peninsula. However, under the veneer of historical fiction, there are interesting insights into the personal struggles encountered by members of the party in their endeavour to liberate Malaya while also dealing with shock, even disillusionment, at their leader's duplicity and treachery.

By providing an account of this historical epoch in fictional form, *The Red Bicycle* does not overpower its readers with overwhelming details of key actors and events, a problem seen in academic treatises of the Communist Party. Presented here as a non-political account of the party and the role of its leader, this book offers a view of the atrocities of Japanese rule as well as the injustices perpetrated by the British after their return, with the help of the communists, as the governing force after World War II. The British betrayal of the Communist Party as the colonial government sought to consolidate its control over a peninsula that was rich in above- and under-soil resources is well captured in this narrative. This is a tale too of the naked greed of individuals and colonial governments and of brutal oppression to protect vested economic interests.

A thoughtful reading of this historical period, from the perspective of this book, will draw attention to man's inhumanity to man, as seen in the intensity of oppression by colonial powers. The lives of the key characters in this book and the nature of their discussions with each other about their struggle indicate a self-realisation that the route to liberation from oppression must come from the people themselves and at great sacrifice. Their lives were also devoted to a struggle to awaken a national consciousness among fellow Malayans.

This book reminds Malaysians of core aspects of colonial rule. The fundamental purpose of colonialism was economic, while racism featured as an essential tool employed by the British to divide the colonised. The love shared by the key characters, Kuppu and Chin Leng, indicates another feature of the Communist Party: its trans-ethnic dimension, one that historians inadequately discuss. The necessity of revolt to achieve this vision of a free de-colonized society with equitable distribution of the country’s wealth is a powerful idea that runs through this novel. A high price had to be paid by the communists who resisted the injustices of colonial rule. There will, of course, be disputes about the form of the struggle and whether the ends justified the methods employed by the Communist Party, but such debates precipitated by this book will be another of its major contributions.

This book must be read by Malaysians who are now confronted with similar struggles: the disillusionment with political leadership, one espousing unity and equity, and yet betraying its citizens with covert corruption; and of public discourses about moderation and inclusion while parties conduct their politics along divisive ideas based on race and religion. This book reminds us of the need to revisit Malaysian history, to read it more thoughtfully and from the perspective of the oppressed. *The Red Bicycle*, if read with these ideas in mind, obliges all Malaysians to struggle for the cause of justice, particularly in the face of the duplicity and treachery of its leaders.

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