

# RESTORING HEALTH CARE TO THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE



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**RESTORING HEALTH CARE TO THE HANDS  
OF THE PEOPLE**

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# FOREWORD

## Health, Development and Democracy

M. L. Tan

Malaria in New York. Tuberculosis in London. Historical accounts of living conditions in the United States and European countries during the 19th and early 20th century show striking parallels with the problems that we confront today in the Philippines and other Third World countries.

It would be over-simplistic to dismiss this crisis in health care as inevitable. One interpretation is that our health problems are typical of "tropical" countries; yet, history shows that so-called tropical diseases were also widespread in temperate countries. Malaria, for instance, was widespread in New York's Richmond, Queens and the Bronx in the early 1900s. Tuberculosis raged mercilessly in the boroughs of London throughout the Industrial Revolution.

An alternative interpretation is that such health problems are unavoidable in the process of modernization, that the "transition" to urbanization is always associated with congested slums and a breakdown of social services. New York in the early 1900s in fact had infant mortality rates higher than those of Calcutta or Bombay today. Epidemics of summer diarrhea, exacerbated by adulterated milk, killed thousands of small children in New York and London in the late 19th and early 20th century.

On the other hand, we also witness the dramatic alternatives that have emerged in other "transitional" societies. The People's Republic of China was able to drastically reduce the incidence of many communicable diseases after their revolution in 1949. Nicaragua, the