject that offered some form of challenge to the mind. He maintained that attitude, almost to his final gasp of breath.

There was an abundance of wreaths for JQ, with varying messages of farewell. One wreath in particular, attracted much attention. It was from a certain 'Tan Wah Piow', who lived overseas. It had a message hailing JQ as the challenger of despots and defender of human rights. It stood amongst many others which lined the driveway and the road pavement, but had caused considerable commotion with the message.

Together with these wreaths, there were blankets, with many Chinese characters, written with the customary brush in black ink. These were propped against some form of support, or hung along the walls of the lounge.

Within a number of condensed hours over the evenings of the wake, relatives, classmates and friends offered their depictions of recollections. It felt like I got to know JQ so much better through the tumbling forth of words of condolence appropriate for the occasion, but it was the multiple expressions of sincerity over the loss, which supplied the insight. Concurrently, came this realization of having missed out so much of the man, when he had been alive.

I wondered if I should go up to the mike, and speak of Rose, the wife he had often lost his temper with, because she knew best, of the frustrations he must have felt with his illnesses, but whom he had also loved so much. I felt that I owed it to my long-time friend, to shine some beams on her for a while, and focus some attention on the sacrifices she had had to give. I put that thought aside, since the main thrust of the speeches on such occasions of loss, were customarily renditions to illustrate the corresponding awareness of it.

They were a revelation of JQ's life, presented, almost within a flash.

In a way, eulogies do, of course, educate some on previously unknown aspects of deceased persons, alongside what is already known. During the requiems, as I listened to the speeches, I learnt of other distinctive facts of JQ. His activities, his beliefs, and what had transpired in his life.

Several people caught my attention. A middle-aged lady, who was asked to read out a love poem to Rose, was a little nervous at first. The slightly faulty microphone contributed to it somewhat. However, the poem was beautiful. Then there was this girl-like figure, with close-cropped hair. She seemed confident at the mike. Lysa was eloquent in what she had to say, though obviously overcome with grief, as she spoke of the past few years, when she had become good friends with JQ. She had visited JQ often, sat by his bed, and read to him. She reminisced about the immense sense of loss, and regret that she had not met JQ earlier, as he had had a powerful impact on her; also, of the last few years, spent in working with JQ, in writing and translating some works from Chinese to English. She mentioned the final talks they had given, travelling to Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Malaysia, before he fell even more ill than he already was.

Also overcome by the loss of someone dear, and very emotional about this, was Isrizal, a young Malay man, who spoke of how JQ had helped him and encouraged him towards his ambitions. It was evident that JQ was very tuned in, to the multi-faceted proceedings of society, and had participated in a consciousness of it. Another person who spoke, was one, among several Singaporean Indians. Initially, those who sat near the microphone looked up nonchalantly at Ravi Sharma, as he started speaking in English. He mentioned that Rose

had asked him to say a few words, so in an almost apologetic way, he continued. As soon as he switched to Mandarin, everyone at the wake sat up with a jolt, stunned into listening with complete attention. They had thought he was simply going to rattle out a couple of phrases in Mandarin, in a show of support to the family. Just someone who had probably picked up some expressions in Mandarin. However, when this speaker carried on speaking in flawless Mandarin, on par with any of the best, from China itself, every single person at the wake was overwhelmingly stupefied. Immobilised. In essence, he too, spoke of what he had learnt in life, through JQ, reflecting yet another perception of the man.

With each evening, as different reminiscences and words of praise were given, layers of the dead man were peeled back, for those in attendance to discover what was put to light of the man who had passed away. They were given the opportunity to acquire an entire spectrum of knowledge and understanding of the kind of man JQ had been. He had been totally blind, deaf in one ear, undergone several operations in his life, became almost completely paralysed, except for the movement of both arms, and was a victim to cancer, which ultimately took his life. Yet, he had lived life to the fullest.

Those who had been close to JQ and seen him experience all the debilitating afflictions, understood him far beyond what was spoken of, in the speeches and the discussions about him. This was especially so for the people who had cared and looked after him. Two girls from Myanmar, Kim and Celia had become very close to JQ and were very upset. During quiet moments, when there was a lull in the number of guests, Celia, who appeared singularly affected, would sneak up to the coffin, and cry inaudibly, each time, as she snatched some few last glimpses of her 'sir'. Celia, a name he

had given her, clasped in her hands, the gold chain her 'sir' had left her.

Throughout those evenings, as I listened, watched, spoke to people, and observed what transpired, I was all the more determined to put into words, the kind of person this enigmatic character had been. It was an undertaking I owed both he and Rose. I had got to comprehend a little more of him, in the last few months of his life, during the more frequent visits to his house. Yet, it was what had been unfolded during his wake, which opened up a completely new horizon. The least I could do a fellow writer, as he liked to call me, was to offer him what best I could give. Words. In writing, no less.

* * *

It was peculiar to switch on the laptop at 7:30 on the morning of July 16th, a month after JQ's death, to receive an e-mail from him. It felt like a voice from the dead. Rose was actually forwarding a You-tube recording. In it, the recording of her husband's talk, delivered shortly before his untimely death showed the significance of this last public address. I looked at the face, so alert, so focussed on what he wanted to say, and how he had expressed it. Those who did not know of his range of physical handicaps, need just listen to what the voice revealed, and watch the speaker's face, to see, hear and understand what it had to offer the audience, as he spoke of his experiences, and explained his undertakings in writing.

