

DAP is confused on communists past and present

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MP SPEAKS As press statements go, (DAP Secretary-General) Lim Guan Eng's speedy response to my comments regarding the film 'The New Village' speaks volumes to his inherently political and partisan character.

The New VillageFor context, I questioned why 'The New Village' appears to be given an easier ride by the Film Censorship Board compared to 'Tanda Putera' whose screening had been delayed by a year until its new release date of Aug 29.

Considering the pain and tragedy attached to the points of history at which both films are situated, it was a question I raised to ensure that the sensitivities of all Malaysians were taken into account, what with the screening of the two films meant to happen in the month of our Independence.

Instead of engaging in the question of what was appropriate and accurate to be screened as history, Lim's statement belies a deep partisan bias on matters that concern national history, identity and sentiment.

This bias comes at great cost to the force of his arguments - he employs a most rudimentary logic to arrive at an indefensible conclusion that Utusan and Umno Youth are hypocrites. I wish to expose this bias.

Lim's charge of hypocrisy centers on this most curious of arguments: that if BN makes ties with governments or other political parties with a communist past, then it has no right to complain about films that may glorify our own communist history.

He quotes our ties with the likes of China and Cuba as examples - and for effect, he brings up the relationship that BN Youth made with the Communist Youth League of China (CYL).

It doesn't take very much to know that the situations cannot be compared.

Diplomatic ties

Our relationships with China, Cuba and Vietnam are diplomatic ties with internationally recognised sovereign governments - relationships borne out of trade, economic and geo-political necessity.

The New Village That they happen to be 'communist' - in the case of China clearly more in name than in nature - does not carry the same significance as the communism Malaysians remember; a communism which this film appears to be glorifying.

But let's indulge Lim in his lazy analogies for a moment longer.

The Communist Party of China has undergone a profound evolution in its character as the world moved away from Cold War sensibilities to 21st century globalisation - in the most important ways, it is unrecognisable from its Marxist-Leninist past to the present day incarnation responsible for turning China into a global superpower.

In stark contrast, the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) never went through anything of the sort as far as the Malaysian collective consciousness is concerned.

It was not the party of government, it was not responsible for steering this country's economic progress.

Instead, it remains synonymous with a very dark period in our history, conjuring up painful memories for all Malaysians affected by their reign of terror.

But of course these basic comprehensions are lost on Lim.

He would sooner suggest we break off ties with China than acknowledge that perhaps more thought should be given to whether there are serious issues surrounding this 'The New Village' film.

Reactive and sensitive

In fact, isn't it telling how reactive and sensitive Lim was to my remarks, when what I called for was a review by the censorship board?

Even without having seen the film, it wasn't too difficult to ascertain from the trailer that communist insurgents were the protagonists painted as national heroes.

dap special meeting 110313 lim guan eng Now, unlike Lim (left), I am receptive to the nuances of history - I understand there can be different readings of historical accounts depending on which period one looks at, and I understand that people and organisations sometimes take up roles with inadvertent outcomes for others.

But one fact is indisputable - that the CPM terrorised and murdered thousands of Malaysians who did not bow to their wishes - many of whom died in gruesome

circumstances, disemboweled and dismembered. It is from this sombre point of origin that my discomfort comes.

Lim accused me of stoking "the fire of racism and lies to further divide the nation with walls of hatred and fear" when I never once mentioned race in my initial remarks.

And I didn't for a good reason - because the pain inflicted by the CPM was not felt by one race, but by all Malaysians.

And it is a Malaysian - not a Malay or Umno or Utusan - outrage that occurs when there is any attempt at either historical revisionism or an unfair portrayal of history regarding the CPM.

Instead of indulging in political platitudes - accusing his opponents as divisive, deceptive or hypocritical at every turn - I urge Lim to suspend his partisan judgment when it comes to matters that concern our identity and history as a people.

That's what statesmen do. He should try it sometime.

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