



*By Sharyn Shufiyan*

“God save the Queen, a fascist regime, they made you a moron, potential H-bomb.”

Those words attracted as much controversy as it did a following in the 70s. Sid Vicious overdosed at the age of 22, two years after the release of “God Save the Queen,” while the Queen, at 85, still stands and waves to her subordinates today. As controversial and messed up as the Sex Pistols may have been, they went on to become one of the most influential bands in history. None were charged for attempting a coup against the monarch, the plaids live on, and God did save the Queen.

Malaysia has a peculiar way of dealing with deviant behaviour. We just don't want them. And we so easily put two and two together, like how celebrating Valentine's Day will lead to a sudden break-out of orgies, like how being found in possession of Das Kapital or a hammer and sickle means that we're 'reviving the communist ideology'. I have a Vietcong propaganda poster as souvenir from Hanoi. I must be a Communist living in a concrete jungle. Oh dear, they're going to get me now. Never mind that it's artistically appealing or that it's our constitutional right to freedom of personal liberty to own such memorabilia - to 'own' it, I must 'be' it.

Perhaps it's not so much an allergy to antagonist idols than an aversion towards pop culture. After all, commercialisation has taken over deviancy and made it popular. Why, you can see Che Guevara's handsome face all over Petaling Street. Or maybe because Che is the epitome of Western deviation, hence far removed from us. Rashid Maidin, on the other hand, is a matter of national security? If images and books of Malayan Communist front men became pop culture, would it still be considered propagating the ideology? We have close diplomatic ties with China and wear most brands that were made and assembled in China, where then, do we draw the line? And why, do we detain our very own countrymen?

Is our crime rate that low that we make criminals out of ordinary civilians?

And it is this dictatorial nature of authorities making certain unlucky people scapegoats to teach the rest of us a lesson, that I wonder, who is the real communist here?

It is not rocket science, just common sense. For many of us, enough is enough. For Ee Chia, she had her last straw during the arrest of Raja Petra Kamarudin under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in 2008. "I feel that I want to do something beyond just complaining and whining about the current state of our country. And I truly subscribe to the notion of being Malaysian first. It doesn't mean that we disregard the diversity of our cultures, but rather to embrace this diversity and yet be united as one." Ee Chia began to become active with Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia, a civil society movement and her passion continued to grow and burned fierier with every injustice.

And one such injustice is the recent detention of six Parti Socialis Malaysia (PSM) members under the Emergency Ordinance 1969.

"I feel that they have been unjustly and illegally detained. There is certainly no basis to their detention. The police said that they were detained because they are suspected to be the 'prime movers' of the Bersih 2.0 rally on 9th July while our de facto Law Minister, Datuk Nazri Abdul Aziz said that the detention was for the 'act of reviving the communism'. So which is which? As of today, they have been detained illegally under EO for 24 days. The judgment for petty theft is 21 days in prison upon conviction. But the EO6 has been incarcerated in solidarity confinement for more than 21 days without any proper conviction. How is this just?"

So what is the Emergency Ordinance? Why is it such a big deal that both you and I should care about it? “The Emergency Ordinance was enacted as a temporary measure to control the spread of violence after the May 13, 1969 racial riots. The Emergency Ordinance is used to arbitrarily detain or restrict the movement of suspected gang members and criminals who the police find difficult to bring to justice due to lack of evidence. Instead of arresting suspects and charging them for offences under Malaysian criminal law, the police simply lock up hundreds of persons for two years or more under the Emergency Ordinance. According to the Ministry of Internal Security in May 2005, the last time the government made EO detention figures public there were 712 EO detainees in Simpang Renggam.” (*Convicted Before Trial, Human Rights Watch*.)

In other words, if you like Che Guevara - and just for the fun of it in the beginning - they'll detain you until they make you want to be a communist and go guerrilla on them by the end of it. I know I would if I'm locked in solitary confinement for 24 days. I'd go bonkers.

For Ee Chia, it is imperative for Malaysians to know of these repressive laws. “The EO6 are just ordinary people like you and me, who are entitled to the freedom of thought. If the police can simply use EO as they wish against the six of them, police can use the EO against us, and our loved ones too, for whatever reason only known to them. This is a violation to our human rights.”

“It is important for us, the citizens to know and understand the implication of such laws over our lives. Once we are aware of it, then we know that these draconian laws are not needed in

Malaysia.”

Increasingly, the public's freedom of expression, or more conveniently to some, public dissent, is viewed as a force that must be quenched at all cost. Not just in Malaysia, but all over the world. Malaysia is, to put it blankly, a godfather nation; only those with authority know what is best and we are mere children to behave properly and indiscriminately. Our parents use the fear tactic to subdue us and make us good children; “go to sleep or the boogeyman will come and get you.” And for a very long time, we lie on our beds with our eyes wide open, in the dark, afraid of the boogeyman... but guess what, he never came.