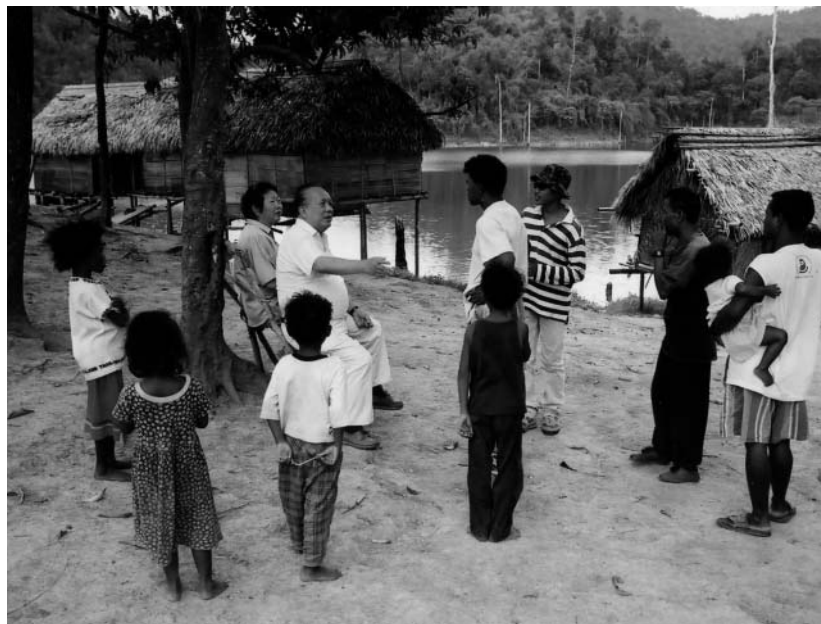
I felt an immense gratitude for the existence of the You-tube, and the connectivity of the web. However, as I stared at the face, and grappled with the smooth flow of words proceeding from the voice, there was this sense of loss of a most admirable friend, someone I wish I had got to know better.

Wherever he might be, he is probably smiling in satisfaction at a growing audience to his thoughts, that at least, he has left behind, some degree of literary legacy. Or, he might be thinking, how he wished he could have been given the chance to pursue further, that drive to present the many ideas he still had, and made more people aware.

Every story travels to the inevitable end. However, it is possible too, that the end of a story is the beginning to another.

*Dedicated to the memory of Tan Jing Quee
18.1.1939 - 14.6.2011*

'Every day is a journey, and the journey itself home.'
- Matsuo Basho, famed Japanese poet-philosopher



Jing Quee and Rose at the Orang Asli settlement, National Park, Malaysia

One of the nicest and most generous of friends

FRANCIS KHOO

Jing Quee was one of the nicest, most generous persons I have ever known. His self-deprecatory sense of humour – he was always laughing at his own foibles – was devoid of vanity and was just typical of that generation who committed their lives to building a just and equal society. I found this trait not confined to our people in Malaysia and Singapore. South African and Palestinian friends engaged in the struggle for liberation had the same child-like approach to life and, like Jing Quee, never betrayed bitterness.

Jing Quee was my senior at University by several years, but despite my very active involvement in student politics in the late sixties, I had not heard of him. I was not in Jing Quee's Socialist Club and was a naive liberal believing in the rule of law but lacking any in-depth understanding of why there was inequality and injustice in society. It was only in 1972, when I had just begun law practice, that I first met Jing Quee and A Mahadeva. We were on the editorial board of the graduate monthly magazine, "Commentary". Something about the two of them drew me to them instantly. In the course of the months ahead, I viewed them as my mentors in understanding how the world worked. It was only much later that I learnt they had been involved in our movement for independence. I am forever grateful I met them then. Maha died a few years ago; with Jing Quee now gone, our loss is inconsolable.

There is a dwindling band of friends who still perform the vital role he played. Jing Quee was the 'bridge' in three vital ways. Because the history of our people has only been written by the 'other side', the lapse of time and the separation of geography and community meant that our peoples' story would soon be erased from our collective memory. He sought to redress that.

He was firstly, the 'bridge' between the generations. I was a beneficiary of that. It was mainly through him that I had the privilege of meeting many of the patriots in the independence struggle. He also sought out the younger generation to learn from them and to share his experiences with them. His efforts meant that our idealistic youth could now have an alternative view of our history.

He was, secondly, the 'bridge' between the territories. I was also a beneficiary of that. Jing Quee consciously kept alive the links between the people on both sides of the Causeway. He believed in the unity of the Malayan people and that Singapore was an integral part of that people.

He was, thirdly, the 'bridge' between the communities. I was also a beneficiary of that.

He was committed to a non-racial society with Malay as the national language. He was fluent in English, Mandarin and Malay and kept close links with the three societies throughout his life.

A fitting tribute to his life's work would be the 'People's History' project in KL. Jing Quee was one of its architects and it would serve as a repository of the collective works and memory of our people's struggle for justice and liberation.

Throughout our thirty-four years in exile, Swee Chai, my wife, and I kept in close touch with Jing Quee and his wife, Rose, and his friends.

There was one episode that particularly touched me. I visited Malaysia some years back and he knew my health was failing me. With Rose, he met me in Johore Bahru and brought me on a week-long odyssey swing around the peninsula, starting eastwards through Kuantan in Pahang. We spent time in the east coast states of Trengganu and Kelantan, crossed the east-west highway, spent a night in the National Park, met some orang asli and saw my first Rafflesia flower in the rain forest. We entered Perak and then finally to Kuala Lumpur. It was an experience I will never forget and it had been years since I had the chance to travel in that fashion.

I last saw him at the 2009 KL launch of *Our Thoughts Are Free*, a collection of poems of our political prisoners over five decades. Jing Quee edited the poems, along with Teo Soh Lung and Koh Kay Yew, both former political prisoners as well. I have several of my poems and songs in it.

In one of them, I raised the question:
what is a rebel, what is a revolutionary?

"a rebel hates, a revolutionary loves
a rebel hates injustice, a revolutionary loves justice

a rebel attacks the singer and is deaf to the song
a revolutionary retrains the singer and rewrites the
song

a rebel sees red, all vision blinkered by the burning
grass
a revolutionary see the wondrous colours that is the
rainbow

a rebel asks 'why', a revolutionary, 'why not'?
a rebel sees the impossibility of today, a revolutionary
the possibility of tomorrow

tomorrow shall come when the rebel matures into a
revolutionary"

Tan Jing Quee was a socialist student leader, ran under the socialist party ticket in the 1963 general election and nearly defeated a government stalwart, was arrested and imprisoned for three years that year and then again in 1977 under the draconian detention without trial law.

Was he then, a rebel? In my thinking, he was much more than that – he was a true revolutionary, a great human being, friend, husband and father.



