

15 – HONG KONG AND SINGAPORE

Continuing along the path, we approached the 'first-class' waiting room of the railway station, in which we saw long-haired Hong Kong lads dressed in jeans and tee-shirts. Then, out on the platform, an elderly Chinese lady approached us, offering cans of Coca-Cola and other soft drinks, which she carried in a bucket. Shaking her off, we clambered aboard the train. Before doing so, I took one last look back towards the bridge. On top of the waiting-room building flew the blue Hong Kong flag with the Union Jack in the corner. Just behind it, on the other side of the border, flew the red flag of the People's Republic of China, the country where time and 'progress' had effectively stopped. Would I ever return? It would be interesting to go back in ten years' time in order to see what it would be like then, I thought.

I tore myself away from the scene and entered the smart carriage. Inside, an elderly man who spoke broken English asked me to buy some soft drinks, which he had on a trolley. Like the woman outside, he was very insistent.

Shortly afterwards the train began its journey to Kowloon, originally a city but now a district of Hong Kong (*Hèung Góng* in Cantonese, meaning 'Fragrant Harbour'). The scenery changed considerably, for here everything seemed to be on a much smaller scale. We sped past modern buildings, villages, and dramatic wooded mountains. By contrast to what we had seen in mainland China, everything looked very prosperous. Suddenly we saw high-rise buildings and passed over the main street of a very busy modern city. Later we saw more mountains, then the sea and various islands.

Sitting next to me and Frank Cahill were two middle-aged French ladies, with whom I spoke in my rather limited French. One of the ladies had been in mainland China twice, had enjoyed herself there, and described the people as '*très gentils*'. She thought very highly of the country.

As we neared our destination, the countryside quickly gave way to white high-rise buildings; they were everywhere, even clinging to the mountainsides. We were now in Kowloon – a sea of concrete. After a few minutes, we stopped in a large modern railway station, packed with prosperous-looking people dressed in colourful Western clothing. Here the girls wore mini-skirts, used makeup, and were very figure-conscious. By contrast with what we had been seeing, everything looked cheap and gaudy.

Led by a young man, we hastened through this throng of humanity and walked to the entrance of the station. Outside, where we waited for a coach,

we saw rows of orange-coloured taxis, with bored-looking drivers sitting inside them. After a short delay, our coach arrived, and we clambered aboard. Inside it was blissfully cool, for the coach was air-conditioned.

Off we set and drove slowly along wide roads jammed with traffic. At first we travelled along Kowloon Bay, which was full of small boats. We then turned inland, where we were surrounded by high-rise buildings. When we noticed washing hanging out of the windows, we realized that these were apartment blocks with shops on the ground floors. This was how they managed to squeeze four and a half million people into such a small space.

We eventually left the highway and entered a warren of narrow streets poked in between the high-rise buildings. Large, gaudy signs, of all shapes and sizes, with text in English, Chinese, and Japanese, protruded from over the shops and met in the middle of the streets, almost excluding the daylight.

At last we stopped in Kimberley Road, beside a huge 'glass box', which housed the Hotel Miramar. It was only when we stepped out of our coach with its sealed windows that we realized how noisy the place was. Like the other streets we had driven through, this one was full of shops and large, gaudy signs. A particularly large one, surrounded by rows of bulbs, hung outside a restaurant, informing customers that it had 'sophisticated topless waitresses'.

Our hotel, approached from a complex of shops on the ground floor, was very large and vulgar. We waited in the lobby for our luggage, and were given the numbers of our rooms. When the luggage arrived, Christopher and I dragged our bags and suitcases into one of the many lifts and ascended to the sixth floor, where we found an unmanned reception desk. A large sign, written in English and Japanese, informed us that we must only receive keys from one of the authorized attendants, and instructed us to ring the bell for service. A message on a box with a narrow slit requested us to deposit our keys in it when leaving the hotel. We rang the bell and an eager Chinese lad appeared. When we asked him for our key, he produced keys of his own, unlocked the back of the box, and extracted the key for our room. He then fussed over us, insisting that he carry our cases to our room and, when he had done so, hung around and repeatedly told us that should we require any assistance, we should not hesitate to call him. We soon got the message; Christopher found two British coins in his pocket and gave them to the young man. The fellow seemed to be reasonably satisfied, though he left without thanking us.

