

'Grandpa, were the BN bad and cruel people?'

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Yesterday my 10 year-old son asked me: 'Papa, were the British bad and cruel people? How did they oppress us? What were they really like?'

I am glad my son asked me that question. The boy is bright and curious. He wants to know. He is beginning to have a questioning mind and he won't swallow everything he is taught or hears.

That set off a train of thought. I was educated in Christian missionary schools in Penang. Those were happy days. There was no racial polarisation and we mixed and studied and played together – Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and the odd white kid or two. The medium of instruction was English but I think we couldn't have cared less if it was Greek.

We had a well-rounded education thanks to the British and it opened our minds. I believe my later marriage to a Malay and my conversion to Islam were easy adjustments for me because of my educational background.

But where are we today? The question is very relevant because we will be celebrating 50 years of Merdeka soon. Are we more democratic compared to 50 years ago? Definitely no. If anything, we have become fascist.

Are we polarised by race and religion? Yes and yes. Our leaders talk of moderation and tolerance but in practice are racists and extremists. There is terrible tension below the thin surface of calm.

Are we richer than 50 years ago? Definitely yes. But 50 years ago, we were not an industrialising and exporting nation but an agrarian country and our major exports were only rubber and tin. Yes, our country is rich and only the elite of the dominant party know it because the wealth of the country is in their hands and everybody else is just making do or worse. Today, we have a First World infrastructure but little minds to run it and thieving hands to steal from it.

Are our leaders an enlightened lot? Can our leaders hold their own on the world stage? Not if our dominant ruling-party leaders are examples. Most are petty-minded, infantile imbeciles raving and waving kerises threatening their own citizens with bloodshed and bullying and humiliating their women folk. Or else they are robber-barons and petty thieves. Their highest form of debate and oratory is flattery and fawning paens to themselves.

They are a seedy, greedy cabal.

I can go on and on about the politics. But suffice to say the fascists are dividing the population and even encouraging a feudalistic mind-set to stay in power with ill-gotten wealth. They are not only splitting the races – they are also dividing within the races. So today we have an elite ruling class who are getting richer and richer and the poor man on the street who is being exploited right, left and centre.

Coming back to my son's question, I had to tell him no, the British were not bad, cruel oppressors like the Japanese. And they were sporting enough to grant us independence when they thought we were ready for it. They did not leave us in the lurch. In fact they left us some

good institutions, like the educational, judiciary and parliamentary systems to build on.

But it looks like instead of building on the systems we are more intent on destroying them. Our judiciary, once admired by other Commonwealth countries, is now a disgraced institution. Our parliament is a laughing stock, a circus of bumbling clowns and raving maniacs, goons and hoods. Our educational system produces docile and unquestioning little minds. Our electoral system is rigged to maintain the cabal in power.

Umno propaganda wants us to believe that Anwar Ibrahim stands for revolution and the BN are for evolution. They lie to themselves if they believe that. There is no way we can have political evolution with the present system rigged to keep Umno in power.

I wonder if 30 years down the road, my grandson would ask me, 'Grandpa, were the Barisan National bad and cruel people? How did they oppress us? What were they like?'

I will have some history to tell.

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