Jing Quee and Rose at the family home of Ho Piao's in-laws in London on 9 January 2001 with Francis Khoo (left, standing) and Dr Ang Swee Chai (seated next to Rose)

A Life in Poetry

TAN PECK LENG

Born of a father who...

*...braved the hungry seas
Sixteen
in rags
a little learning
Found a new livelihood
Practised an alien alphabet.
When war clouds threatened death,
... survived troubled seasons
Of gruel
tapioca
wild roots*

who, when...

*The family grew to new demands,
...forged new skills in testing times
Built shelves
cabinets for growing needs
Lavished fountain pens
stationery
books for birthday gifts
not toys;
Taught [them] to value essentials
Tailor meagre means to proper ends*

(To Each A Different Dream)

Jing Quee
Eighteen
in school uniform
did discern
the underside of Singapore...

*Dust covered street, almost deserted.
The trishaw rider waited,
Piles of laundry clothes on his tiny seat.
The grass-cutter stopped to wipe his sweating brow,
The road sweeper swept and chewed and spat,
The ice water stall lay open to the sun and dust;
The owner nowhere to be seen.*

*Perhaps he was there
With the brown uniformed men, the men in singlets,
Men stripped bare to the waist,
All dozing under the tree beside the street.*

(Afternoon)

May 13, May 28, USC,
Opened his mind, opened his heart
To anti-colonialism, nationalism, socialism...

*with dreams in [his] eyes
Merdeka!
[the] rousing oratory lifted the flame
in sharp, rising crescendo
Merdeka!
the cry resounded, reverberated
from Bukit Timah to Kallang
[they] marched, and sang for freedom:*

*pure of heart, stout in conviction
from Jalan Besar to Middle Road
[they] watched the liberated dove
spanned the open skies
garlands and fireworks exploded
celebrating peace, unity, liberty*

(LCS: In Memoriam)

But not for them the freedom craved
Manacles came in its stead...

*On the second day of February
thunder raged thru frightened streets
lightning blighted all lamps
once again freedom was enchained
hopes manacled, dreams outlawed*

(LCS: In Memoriam)

Not one to bow to tyranny
He took up the fight
In the unions, in the Barisan
Until the dogs of night
Came barking at his door...

*[He] saw them coming
from [his] window
overlooking the deserted street
the dim light shone listlessly
and the dogs had ceased to bark.
they came
flashing their torches
in this pre-dawn raid*

*to seek out the stairs
towards [his] incarceration.
Knowing at long last
they had come
waiting
hearing
the shuffles of ominous feet
the rude knock
piercing
the stillness of the night
and the opening of [his] freedom
to their identification.
“You know what it’s all about”
the torch framed [his] visage
they proceeded to rummage
[his] papers, books
turning [his] clothes
and [his] drawers
silently [he] turned to change
packed [his] towel
toothbrush
a cake of soap
silently [he] followed
the exit into the night
as the rooster awakened
to the first cry of dawn.*

(Fajar)

And so he became
Another ISA detainee
“What was it like ‘inside’?” you ask
“A difficult question,” he answered...

*Could you, would you really listen
Without sneer, to the end*

*How should I begin?
Should I start from the traumas of the raid
How liberty was so capriciously enchained
Without warrant, without warning
On the dark hours
When even dogs slept undisturbed.*

*You were hauled into a world ran amok:
The mug shots, ‘turn out your pockets’
the thumb and finger impressions
(Whatever for, I commit no crime!).
No one bothered,
The guard shoved you on,
Along the corridor of despair;
That first heavy thud of the iron door
Sealing you incommunicado from the world –
The wind, sun, moon, and the stars
And all that was human and dear.*

*Should I recall the dark cell
At Central Police Station
A purgatory of perpetual night
The stone slab for the bed
Sullied, soiled mattress, no sheets
The pillow of tears and stains, no cover
Blood smeared walls, cries of past agonies
The rude, cruel hourly rip-rap of the shutters
“To check your health”,
So it was explained.*

*Should I narrate
The daily bath at the tap
The squat pan, dank and putrid
Meant to dehumanize, humiliate.
Should we be thankful
For the daily ditch water
Which pass for tea
The stony crumbs for bread
The rice so callously tossed with dust?
Should we be grateful
For the censored books and news,
To decontaminate our minds;
Should we be grateful too
For the unbearable heat
The lonely insomnia of the day and night,
Migraine and diarrhoeic fever
And panadol as panacea?*

*How could I ever forget those Neanderthals
Who roam Whitley Holding Centre,
Under cover of darkness,
Poured buckets of ice water
Over my stripped, shivering nakedness,
Slugged my struggling, painful agony
Circling, sneering, snarling
Over my freezing nudity,
More animals than men?*

(ISA Detainee)

Three dark years
Could not break his spirit...

*[He] kept faith
Stayed the course, endured
Tempestuous storms of repressions.*

His name forever etched
With the...

*Brave men and women all,
Who pledged youthful idealism
To turn the nationalist tide for liberty.*

(For Chia Thye Poh)

To UK he went to study law
And from...
*The quiet nights by the fireside,
The gentle chats, brewed coffee*
Embarked on a 40-year Love's Travelogue

But even as May wove new colours into his mornings
And filled his evenings with her joys
As he fed the fishes with Hao-Yuan at the Botanical
Gardens
He could not help but note,
"The flowers blossom in controlled profusion."

His lot it was then
To tell the history that had to be told
For...
*Only when we open our hearts
Confront this barbarism
Can we truly exorcise our fears,
Finally emerge as a free people,
A liberated society.*

(ISA Detainee)

Comet in the sky
Our thoughts are free
The Fajar Generation
The May 13 Generation
The eulogies to
Samad
Linda
Ho Piao
Usman
Rajakumar
For...

*When [we] remember each one
[we] remember the common humanity of all
(For Chia Thye Poh)*

And as we remember you now, Jing Quee
We remember...