Our room was large, very luxurious, comfortable, and air-conditioned. It contained two single beds, a smart bathroom, a radio, a colour television, and a flask of iced water. No tea or slippers here!

On the inside of the door was a special catch which, when the door was shut, acted as a very effective lock. When I opened the door of the cupboard, I found a notice printed in English and Japanese. At all times, I read, we were to keep the door locked when in the room, and at no time – even for a few moments – were we to leave the door open or unlocked when out of the room. Again we were reminded to leave the key with the attendant, and were warned to beware of touts, pickpockets, and people attempting to impersonate members of the staff. Any suspects were to be reported to the hotel staff or police.

As it was about one o'clock by now and we were hungry, Christopher and I decided to get something to eat. In order to exchange money, we went to the reception desk in the lobby, but as Christopher thought that the rate was low, we walked out of the building and down the road to a small bank, where some good-looking girls in blue uniforms served us. I exchanged a £20 travellers cheque at the rate of about HK\$7.79 to the pound. I would discover that it would cost me this amount of money to survive here for just one day. On our way back, a salesman stepped out of a clothes shop and invited Christopher to come inside and try on something. Ignoring him, we returned to the hotel and decided to get a simple lunch in the ultra-modern coffe bar, complete with palm leaves and piped Western pop music.

We sat by the window and were served by a slim young man dressed in a green uniform. For about £1 we had sandwiches with salad and tea. The waitresses in green jackets and mini skirts were slim and lovely-looking, though most of them looked cheerless and bored.

We then returned to our room and later went out for a walk. In a photographer's shop nearby, where I was served by an attractive but very bored-looking girl, I purchased two Kodachrome ciné films for about £3 each. We strolled around the nearby streets, which became rather tedious after a while. Here and there we saw copies of *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *Mayfair*, *Men Only*, and various Japanese pornographic publications openly displayed on stands outside magazine shops.

On we went, passing shops, shops, and more shops. We encountered beggars, suspicious-looking characters, dropouts, drug addicts, and drunkards; all the time we had the roar of traffic in our ears, and were surrounded by high-rise buildings.

Following Kimberley Road, we walked round in a semicircle, ending up in Austin Road, which eventually brought us down to the waterfront and the vehicular ferry that went across to Hong Kong Island, just a mile away. It was even busier here. By now the sun had come out and, although it was misty, it had become uncomfortably hot. Here, near the ferry, we came across a filthy-looking Chinese dropout with long, greasy matted hair and dirty skin, who wore just a sack around his middle, and who was sniffing around in

dustbins, like an animal. As we looked out over the bay, a well-dressed Chinese young lady, smoking a cigarette and either drunk or high on drugs, gazed around vacantly and fell against me, muttering 'Hello'. Not far away we saw a fellow with about fifty empty shopping bags tied around his neck.

Leaving this area, we went down narrow alleyways lined with old-fashioned shops, which were situated on the ground floors of yet more high-rise apartment blocks. The alleyways were hardly wide enough to allow two vehicles to pass, and were full of rather dodgy-looking characters. I was glad to leave this area and walk up another street, where we went into a large, slick clothes shop. Here Christopher bought a colourful pair of swimming togs from a bored salesgirl. All the shop assistants we had seen so far looked fed up, and some had their heads buried in their arms on the counters. This lassitude may have been caused by the suffocating afternoon heat.

Just outside the clothes shop, a half-dressed and long-haired fellow, with a swollen and bright red stomach, rolled about on the ground, groaning in agony, and a crowd of well-dressed youths gathered to stare. Ambulance men then arrived with a stretcher, and bore the man and his belongings away. Across the road was a large and luxurious cinema, where young men and women were queueing to see what looked like an extremely violent and bloodcurdling Chinese film.

By about five o'clock I had wearied of all this; I was sweating, my feet were sore, and my head was throbbing with the unceasing noise of traffic. I left Christopher and walked back to our hotel, which fortunately was not too far away. I rested in my room for a while, watching snatches of television programmes on various channels. There were a couple of English-language channels that showed American movies – on one of them I saw the popular children's programme *Sesame Street* for the first time. The Chinese channels transmitted excellently-produced programmes, which were interrupted at regular intervals by advertisements.

