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Flattening the curve of human tyranny



By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - January 14, 2021 @ 1:22am



Murals of local Malaysian personalities, like that of a local bread seller in George Town, can be used to decorate restaurants. FILE PIC

WOULD anyone accept a public restaurant that uses images of Nazism and Hitler as a decorative theme? Most unlikely, not even in his home country for obvious reasons. Too many people have suffered under the regime with memories lingering on over generations.

Having such images overlooking clients who are having their meals among friends and family is just unpalatable to say the least. Hitler and his brand of politics have no place in eateries. Maybe in a dark museum somewhere, certainly not in restaurants or public places.

The same should apply to similar personalities and leadership better known for their homicidal and genocidal tendencies, including towards their own kind. There are many of them. Fortunately, very few made it to restaurant walls in a celebratory mood.

So what happened recently in isolated eateries in Melaka, Pulau Pinang and Johor is dumbfounding. Especially in Malaysia, where such images and personalities have huge stigma linked to traumatic memories of senseless lives lost. Many more were agonised physically and mentally given the ruthless actions they were forced upon.

While this is best forgotten, putting up decorative pieces related to the bitterness brings to light just the reverse. To justify it from whatever angle is plainly insensitive. To prove a point, imagine the portrait of another infamous character, Joseph Stalin of Soviet Russia. Will that be

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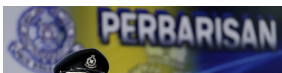


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inimicus character, Joseph Stalin of Soviet Russia. Will that be acceptable?

Why not use local Malaysian personalities and unsung heroes to decorate the restaurants instead? There are plenty to choose from. For example, in George Town, a larger-than-life portrait of a local bread seller is displayed on a huge wall. Or that of a fisherman repairing his net in Balik Pulau mural.

They are just two examples of majestic art pieces realised by foreign talents – talk about cultural sensitivity, providing more meaning in challenging times of deteriorating race relations. No need to politicise what is plainly a misplaced choice of artistic ambitions best avoided if good sense is to prevail.

To quote Datuk Seri Ti Lian Ker, the deputy national unity minister, it "could be resolved without having to reopen old wounds", which is exactly what would have happened if nobody blew the whistle to inform the authorities of the said issue.

The deputy minister is spot on when he said "the Communist insurgency left a black mark in Malaysia's history". How can one ever forget? And this not the first time such issues have been raised. It does not look like we have learnt much, if at all. One reason perhaps is because of double standards.

The most apparent case is the inflow of "finances" from a Communist-led country. Some allegedly against good governance linked to the 1Malaysia Development Bhd scandal. It took the country by storm when several unethical practices were highlighted, involving some Communist-led companies. Somehow it gave the impression what happened in the past was conveniently forgotten, if not forgiven.

The newly elected "multi-racial" government then was hard-pressed to decouple some of the dubious deals involving billions of ringgit. The generations who lived through the Bintang Tiga insurgency days could not help but to recall how the "finances" played a significant role too.

Despite many decades having passed, ideology has a way of rekindling itself unassumingly. Never mind if it is out of everyone's mind. Adorning the restaurant sounds like just one way of making a comeback, especially directly to those who are historically blind as often reminded by the late eminent historian Tan Sri Khoo Kay Kim.

So it is not surprising to read that the restaurant owners are in their early 40s, one with a Chinese national wife. What insurgency meant to them may not be fully understood as compared with that by the older generations. The gap seems to point to the system of education, where events of national significance and interest are apparently treated differently or with different emphases.

In other words, the curve is yet to be flattened when it comes to human tyranny all over the world, regardless of when and where. More so who and in whatever form. The time to do this is now before it becomes a tragedy of a pandemic proportions.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector



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