*There is a certain immortality
In your simplicity, your smile –
Pure, resolute, unyielding,
Mocking the tyrant's curses,
Such a smile as touches the heart, lifts the spirit
Of the humble and the brave*

*There is a certain immortality
In your tenacity, your courage –
Resolute, unyielding, pure,
Turning the wheels of solitary decades
Time, like flowing waters
Moves relentlessly on, never retreating,*

*Until an irresistible tide shall rise
To propel the human will to overcome.*

*There is a certain immortality
In your endurance, your sacrifices –
Unyielding, pure, resolute;
Like springs of clear, sparkling waters
Flowing thru rushing streams to unbounded seas.
(For Chia Thye Poh)*

*There is a definite immortality
In the mighty wave
You and the enduring band
Impelled
To set free a generation trapped in lies.*

A leader of his generation

TEO SOH LUNG

1977 saw the arrest and imprisonment without trial of at least 28 people (mostly professionals) in Singapore, under the Internal Security Act (ISA). They were labelled “Euro-Communists”. Those arrested included four lawyers. Among them was Tan Jing Quee. There would have been five had it not been for the inefficiency of the Internal Security Department (ISD). Francis Khoo managed to escape to London. The ISD then arrested his wife of barely two weeks, Dr Ang Swee Chai, a prominent surgeon, at the hospital where she worked. She was led away in the presence of patients and colleagues and interrogated in the cold room for several days. Upon release, Swee Chai left Singapore, promising the ISD that she would persuade Francis to return. They never did. Their lives as exiles was most difficult, made worse by the suspicion and distrust of their erstwhile friends.

The ISA has wreaked havoc and caused untold misery to thousands of families and friends. Family members argued over the guilt or innocence of those arrested or imprisoned. Friendships were broken as suspicion descended on those who were thought to have “squealed” or “spilled beans” on others. Those who were detained longer than others for the same ‘offence’ had misgivings about those who were released earlier. Till today, no family member or friend of political detainees has spoken of the trauma, hardship, sufferings and suspicion that they themselves have endured. They are either ashamed of their experience or are afraid that they would invite recriminations, including possibly arrest. Generations

of former detainees decided to protect their children by letting them live in ignorance of the parents’ past.

Jing Quee had often spoken of the sufferings of former detainees, especially the Chinese-educated, many of whom were severely tortured in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Many more were banished to their so called “homeland”. Jing Quee felt for them, their broken lives and that of their children. He was a biblical peace maker who conscientiously sought them out and maintained contact with them. Whenever opportunity permitted, Jing Quee would, like a good uncle tell stories of the past to the children. This year, with the publication of *The May 13 Generation* which documents the Chinese Middle School student anti-colonial movement in the 1950s, the silence of the Chinese left is broken. He had in his quiet, steady and sure way, brought together the efforts of the English-educated and the Chinese-educated left who fought to achieve independence but who, by a stroke of evil genius of a handful, had languished in prison.

In 2009 Jing Quee asked if I would help him put together a collection of poems by former ISA detainees. I jumped at the privilege. His eyesight was failing but his mind was razor sharp. His memory of dates and events amazed me.

Jing Quee knew that there would be questions about why the songs and poems of Francis were in the collection. Francis’ escape from Singapore was the subject of speculations by some of his friends that he was a government agent. They could not believe that he could slip away while others were arrested. Exiles and friends in London avoided him and Swee Chai. But they carried on with what they believed in. A few months after their arrival in London, Francis appeared on the BBC television programme *Price of Freedom*. He spoke about the arrest and imprisonment of his friends under the ISA. Subsequently, Francis and Swee Chai became deeply

involved in the Palestinian cause and founded Medical Aid For Palestinians.

Jing Quee's affirmation in *Our Thoughts Are Free – Poems and Prose on Imprisonment and Exile* of his friendship with Francis, his eloquent introduction of Francis, Swee Chai and members of his family brought a change in those who distrusted Francis. Slowly, they were reconciled with him.

In recent years, Francis would rationalise philosophically that while the escape overseas by Palestinians and South Africans from arbitrary detention cause jubilation among their friends and sympathisers, his own escape was treated with suspicion because Singapore in the 70s was a closed society. People lived in fear and permitted lies to fester. Repression and imprisonment without trial resulted in paranoia. His escape to England was considered incredible because people were not used to success in such endeavours.

Jing Quee's sensitivity and concern for his friends will remain appreciated. Ever willing to bridge divides and stand by his friends, he was decisive yet gentle. Twice detained under the ISA, he believed that there was a time for everything. He would not be hurried but when he made up his mind to do something, nothing could stop him. He was a leader of his generation.

Jing Quee, rest in struggle

JOMO K.S.

Almost four decades ago, in mid-1972, I met Tan Jing Quee and his longtime comrade Mahadeva after a discussion with some of Singapore's leading intellectuals then, including Chan Heng Chee, Tay Kheng Soon and others, at which I was a fascinated fly on the wall. It was indeed a rare privilege to learn firsthand from a protagonist of the student, labour union and other political struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s, who later became a victim of repression which the perpetrator had so eloquently denounced earlier in his political career in the mid-1950s. Although not one of the February 1963 Operation Cold Store victims, he too was detained without trial for several years from late 1963. Jing Quee and Mahadeva were later detained again, together with several others, notably Dr Poh Soo Sai, on new trumped-up charges as the ruling party was embarrassingly forced out of the Socialist International in the mid-1970s.

But soon after, US President Jimmy Carter's human rights advocacy (1977-1980) seemed to have had some success in Southeast Asia with the release of most remaining political detainees in Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei from the anti-leftist repression in the region of the early and mid-1960s. By the mid-1980s, a new generation of activists had emerged in Singapore, shaped by a myriad of influences and with little real connection to the earlier generation of anti-colonial activists of the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, the repression and the victims of 1987 on both sides of the Causeway were quite different from the 1976 repression, although the extent of

police coordination in the two episodes remained evident albeit reduced in the latter case.

By the 1990s, earlier efforts from the 1970s to record the role and contribution of the anti-imperialist nationalist movement – through the monthly *Nadi Insan* (1979–1983) and subsequent book publications on the independence struggle, student movements, Mustapha Hussain, Khatijah Sidek, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy and James Puthucheary – led to a new collaboration with Jing Quee, who had retired by then from his legal practice with Lim Chin Joo. Working with Jing Quee on the legendary Lim Chin Siong was indeed a rich learning experience for me – and I suspect for him as well, albeit for different reasons. Working with academics as well as Chin Siong's comrades, we published *Comet In Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong In History*, arguably the analytically most significant volume in the aforementioned 'series'.