As Christopher had made an arrangement to go out for a meal with some of the other lads in the evening, and as I was not particularly interested in joining them, I stayed indoors. However, at around seven o'clock I went down to the hotel entrance and tried to make up my mind as to which restaurant I should try for my evening meal. As they all looked expensive and I did not know what I should do, I was delighted when the Brennans, Paddy Flanagan, and Frank Cahill appeared. Paddy advised me to stick to the coffee bar for dining, as it was the cheapest. Frank decided to join me, and together we went in for a meal. I attacked a beefburger, served with salad, crisps, and tea, and for dessert I had pancakes and ice cream. The meal was quite adequate and cost about £2.75.

Afterwards, I returned to my room, and the others went off to savour the pleasures of Hong Kong Island, with its gaudy lights, floating restaurants,

casinos, striptease clubs, and other dubious forms of entertainment. While I wrote my diary, I half watched some Chinese programmes on the television; one of them, a detective film, portrayed the nightlife of Hong Kong. In a variety show, which was very European in style, a young Chinese lady sang excellently in English. Later I watched an American film, with Chinese subtitles, about buried treasure off a Greek island.

I then climbed into bed, where I watched an episode of the BBC series, *The Pallisers*. At midnight I turned out the light and drifted off to sleep.

So, this was the Hong Kong that everyone raved about and said was so beautiful. I would see about that tomorrow morning, for Christopher and I had planned to go on a coach tour around Hong Kong Island.

I heard Christopher returning at about 4 a.m. – he had been ‘out with the boys’ all night, wining and dining.

I woke some three hours later, had a shower, and went up to the Ondine dining room: a slick, blue, futuristic place that afforded a panoramic view of the high-rise buildings, the mountains, and the sea. Here I breakfasted on orange juice, toast, lightly-fried eggs, and ham – all washed down with tea. Afterwards I returned to the room, where I urged Christopher to hurry, and at 8.30 we booked our tour of Hong Kong Island, which cost HK\$40 (about £5). As Christopher had borrowed this amount from me yesterday evening, he changed more money and paid for me. He then went off for breakfast and I waited.

At nine o’clock an attractive Chinese girl, dressed in a tight red blouse and black slacks, approached me and, having ticked my name on her list, told me that we would be leaving in about ten minutes’ time. Christopher appeared just as we were about to set off. Some Americans joined us and we boarded a coach out in the street.

Inside the coach it was pleasantly cool. We now drove through the narrow streets, picking up more people here and there. We then made our way across to Hong Kong Island by driving through a long tunnel under the sea.

On the island we encountered more high-rise buildings and noisy traffic. Our first stop was Tiger Balm Garden, on the side of a mountain. We clambered out of the coach and entered a bewildering maze of hideous statues, supposedly Chinese buildings and pagodas, all made of concrete and painted in bright, vulgar colours. Despite the appellation ‘Garden’, there was not a plant to be seen. This dreadful place was dreamt up by a Burmese man named Aw Boon Haw (1882–1954), who had founded factories to manufacture his famous Tiger Balm ointment and other herbal remedies. Although the ointment was available to buy in the gift shop, I opted for three Chinese dolls on sale for just HK\$10 each. As it began to rain, I was glad to leave this dreadful place after our allotted twenty-five minutes.

Next we headed for Victoria Peak at the west end of the island. A young man gave us a running commentary on the various so-called points of interest that we saw from the windows, which I found quite uninteresting. As we climbed up the Peak, overlooking high-rise buildings, hills, and the sea, it became very misty. By the time we arrived at the Peak Tower, where it was raining heavily, we could see nothing.

From here we drove to the south of the island, where we overlooked Repulse Bay, which was lined with yet more high-rise buildings. We stopped in Deep Water Bay, where refreshments were available. Ignoring these, I sheltered under the trees and had a look around. The place must have looked beautiful a long time ago, but now it was spoilt by the modern buildings. A few people were bathing in the water, despite the rain and coolness. We stayed here for twenty minutes; once again I was glad to leave. The Americans on the coach were not very friendly and expressed no opinions about anything.

We then stopped at a fishing village, where we saw hundreds of grubby-looking sampans on the water, in which people lived. While looking at them, we were pestered by children who constantly demanded money from us. Afterwards, when we were back in the coach and climbing up a hill, we saw a more distant view of the sampans and the floating restaurants, which were large and gaudy edifices built on boats and covered in electric light bulbs. Later, as we worked our way back to the north of the island, we passed through the town of Aberdeen, which contained more high-rise buildings.

