

May 13: Four decades of secrecy exposed
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I refer to the malaysiakini report Ministry seizes controversial May 13 book. Dr Kua Kia Soong's new book, 'May 13: Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969' may look like a dry academic thesis, but it moves at a cracking pace. It is also undoubtedly one of the most important books ever published on Malaysian society and politics.

May 13 made this country. Or more accurately, it un-made it. Kua, making use of newly de-classified documents tells us why the May 13 incident happened, and who were the people responsible for it.

The gist of what he has to say is what most people who are not abysmally ignorant have long suspected. That:

1. the May 13 incident was not a 'spontaneous' clash between the Malay and Chinese communities;
2. the key figures in the Alliance government then - such as Tun Abdul Razak - had carefully pre-planned and orchestrated the whole grisly business. Other fellows involved in the ghastly plot or its aftermath in varying degrees were Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, Harun Idris and Ghazali Shafie.
3. the idea was to oust the Tunku who was none too keen on Razak and his cohorts' new Malay agenda;
4. the agenda was that of the 'ascendant Malay state capitalist class' for political and economic dominance;
5. the Razak-ites got support from the police and army as evidenced by the partiality of the security forces in favour of the Malays in 'putting down' the riots. Curfews were strictly enforced in Chinese areas, whereas soldiers were laughing it up with armed hoodlums in Malay areas.

The difference this book makes is that Kua has marshalled clear documentary evidence as proof of the above. He has drawn from 'stories fielded by foreign correspondents who were in Kuala Lumpur at the time; dispatches by the British High Commission personnel who kept a close watch on events and who had their ears to the ground; dispatches from the foreign and Commonwealth offices covering the South-west Pacific countries, eg Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore as well as press releases by the Malaysian Red Cross Society'.

Malaysians have never before seen these documents, hitherto mouldering at the Public Records Office in London and now resurrected. These documents establish, beyond any doubt, the manipulative ruthlessness of men like Tun Razak, Tun Dr Ismail, and Datuk Harun Idris.

And in their wake came half-baked national culture peddlers like Ghazali Shafie. Their actions not only caused dreadful loss of life and untold human suffering; May 13 also wrenched this nation away from the path to true parliamentary democracy and left us with the misshapen perverse system of government we now suffer under.

It gave rise to the panoply of repressive legislation which today makes us 'cribbed, cabined and confined' in our own country. It has caused us to enter the 21st century encumbered with a political system that is race-based and parochial. It has led to the propagation of racist concepts such as 'Ketuanan Melayu' which has entered into mainstream political discourse.

It has resulted in the creation of a special class of citizens called 'bumiputeras' who are given preferential treatment by the state; and made second-class citizens of Malaysians of other races. It has become the great bogey, conjured up by the BN government at every general election in order to terrorise Malaysians into voting for them.

It has shamed our nation - a nation that categorises and marks its citizens by their race from birth.

This is the legacy of May 13, and this will remain the legacy of May 13 until the truth of what caused the bloodbath is revealed to all Malaysians, regardless of race. Its repercussions are all around us. Last year, a cabinet minister waved a keris about as a warning to non-Malays, and now Maybank and Ambank have tried to impose bumiputra quotas on legal firms wanting to do business with them.

This is why the importance of Kua's new book cannot be overstated. In six sharp, short chapters, he has un-done four decades of concealment, evasion and outright lies. In this fine book, he relentlessly pursues the truth, but always in a matter of fact and un-emotional tone. He has no need to resort to histrionics. The bare facts he has presented for our scrutiny speak for themselves.

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