As he became consumed by the project, Jing Quee explored the possibility of doing a doctoral dissertation on related subjects. Although initially encouraging, I changed my mind for two major reasons. First, a botched operation had deprived him of much of his eyesight while other health issues seemed to be plaguing him as well. Second, I was becoming increasingly critical of the academic credentials fetish consuming our society and culture, and also more cognizant of the unhelpful consequences of PhD requirements on writing history.

Jing Quee eventually developed a creative and productive research and publishing agenda which he had – almost miraculously – virtually completed by the time of his untimely passing. He led and completed important work on the historic role of the University of Malaya's Socialist Club (*The Fajar Generation: The University Socialist Club and*

the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore) as well as on the May 13 student movement in Singapore (*The May 13 Generation: The Chinese Middle Schools Student Movement and Singapore Politics in the 1950s*) in addition to publishing three anthologies of poetry (*Love Travelogue; Our Thoughts Are Free; A Gentle Journey*), a selection of short stories (*The Chempaka Tree*) as well as an English language translation of a Chinese language novel from that period he much admired (*The Mighty Wave* by He Jin).

To the end, he was conscious of and sought to overcome the cultural and political divisions between the Chinese educated and the English educated. In addition, he encouraged and supported other efforts by kindred spirits. In pursuing this programme, he remained loyal to his comrades, with some dating back over half a century to his secondary schooldays in the early and mid-1950s. He drew great strength from Dr Lim Hock Siew, Dr Poh Soo Kai, Said Zahari and others less well known. But Jing Quee also worked very well with others much younger than himself including Hong Lysa and Teo Soh Lung – for younger collaborators, he was like the young uncle one could relate to.

Passionate and committed to the end, he passed away after taking ill following the penultimate stage of a triumphant book launch tour for the May 13 and related books. He will be missed, not only for his gritty determination despite his failing eyesight and health, but also for his generous support for those causes he was committed to. Throughout, he was loyally supported by his wife of more than four decades, Rosemary Choong. And to the end, he remained a proud and devoted father to May, Jake and Boon, and in recent years, an indulgent grandfather to their children in turn.

Tan Jing Quee and a sense of history

HONG LYSA

At my first meeting with Tan Jing Quee five years ago, I did what I am sure fellow historians who got to know him all did—urge him to write his memoirs. Prior to that, I had read *Comet in Our Sky*, and attended the forum where Jing Quee and Michael Fernandez spoke about their detention without trial.

After ruminating for a week following our meeting, I wrote him a long email, explaining how valuable the insights about Singapore's history that he let us have a glimpse of in our conversation were; that he should write for the sake of posterity, otherwise Singapore's political history would remain impoverished for lack of contending voices; that he might even consider doing a recording with the Oral History Department, just as Dr Lim Hock Siew did, telling his powerful story without impediment, and stipulating that the tapes be accessible to anyone who wanted to listen to them. Or at least he should consider dictating into his own tape recorder, and keeping it until he was ready to release them.

Looking back, it was a naïve letter, written in the excitement of meeting such an informed, critically-minded and eloquent person, and knowing that his generation was getting no younger. Jing Quee replied in a polite email, professing that he was only a minor personality in the events of the late fifties and early sixties, and that his recollections

would not be particularly significant. Nevertheless, he would like to continue our conversation if I had the time to spare.

When I got to know him better, I realized a number of things from that reply. Firstly, his emails were brief and carefully-worded, as he had to rely on someone to type it for him, and was careful to be discreet. Also, when Jing Quee said that his role in the political events of his time was a minor one, he meant it. It was not false modesty. And finally, that there is no need for academics or anyone else to impress on him the importance of his generation writing their history. That was in fact his life-long goal. He built up, maintained and treasured friendships with fellow former political detainees and activists among the English-educated and particularly with the Chinese-educated, including those living in Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and a number of western countries. Accompanied by Rose, he travelled often to meet up with them. This was for the purpose of keeping in touch and maintaining friendships, solidarity and a sense of community, and also to learn about their experiences to strengthen his understanding of the complex larger historical picture. He had a remarkable memory, clarity of thought and a long-term perspective. He bid his time, squirreling information gathered from talking to people, collecting documentary evidence, reading widely, and piecing them all together in his mind.

It was through such a systematic approach, resolve and appreciation of his friends that Jing Quee wrote informed, warm and balanced obituaries for his friends Linda Chen Mong Hock, Ho Piao, Usman Awang, Samad Ismail and Dr MK Rajakumar. On a larger scale, but sharing the fundamental characteristics of these portraits are the books that he conceived and brought into being as editor and contributor: *Comet in Our Sky: Lim Chin Siong in History* (2001), *The Fajar*

Generation: The University Socialist Club and the Politics of Postwar Malaya and Singapore (2010), and *The May 13 Generation: The Chinese Middle Schools Student Movement and Singapore Politics in the 1950s* (2011). Jing Quee ensured that there would be a Chinese-language version for each of these publications.

Jing Quee had high standards, and in his assessment, the books, including his own pieces, could have been better had more time been spent on them, but he also realized the need to have the books out with all their imperfections, and let other researchers take the work further. He wanted to register the voices of the participants in the history under consideration, and provide an analytical baseline to re-look at the dominant narrative. Whether it was his poems, short stories or the history books, Jing Quee would invite critiques and comments from friends, but with the caveat that regardless how devastating these might be, he would not abandon the projects.

Jing Quee passed away knowing that political change was in the air, and with the satisfaction of launching the books on the Chinese middle school students. He had a good number of projects left unrealized, but then what he had in his mind would have kept him busy for another good twenty years. He kept purposefully busy and was somewhat restless when there was no one around to type for him, or read to him.

When Jing Quee woke from the emergency operation on his spine which left him unable to walk, he said triumphantly: 'My body is wrecked, but my mind is unimpaired and clear! I can still work.'

And work he did.

What kept him going through it all was the fact that he had a profound sense of history.