As we journeyed northwards, new high-rise apartments were pointed out to us by the guide, as well as large modern houses owned by the rich. We then passed miserable shacks on the mountainsides where poor people and refugees from mainland China lived. Many of these refugees had swum or travelled in small rickety boats to escape from Communist China, and many people had perished on these dangerous journeys.

Returning to Kowloon was rather slow as the traffic was so heavy. Once again we drove through the tunnel and stopped to leave people at their hotels. Nobody gave our guide a tip, which I thought was a shame as he had put so much effort into keeping us informed. He had apologized for the poor weather and had done his best to keep our spirits up. Christopher and I gave him something when we arrived at our hotel. I was glad to be back, for I felt that the tour had been a waste of time and money. However, it had given us something to do in the morning.

It was about 1.30 p.m. when we returned to our room. When we went down for some lunch, I changed £4 sterling and bought two more Chinese dolls in a smart shop within the building. 'What would you like to buy with your change, sir?' I was asked when I paid for them. I used up the remainder of my money on the lunch: a large sausage roll with salad and a glass of 7-

Up. It felt strange eating Western food using knives and forks once again; I had come to the conclusion that genuine Chinese food, eaten with chopsticks, was far more tasty and nourishing.

Back in our room, we got ourselves ready and prepared to leave. I had felt a sense of achievement on arriving in Beijing; I now felt a sense of relief on leaving Hong Kong. Although China must have been like Hong Kong a long time ago, and her people must have suffered terribly during more recent times under Communism, I had felt much more at ease in the country than I had felt here in Hong Kong.

We all assembled in the lobby and left at 2.30 p.m. by coach for the airport, which we reached by 3 o'clock. The huge terminal building was situated by the sea. After we had waited for a while in the crowded departure area, we went through security, which was very strict. My hand luggage was searched thoroughly, and I had to remove all metal objects from my person, then walk through a metal detector. My musical instruments were unpacked and examined, then put back quickly and efficiently.

Afterwards we proceeded to one of the departure gates, where we waited for some time. We then went outside to a waiting bus and were driven to our Cathay Pacific plane, where we were shown to our seats. I sat between Miss Neylon and a very sleepy John, who clearly was suffering from the after-effects of the previous night and early hours of this morning. One of the places he and his pals had visited was a restaurant with topless waitresses, who had pestered the lads to buy them drinks and spend money.

We finally took off at 4.40 p.m., zooming along a runway which, because of the lack of space, jutted out into the sea. Goodbye, Hong Kong! I had no desire to return.

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Our flight to Singapore lasted three and a quarter hours. The service on our Cathay Pacific flight was excellent, and all our food and drinks were supplied free of charge. As a result, certain members of our group drank too much alcohol and became rather noisy, which disturbed other passengers. As usual, Christopher's voice dominated, and he was asked to keep quiet. The food was excellent and the menus were beautifully printed. A flight chart, together with details and a certain amount of technical information was passed around, with the compliments of the captain.

We set our watches back thirty minutes and arrived at 7 p.m. in a large modern airport. As we said goodbye to our pleasant hostesses and stepped out of the plane, a wall of dry heat hit us. Within minutes we were all sweating. After a short delay in the airport, we were led to an air-conditioned coach that awaited us outside. During our drive to the Ming

Court Hotel, our pleasant young courier introduced himself and told us about Singapore. He mentioned that Singapore consists of one large island and fifty-four small islands, and is situated off the south coast of Malaya and eighty-five miles north of the equator. Malay is the national language and English is the language of business; while most people are bilingual, many speak four or five languages and/or dialects. Because of Singapore's position, so close to the equator, it is always hot and there is very little change in the weather. Our guide finished by recommending a tour of the city tomorrow morning, which many of us decided to take. When he finished speaking, he sat beside me and we chatted for the rest of the journey.

From the windows of the coach, the city looked quite modern, with tall buildings and wide roads. It certainly looked more civilized than Hong Kong, for there was space for parks here and there, and trees lined the roads. It all looked very clean.

We arrived at our hotel at about nine o'clock. Although it was a large, slick hotel, it felt more homely than the one in Hong Kong. In the lobby a European lady was playing a grand piano and crooning into a microphone for the entertainment of the guests. After we had checked in, we gathered round a handsome Indian man with shining teeth, who welcomed us to the hotel, gave us envelopes containing the keys to our rooms, vouchers for tomorrow's breakfast and lunch, a special security pass, and forms that we had to fill in. He finished by hoping that we would have a good night's sleep and that we would enjoy our short stay in Singapore.

