

Ku Li who wants in from the cold
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S Thayaparan

"Princes in this case,
Do hate the traitor, though they love the treason"

- Samuel Daniel

COMMENT Every time Umno is drowning in sea of turmoil, it can count on Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah to describe the water.

His team B cohorts fared better in the post-Semangat 46 debacle with Abdullah Ahmad Badawi eventually assuming premiership of the country, Musa Hitam flirting briefly with stewardship of Suhakam - that rubber stamp of a human rights organisation - and who can forget Rais Yatim who seems to be pilfering pages from the Joseph Goebbels book of public relations.

Razaleigh, of course, always nurtured the perception that he was the last honest man in Umno, a prince who reluctantly found himself consorting with thieves.

Ku Li, as is he fondly known as, has the remarkable ability to engender goodwill from certain sections of the general public by disassociating himself from the excesses of Umno even though he contributed to the very culture he claims to despise.

If Anwar Ibrahim is accused of being a political chameleon, the same can't be said of Ku Li, whose stand has been consistent, that is to be the fly in the ointment of his former comrades, encouraging them to view him as a political maverick but yet saying nothing that would earn him total banishment from the corrupt ranks of the ruling coalition. He may be out in the cold but he is definitely not freezing.

His latest populist broadside against Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin for apparently going against the fairly recent party dogma, or should I say propaganda - that he (Muhyiddin) is "Malay first and Malaysian second" - is comical because the only people who actually subscribe to the 1Malaysia concept are the spin doctors of BN.

Muhyiddin's rather bigoted but honest comment is not a severe blow to the concept of 1Malaysia. The severe blows are Umno's association with outsourced thugs like Perkasa and Perkida, the numerous statements from high-ranking public officials like the military top brass who question the loyalty and patriotism of the non-Malays and the biased manner in which the law is used to silence public dissent.

And the nullification of the so-called 'Jiwa Malaysia' is best exemplified when a non-Malay political leader has to assure the majority of Malaysians that nobody in his party will seek the highest office because 'race' unofficially prevents them for doing so.

It's humour of the blackest kind when the Star, a non-Malay propaganda organ, "mistakenly" attributes comments to the contrary (during a recent debate) to this non-Malay leader to galvanise Malay solidarity.

Separate but equal

How can we nurture a national spirit when for the past 50 years, the organisation that Razaleigh continues to be a part of has done its best to ensure that we will always be divided along racial lines?

What kind of national spirit are we talking about when the best the non-Malays can hope for is to wait for a Malay saviour to lead us to racial equality since members of our own community can never hope to play that role?

We are not in this together, which is the perfect expression of a national spirit, but rather we (the non-Malays) are playing a tactical game hoping that our respective communities fare better under a Pakatan Rakyat administration.

The cliché that it would take a generation or more for us to be truly united may be true, but I suspect even with the reduction of the level of governmental malfeasances, the direction we are heading in is "separate but equal" (an outcome desirable to the racialists within Pakatan), which is an odious concept but one which no doubt would satisfy a generally apathetic polity.

Ku Li may assure us that the NEP (New Economic Policy) was never meant to create "an incubated class of Malay capitalist" and was intended to correct the imbalance in the level of economic participation of all communities - and this may be the revisionist moderate Malay line - but the reality is that successive Umno strongmen molded it into a replay of the feudalistic nature of Malay society.

What was created was a serf class addicted to racial handouts and entitled warlords competing for the favours of the federal government. Anwar has publically stated that he is only going after the top guns of Umno, which indicates to me, he is quite willing to assume control of the ground-level apparatus that has sustained the corrupt regime for over 50 years.

And if what former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad says is true that Anwar is only willing to debate Umno on matters of foreign policy and not domestic ones because of the support the latter policies receive from the "people" which I suppose mean "Malays", then we can be assured that if the Chinese and Indian communities are somehow placated, then the NEP which benefits the Malays will be retained in a way that would not jeopardise the Malay support that Anwar receives.

Surely Razaleigh who bemoans the fact that the civil service does not reflect the diversity of Malaysian society is aware that this was a deliberate attempt to ensure Malay hegemony on nearly every facet of the public service. Who could forget Operasi Isi Penuh?

And by resorting to such measures, the BN regime perhaps unwittingly created the racial divide in the private sector. The twisted logic went that the Malays would dominate the public sector and certain Malays would get rich of the Chinese-dominated private sector. Surely all this is not new to Ku Li?

And let's be honest, "the exclusively Malay character" of national schools is not the reason why non-Malays have a problem with the education system here in Malaysia. It's the Islamisation, or more accurately the Arabisation, of the Malay community which infects the national school system. It's the bogus history. It's the racists or bigoted teachers.

It's a government which refuses to acknowledge that the system is extremely flawed and continues to use schools as a petri dish for whatever bizarre social engineering experiments it comes up with and which generally involves a profit motive for crony companies.

Malay community in trouble

The hard cold fact is that the Malay community is in trouble. Never mind the constitutionally-created Malays who are changing the racial make-up of the community, the biggest threat to 'Jiwa Malaysia' is the way how the state and certain Malays practice Islam.

I don't normally do this but it's personal anecdote time. Last Christmas, I met up with a few old armed forces comrades. There were a few "younger" officers still in the service.

anwar machap by election campaign 120407 food line 03One of them a non-Malay related how he had stopped inviting his Malay co-workers for meals at his house because they always brought their own utensils. I gather that this is not unusual in contemporary Malaysia, but this was not always the case, definitely not when I was in service.

You want to instill a sense of national spirit in the various communities here in Malaysia? Start by reforming how Islam is transmitted by the state.

I have no idea what roles politicians like Razaleigh can play in this new landscape or even if it's a good thing that they remain active in the political scene. Anything from Umno is suspect, especially when delivered in tones which are pleasing to the ear.

However, if Ku Li is really sincere in making a difference, I suggest he abandon Umno and join the DAP or go on a one-man crusade to save the "Malay character" from the twin scourges of Umnoism and Arabism.

Either way, he will truly be the maverick some think he is or at the very least, earn the gravitas some attribute to him.

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