Remembering your name and your face

TAN DAN FENG

The launch of *The May 13 Generation* was held fifty-seven years and one day after the first large-scale student protests against the colonial administration in Singapore, a seminal but seldom-mentioned event in our history that eventually led to Singapore's independence.

The book was the first significant work on the Chinese middle-school students' movement in Singapore, and the launch, the first major public event to discuss it.

It was an impressive affair by any standard. Held in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce auditorium with refreshments for 500, the setting was grand enough to make one forget that the event, like the book, was the effort of a mere handful of individuals with an average age well above 60.

The protagonists sat in the audience, wispy-silver crowns and home-dyed curls replacing the crew-cuts and pigtails they sported half a century ago. Their faces stood out in their ordinariness. They looked like the grandmother at the playground, the shuffling retiree at the bookstore, the ex-Chinese teacher neighbour or the quiet relative at the wedding table; nameless faces that young Singaporeans instinctively address with a generic "uncle" or "auntie" when they meet.

Interspersed among them were unlined faces: Grown-up children bringing parents on a rare visit to town, activists tracing their heritage, budding politicians seeking causes to champion and political junkies looking for a fix barely a

week after the raucous campaigning of a watershed general election.

The proceedings were far from polished. Voices that had moved thousands at student rallies and political hustings two generations ago seemed rusted by the long silence. Some speeches meandered, sometimes excruciatingly so, and the tempo lurched and stumbled like the gait of a recovering patient learning to walk again.

Among the audience, the long-silent and long-silenced listened stoically, while younger members strained to hear and find relevance to their current and future endeavours.

Occasional moments of sharp clarity punctuated the three-hour event. Speaking from the floor, the widow of a former Barisan MP encapsulated why so many had come for the event in her plaintive plea: I don't want my grandchildren to think that we were the 'huairen', that we were the villains of the Singapore Story.

The ending of the long silence did not seem to have brought closure or catharsis as much as ambivalence and an unfamiliar feeling of having to now confront long-buried emotions. Perhaps there was also some sense of relief that a barrier had been breached that would allow more alternative discourses in the future.

The man I knew as Uncle Jing Quee peppered me excitedly with questions when he came off stage. He wanted to know how his Mandarin speech went. Independent of the government's calling, he had worked assiduously to become bilingual and bicultural late in life, building an impressive vocabulary of Chinese political and historical terms, not to win election votes or make money, but to help his mission of redressing what he perceived to be deficiencies in the telling of the Singapore Story.

That he was serious in his undertaking could be seen in how he eschewed emotive personal recollections and polemic

in his writings, penning instead studiously researched essays that could stand up to the objective scrutiny of future historians.

That he was selfless in his pursuit could be seen in how he initiated and tirelessly drove forward *The May 13 Generation* project, even though he was never directly involved in the Chinese middle-school students' movement.

Many lingered in the auditorium after the speeches ended. Old comrades who had managed to miss each other for half a century on an island of 5 million people and 700 square kilometres approached each other with hesitant smiles.

Do you remember me?

Oh. I know your face but I can't remember your name.

Could this not also be a description of how the nation has treated the generation that contributed the most to its founding and building?

I know your face but I can't remember your name.

And then, almost as if scripted for a movie, a palpable change in mood could be felt moving across the hall.

I saw a respected senior doctor grow silent in the middle of a conversation when someone whispered in his ear. I spotted a Cultural Medallion winner in his 70s execute a youthful skip of joy. A slow murmur built as iPhones chirped and mobile phones clicked.

Uncle Jing Quee was sitting in his wheelchair in a corner, unable to see the interactions going on but very much enjoying the ambience. I walked up to him and told him the news. I just received a text message – MM and SM are resigning from cabinet.

Without missing a beat and with a smile that could only be described as cheeky, my Uncle Jing Quee said to me: See how well our book launch has worked?

We will remember you Uncle Jing Quee. We will remember your name and your face.

Tribute to Uncle Jing Quee

SAI SIEW MIN

It is difficult to collect my thoughts about Mr Tan Jing Quee. “Friend” will be an appropriate word to use but Mr Tan Jing Quee was more than a good friend. He was an unusual friend and was more like a *zhangbei* or elder to me. In Singapore’s street language, he was an “uncle”. I call him “Uncle Jing Quee” but our relationship did not begin on such affectionate terms. In fact, Uncle Jing Quee protested initially against my calling him “Uncle Jing Quee” because that was how his nieces and nephews called him. I remember he said it would be “too affectionate” for me to refer to him thus but to no avail. I continued to call him “Uncle Jing Quee” – and his wife – “Auntie Rose.” It will not be possible now to remember him as other than “Uncle Jing Quee”.

We got to know each other because I am a historian who teach and research post-war Singapore history and Uncle Jing Quee was so much part of that past. Sometime in 2006, Hong Lysa and I came into contact with him because he wanted to talk to some historians. I guess we fulfilled this criterion. Armed with all my theoretical and practical knowledge on how to touch base with a potential “interviewee”, “informant”, “oral history subject” and what not, I remember approaching him very gingerly. I was eager to demonstrate that I was an ethical, sensitive and professional historian who knew how to handle a person with a delicate past. On hindsight, I do not think Uncle Jing Quee was offended. He may have been even amused by my initial clumsy attempts to play “professional historian”. With his signature light touch, slowly but surely, he

dissolved the infamous “researcher-informant” relationship that has been the subject of much academic angst and treatises.

There was no way Uncle Jing Quee could be “an informant” or “oral history interviewee” because his knowledge of history and historiography was fierce and deep, as it should be for someone of his intellect who had spent years and years rebuilding a unique relationship with his past. This would include rebuilding relationships with former colleagues, friends and political detainees as well as his efforts in tracking down and collecting documentary evidence. It did not take long for me to realize that with regard to “proper research” on postwar Singapore history, Uncle Jing Quee was miles ahead of any historian working on this period of our past.