Christopher and I shared a very comfortable room on the eleventh floor. Christopher went off for a swim in the pool on the fifth floor, then went out for a walk. I treated myself to a very welcome hot shower, then wrote my diary before hitting the sack.

This morning I had breakfast, with some of the others, in the Coffeepot restaurant, close to the lobby. The service was a little slow, but the pretty waitresses dressed in their smart red uniforms and mini-skirts, and their beautifully styled jet-black hair, took my mind off this minor complaint. Already it was becoming apparent that the people here were probably the most handsome that I had ever seen.

After breakfast, a small group of us assembled in the lobby and were met by a very attractive young lady, who led us outside to an air-conditioned coach for our tour of the city. When we set off, the young lady introduced herself as Miss Jamalia, warmly welcomed us, and gave us a running commentary on everything that we could see from the windows. She had a very pleasant manner, and we all took to her.

Our first stop was the House of Jade, which was not far from the hotel. In this mansion belonging to the Aw brothers was a priceless and very fine

collection of jade artefacts from every important Chinese dynasty. However, before we went in, we were organized into a group on the steps and made to hold a banner reading 'Welcome to Singapore – Alkanaah Tours', so that a Chinese photographer who had come with us could take a shot of us. Needless to say, many of us would rather not have done this.

We were then brought inside and given a lightning tour of some of the rooms. I could have spent hours here, gazing at hundreds of fine jade carvings in glass cases. Many of them were exquisite; I spent more time looking at them than listening to our guide.

When we emerged from the cool interior of this fascinating place to the boiling heat outside, we saw Buddhist monks with shaven heads and bright orange robes strolling on the grass. At the entrance were a couple of Indian snake charmers; Miss Jamalia encouraged me to have my photograph taken with a snake draped around my shoulders. I declined her kind suggestion, and let Frank Cahill and John enjoy this dubious pleasure, which naturally demanded a generous tip. The two Indians were very colourfully dressed and, as far as I could make out, they were offering their musical instruments for sale.

After we had left this place, we drove down the long Orchard Road into the Central Business District, which was a restricted zone. We were told that between 7.30 a.m. and 10.15 a.m., Mondays to Saturdays (excepting public holidays), all cars and taxis must purchase and display an Area Licence, costing S\$4 (£1) per day. However, a car or taxi carrying four or more people are exempt from this charge.

Up to this point we had been travelling eastwards. After a while we turned southwards along Beach Road, and passed the famous but not particularly handsome Raffles Hotel that W. Somerset Maugham had written about and stayed in. It was almost hidden behind palm trees. After this we passed St Andrew's Cathedral, built in dazzling white stone and situated beside a park. After we had driven through some older and narrower streets that would soon be changed, we entered Chinatown, which looked like a more modern version of Guangzhou in China.

After this we skirted the coast and passed high-rise apartment blocks. We now ascended Mount Faber. At the top of this hill, we stopped at a cable car station, where there was a shop that sold soft drinks. We walked through it and towards a garden, from where we were able to get a good view of the city, the bay, and the harbour. It was nice here, but much of the fine scenery was shrouded in a heat haze. Another group photo was taken of us; this time the delightful Miss Jamalia stood beside me. As we were leaving, a group of beautiful-looking children suddenly ran into the garden and sat on the seats. Their uniforms were very smart and they seemed to be very well behaved.

Back in the coach we set off north-westwards, skirting the coast. We stopped in a large car park and walked around, in the boiling heat, to the back of a restaurant where the sound of beating drums and a fellow shouting into a microphone greeted us. This was the 'Instant Asia' Cultural Show. The slick MC, wearing thick black spectacles and dressed in a suit, introduced various dances and acts over the loudspeaker system at an ear-splitting volume.

Despite the noise, the items were quite interesting, well done, and very colourful. We saw a Malayan coconut dance and various other dances performed by beautiful smiling girls and young men. Then two actresses, elaborately dressed, performed an extract from a Chinese opera, which was not so much to our liking. The accompaniment (on cymbals and clappers) and the dialogue had been recorded; the actresses merely mimed to the music.

Next was a ridiculous Indian snake-charming act, which consisted mostly of the MC talking to the Indians and inviting people in the audience to come up to the stage and have their photographs taken with a snake around their necks. This was followed by Indian magic tricks, all which were rather silly and obvious.

