

No regrets, says Chin Peng's brother in arms
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BY LEE SHI-IAN

The death of Comrade No.1 brought together many of his soldiers to his wake, reminiscing about the lives they led as insurgents, with most of them never regretting having joined the struggle.

Wong Chien, 81, was one such person.

Despite losing his right hand and going blind in one eye after spending 41 years in the jungle, he does not regret his decision in 1948 to join the Communist Party of Malaya.

The veteran, who now lives in the Thai border town of Betong, was at the Wat That Thong temple in Bangkok to bid farewell to Chin Peng today.

Wong, who was born in Taiping, Perak, was not a personal acquaintance of Chin Peng nor did he know him very well. Wong was one of many foot soldiers who spent decades in the jungles of Malaya.

"It was a tough time for the Chinese in the late 1940s due to the Japanese occupying Malaya before the British colonials returned," Wong said, his brows furrowed as he tried to recall the past.

"I joined the CPM and spent the next 40 years in the jungle fighting the British and Malayan forces," he said, showing a stump of a right hand.

"I lost my hand and right eye to a hand grenade thrown by the enemy forces. But it did not deter me, I was back on the frontline again after recovering from my injuries." he recounted.

He appeared indignant about the allegations made against Chin Peng by the Malaysian government, which described the former CPM secretary-general as a ruthless and cold-blooded murderer.

"Look at my hand, what does this tell you about the Malayan security forces back then? Can I say they were also cold-blooded and ruthless?" he asked, waving his stump.

In 1989, after the peace accord was signed between the Malaysian government and the CPM, Wong applied for permission to return to Taiping.

"My application was rejected by the Malaysian authorities as I could not produce any identification documents. I was born in 1932, my family was dirt poor; where could we find such documents?"

"The process allowing former CPM members who had laid down their arms to return was not fair or just. We all knew where we were born but not all of us possessed the relevant documents."

He said it was the same issue with Chin Peng's remains and the furore over whether it

should be taken back to Malaysia. Wong said Chin Peng had also been born in Malaysia.

"The government intentionally wants to politicise the issue by harping on ancient history, using it as an excuse to deny Chin Peng the right to be buried in his homeland."

Despite not being able to return to Malaysia as a citizen, Wong has visited his hometown of Taiping several times since 1989, together with his wife, to pay his respects to his ancestors.

Although he does not have any children, Wong has no regrets, saying he would not have wanted to bring a child into a world of violence and death.

Today, at the Wat That Thong temple, he appeared happy as he chatted with old comrades and acquaintances. - September 22, 2013.

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