Some of my favourite moments with Uncle Jing Quee were when he told what I refer to as “his Lim Chin Siong stories”. He had produced a formidable edited volume on Lim. Reading *Comet in Our Sky* satisfied my intellectual curiosity about Lim but it was Uncle Jing Quee’s “Lim Chin Siong stories” that made Lim a memorable figure. It was not simply Uncle Jing Quee’s penchant for details and his uncanny ability to recall people and places – such as his account of his first meeting with Lim at Middle Road which included a description of Lim’s demeanour and the tables and chairs in the room – he had a historical vision which often took me by surprise. Often times, Uncle Jing Quee will take a historical “fact” that the most critically-minded historian on Singapore history will accept without contention and point out, quite effortlessly, why it was simply “wrong”, that is, “factually wrong”. It did not take unearthing new data, sources or documentary evidence since all Uncle Jing Quee did was to point to the proverbial blind-spots of our official history. We argued about theories on nationalism, Malayan

nationalism, Singapore and Malayan historiography and then helped ourselves to huge lunches and sometimes, dinners provided by Auntie Rose. It was a fun and decadent way to do Singapore history.

There were several times when Uncle Jing Quee's multiple research/book projects tempted me and there were several times when we actually agreed to work together on a research/book project. It was not to be. My work and family commitments delayed the potential for cooperation and Uncle Jing Quee's deteriorating health and demise now made this an impossibility. In my upbringing as historian and scholar, I am privileged to have been taught and guided by several good teachers and mentors. I count my blessings that Uncle Jing Quee was one of them.

新加坡左派歷史重寫的 先行者—悼陳仁貴先生

潘婉明

6月中旬，從孔莉莎老師的電郵得悉Uncle Jing Quee的情況令人擔憂，但我記得她出國前叮囑我對Uncle住院的事裝作不知，好讓他好好休息。6月14日深夜將近12點，電話才響，我就感到不安，果然傳來噩耗。驚愕中，只對Aunty Rose說了節哀二字，腦海一片空白，竟說不出其他的話。當時我正在趕寫論文，已經告急了，卻呆看著電腦螢幕直流淚，和Uncle結識的記憶一幕幕地在眼前流轉。

我和丁輝是Uncle Jing Quee的「小朋友」。自2009年下旬認識以來，我們就一聲一聲Uncle的叫，開始很禮貌，後來很親暱，視為當然。那時他聽說有受中文教育的學生在新加坡做馬共/左派的研究，便輾轉傳達他想和我見面的意思。其實我和他有過數面之緣，在ARI的研討會或其他老左的活動場合中見過，只是當時對新加坡的左派社群不太熟悉，不了解他在這個系譜中的位置。不過我還是懵懂赴約了。

初次見面，我來到他的住處。他問明我的研究課題，也向我說明了他的興趣，關於馬共的起源、馬來左翼的作用，以及對萊特的各種疑問和

好奇。當時Uncle的視力已經很差，不能閱讀，但還能視物。他希望找到熟悉相關課題，又諳熟中文或馬來文材料的人，能跟他分享和討論，或給他讀點資料，我正好是這樣的人選。我很樂意，其時我也正積極開展論文的研究網絡，但他考慮到我是博士研究生，自己倒過意不去。

初識之際，往來算不上頻繁，只偶爾上門談話，或過府聚餐。僅只這樣，就有朋友善意提醒，我是持國立大學獎學金的學生，和左派人士交往要盡可能謹慎，因為他們一直在政府的監視之下，而我作為學者，不宜主動走進雷達，自我暴露。我沒有特別在意友人的警告，因為在那個階段，我和Uncle的交情尚淺，我不認為這樣和長輩見幾面能有甚麼問題。

2010年上旬，Uncle因無預兆的雙腳麻痺入院，隨即進行癌細胞清除手術。術後不良於行，轉入大巴窰太和觀醫院做復健。起初我不敢去打擾，後來才得知，他需要更多智性的討論和刺激來度過住院的時光。從那時候起，我每周到醫院給他閱讀中文的材料，每次約三小時。有時Uncle會提出他聽說的新書，讓我回去先讀，下次見面再給他讀序和作整體的評論；有時是我向他荐書，先唸目錄讓他挑選其中感興趣的章節。起初我不太了解Uncle的中文理解能力和他的期待，後來回想，還真多虧他的耐心，包容我長篇大論，反而見樹不見林。我發現他並不細究文筆辭藻，再拗口的長句也無礙於他專心聆聽，而後掌握文章的核心和大的方向。因此，每讀完一文，我反而能

從他言簡意賅的確認和概述中，更把握住重點，獲益良多。

Uncle出院後，我轉到他家裡給他閱讀，通常也留下來吃晚餐。餐桌上的家常，讓我對他們夫妻有更多的了解。Aunty Rose是很可依靠的妻子，也可以看出Uncle對她的依賴，但兩人的互動和諧、有默契，沒有因為一方臥病而有不協調。Aunty Rose對Uncle的無微不至也很令人動容，讓人看見她八面玲瓏以外的另一面。

我也漸漸認識到Uncle在新加坡左派群體中的地位。他雖然謙稱是「豆芽人」，但他卻是少見的、可以在不同源流教育背景的左派人士之間穿越的人。了解新加坡左翼概況的人都知道，受中文教育和受英文教育的左派人士鮮少互動，他們對彼此陌生，互不了解，偶有猜疑。但陳仁貴卻是華校生「信得過」的名字。我不知道這個「共識」是如何產生、何時開始的，卻有目共睹。去年在Uncle家舉辦的聖誕節晚會和今年的元宵晚會，與會的華校生少說也有四、五十人，盛況可見一斑。

除了在有基礎的信任關係下，或內部的約定，華校生不是其他人可以動員得了的。Uncle能成為他們願意結交的受英文教育的朋友，必有他可敬之處。在我的理解裡，他有聰明的頭腦，反應敏銳，有說服力；他也有廣闊的視野和寬厚的胸懷，不自限、不自私。他深知自己不是「五一三」的參與者，主持《情繫五一三》的編務稍嫌勉強，但他認為那是新加坡左翼力量最關鍵的肇

始，是不能跳過，也不能迴避的一段歷史。他執意翻譯《巨浪》（*The Mighty Wave*）也出於相同的體認，因為到目前為止，這本小說比任何其他體裁的文獻，更詳細地記錄了事發經過、後續在校園集中的情形，以及參與者的親身經歷和感受。因此，繼《華惹風雲時代》（*The Fajar Generation*）之後，他即刻著手「五一三」的出版計畫。