After this we were entertained by a dramatic Chinese lion dance. As in Guangzhou, drums were beaten and cymbals clashed while two men, completely disguised, operated a very ornate and terrifying-looking lion, which pranced and snapped to the incessant beat.

The show finally finished with more colourful Malayan dances and we left. It was a relief to get away from the ear-splitting noise and the MC's patter. We then crossed the road to visit another dreadful Tiger Balm garden designed by Aw Boon Haw. I did not stay in it long; on my way back to the coach I met some schoolchildren, most of whom giggled at me and said 'hello' in a very affected manner. It was a relief to sit in the cool coach once again; just a few minutes in this type of heat had me exhausted.

We now drove back towards the city. Although a fine place, I was not exactly enchanted by Singapore, as so little of it seemed to be Eastern. It seemed as though the Eastern sights were there just for the tourists. During the journey, John told me of his and the lads' visit the previous evening to the notorious Bugis Street, in the red-light district of Singapore. They had dined and drunk outdoors, where they were able to admire the extremely good-looking ladies of the night, who were very deliberately making themselves available to the clientele. They were provocatively dressed in see-through blouses or very revealing low-cut dresses. John could not get over how beautiful and ravishing they looked. He was astounded to be told later that they had all, at one time, been men!

Our final stop, after we had paid Miss Jamalia for the tour and had given her a tip that she seemed reluctant to accept, was a gem factory. It was almost empty when we arrived, for most of the workers were now on their lunch break. We were shown machines that cut and ground both precious and semi-precious stones. Beautiful young ladies were using these to form pictures by sticking them on to sheets of white aluminium. I did not care much for the finished result. Upstairs we visited an exhibition room and a shop. I found most of the jewellery rather ugly. As far as I could make out, nobody bought anything as all the items were very expensive.

Finally we left and drove back to our hotel. After we had said goodbye to Miss Jamalia, the photographer, and the driver, I realized that I had left an unused ciné film on the coach. As it had just left, I reported this immediately to the Indian man at the reception desk, who took down the details and said that he would do his best to get the film back for me.

We now sat down to a delicious lunch in the Coffeepot restaurant. As I was exhausted by now, I decided to retire to my room and have a rest afterwards. I had considered going to the National Museum in the afternoon, but now felt that I would not have enough energy after this morning's heat. I had a shower, then lay down on my bed and rested. During the afternoon, a note was pushed under the door. Written on a piece of elaborate notepaper was a message from Miss Jamalia: 'Please be informed that your film has been found'.

As our cases were being taken from our room at 4 p.m., I gathered my things together and went down to the lobby. At the reception desk I was told that my film would be returned to me at the airport this evening. As there were shops nearby in the lobby, I had a look in them and bought a book in one of them. In a souvenir shop I bought a couple of dolls for my mother. After I had purchased them, the saucy Chinese salesgirl said to me, 'Would you like to buy anything else?'

'No, thank you,' I replied.

'Would you not like to buy some nice jewellery for your wife?'

'I'm not married.'

'Well, you could buy some jewellery for your girlfriend...'

'I haven't got a girlfriend at the moment.'

'Would you not like to buy some jewellery?'

I politely replied, 'No thank you' and moved away before she could say anything else.

To kill time, I sat down on a comfortable seat and began to read my new book, unsuccessfully trying to ignore the piped music that was being played over the loudspeakers. When some of our party appeared, I chatted to them. Later, when the sun began to set, and when I thought that it would be cooler outside, I went for a walk and strolled down Orchard Road. I passed a

large shopping centre, where everything looked very expensive. The displays in the windows were very colourful and tastefully done.

I returned to the hotel, where I joined some of the gang for a light meal in the restaurant. There was more hanging around until we all assembled and were greeted by the young man we had met yesterday evening. The Chinese photographer appeared with his developed colour photographs; I reluctantly bought the two that he had taken, for I was more or less obliged to do so.

We were then driven to the airport. We said goodbye to our guide, who hoped that we had enjoyed our short stay and would return sometime in the future. My film was returned and we entered the departures section. After various delays caused by checking in luggage and going through the security area, we waited in a huge hall and quaffed cool drinks. Eventually we made our way to our departure gate and travelled in a bus to the delayed Pakistan Airlines flight. Soon afterwards, we took off into the night sky at about 10 p.m., leaving Singapore behind. The holiday was over.