Uncle是新加坡左派歷史重寫工程的先行者。早在2001年，他就負起*Comet in Our Sky*（次年出版中文譯本《林清祥與他的時代》）的編輯工作，重新討論、評估林清祥的歷史地位，並向他在英倫留學時代的患難之交致敬。這些書籍的出版，儘管在各方面都未臻完善，卻起著重要的作用。它們是重啟歷史言路的橄欖枝，是抗頤官方論述的新論證，也是測驗政府尺度的試金石。它們鼓舞了沉寂多時的左派人士重新面向過去，也為新加坡左翼歷史的再闡發奠定基礎。

還在太和觀住院做復健時，Uncle就提到他準備寫回憶錄的事。他跟我聊起他擬定的綱要，談他人生中幾個重大的轉折，如何驅使他一步步走上左翼的道路。但為了爭取時間，他猶豫著要先著手撰寫個人回憶錄還是醞釀良久的馬來左派歷史探源。而今都成了未竟之志。

在苦悶的新加坡做研究，我有幸在他晚年和他結識，雖只短暫的兩年時間，卻是我學術生涯中最美好的回憶之一。Uncle，謝謝您留下重要的歷史遺產，願您安息。

Momentum and Bridging

ISRIZAL MOHAMED ISA

I had made an appointment with Auntie Rose to collect some copies of *The May 13 Generation*. She told me to pick them up from the hospital and that Uncle Jing Quee was not well. I thought that I should pay him a visit. This was just six days before he passed away. As I was about to leave my house, a call came from Teo Soh Lung. I told her I was on the way to the hospital to visit Uncle Jing Quee and collect some books. I asked if she would like to come along.

We had no idea that that would be our last meeting. At the hospital, I saw that his health had taken a turn for the worse. Probably the launch tour of *The May 13 Generation* which ended in May this year, had taken a toll on his already frail health. It seemed to me that he must have gathered all his strength and will to be present at the launches on both sides of the Tebrau Straits. This was the man I had come to know in his later years. Although his body may have been weakened considerably in the later phase of his struggle, his mind was always sharp and his will to see through the different projects he had taken on was something I had always respected. If he was not able to finish a project, he was not failed by his commitment.

Those trips back and forth across the Straits certainly held a special and deep meaning for him. Until the end, he held on to his ideals that started him on his chosen path though tempered by the ever-changing circumstances around him. Trawling through the online newspaper archives, I came across one of the earliest mentions of Tan Jing Quee – an article

in March 1961 that carried news of him speaking as chairman of a conference on anti-apartheid. The conference was to be jointly organized by the University of Malaya Socialist Club and The Singapore Polytechnic Political Society to mark the first anniversary of the Sharpville Massacre. Not only was he concerned about interracial and intercultural bridging in the international scene, I believe that such concerns remained with him throughout his life when reflecting on Singapore and Malaysia.

“What lay at its core was a form of politics that gathered momentum by bridging, rather than by seeking to surmount difference,” wrote historian T N Harper on Lim Chin Siong and left wing politics in Singapore. I guess Tan Jing Quee was very much the embodiment of that bridging. To him, it was a never-ending project to know and understand the past in its relation to the future. I came to realize this very early in our conversations. Auntie Rose would call me at least once a month to their home. I would read to Jing Quee Malay or English texts since he had lost much of his sight earlier on. Many of the texts revolved around political and cultural figures. Some he knew personally, others he knew through friends, books and other sources. At the same time, we would have wide-ranging conversations from what the younger people are up to nowadays, issues surrounding the Malay community, activism here and around the world, and so on.

On a few occasions he would speak to me about Lim Chin Siong and his other comrades. This helped me better understand the circumstances of that period. “[G]athering momentum by bridging” certainly required much selfless effort and it needed time. The situation then did not permit this. Surmounting differences was an easy way out and the oppressive tools were conveniently there within easy reach. Often I noticed the change in his voice as he went further

along in these conversations about his comrades.

More than once, he told me that he could have been a scholar of sorts and I believed he could have. He had caught the bug of reading and writing from early on. He told me that among his earlier choices was to pursue further studies in Indonesia. Instead, he took up the call to join the trade union movement, partly after seeing the sacrifices made by comrades who were detained. He valued dearly his friendship with these comrades, second only to his family life. Early retirement afforded him more time for his intellectual pursuits. Much of the sustenance behind the book projects such as *Comet In Our Sky*, *The Fajar Generation* and *The May 13 Generation* was drawn from that deep well of friendships he had tended throughout his life. In our conversations, he would always give his unreserved respect to those whom he felt, had suffered the most from the struggle.

Uncle Jing Quee chose to embark on these projects with those who share his view that the shaping of future history needed consistent re-evaluation of the existing past, not just the stories of those who were there but especially re-evaluations of such events from those who had actively participated in that very process of history-making. There was much I had learnt, just by observing from a distance the different facets of a project in the making. I knew that I was very much a privileged observer especially in the instance of the creation and development of *The May 13 Generation* book. One of his fellow editors on that book was Hong Lysa, whom I became aware of in the initial stages of my friendship with Uncle Jing Quee, as someone who had already been working with him in various capacities. Uncle Jing Quee had published several articles as tributes to a few important figures from the political and cultural spheres of the independence struggle, on an open, free and multi-disciplinary e-journal,

s/pores, that Lysa had started among academic friends. *s/pores* is an important endeavor in terms of using newer media to reach readers beyond the rigidity of the academic publishing world. From this, it reaffirmed to me my understanding of him as the ardent facilitator continuing the spirit of bridging to gather momentum.

On the first day of his wake, my partner and I made our way to their house. Slowly, we made our way to pay our last respects to him. Upon entering their house, my first action was to go up to Auntie Rose and hug her tight. As I hugged her, she softly said, “Rizal, you lost your friend. Your good friend.” It was only then that I turned around to face him lying there and it finally hit me. Yes, I have lost a good friend and a great comrade to many.