



Cold War

Mark Teh

The earliest communist party in Asia was founded in 1914, taking root across Indonesia, China, Japan, India, Korea, Vietnam, and Malaya by 1930. In the Global South, World War II never ended but morphed into a new series of anticolonial wars for independence, emergencies, insurgencies and traumatic civil wars.

Across Southeast Asia, the legacies of communism remain fraught with contestation and controversy, with diverse complexities embedded in each specific context. The region witnessed the 1965-66 mass killings of more than half a million Partai Komunis Indonesia members, leftists and alleged sympathisers, as well as the Cambodian genocide under the communist Khmer Rouge which systematically executed 1.5 million people from 1975-79. Two of the world's handful of communist states are found in Laos and Vietnam today, but 30 years after the end of the Cold War, bans on communist organisations remain enforced in the region.

The passing of time, the declassification of documents, and the emergence of more nuanced scholarship in political, historical and area studies have combined to decolonise readings of the Southeast Asian Cold War—reframing it as constituted by local forces drawing on outside powers for their own ideological, material and contextual purposes, rather than merely acting as local allies in proxy theatres of conflict directed by the 'big brothers' of China, the Soviet Union and the United States. Parallel to this development, artists have been excavating the facts, effects and affects relating to the inconvenient histories and hysterical aftermath of the Cold War in Southeast Asia—recovering, reinterpreting and

documenting the narratives of survivors, perpetrators, victims, secret agents and family members.



Sim Chi Yin, from *One Day We'll Understand* performative reading, 2018

Source: <https://www.eventbrite.sg/e/one-day-well-understand-performative-reading-by-sim-chi-yin-tickets-135966438277#>



Mark Teh, *A Notional History*, 2019

Documentary performance investigating the rewriting of history books in Malaysia and featuring interviews with exiled Communist Party of Malaya members from a never-completed documentary.

Related links

Books

1. Benedict Anderson, "Radicalism after Communism," in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (London: Verso, 1998). <https://www.versobooks.com/books/573-the-spectre-of-comparisons>
2. *Dialogues with Chin Peng - New Light on the Malayan Communist Party*, ed. Karl Hack, C.C. Chin (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004). <https://nuspress.nus.edu.sg/products/dialogues-with-chin-peng>
3. Antariksa, *Tuan Tanah Kawin Muda: Hubungan Seni Rupa-Lekra 1950-1965 [Tuan Tanah Kawin Muda: The Relation between Art and the Institute of People's Culture 1950-1965]*, (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Seni Cemeti, 2005) <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5212860-tuan-tanah-kawin-muda>
4. Tony Day & Maya H. T. Liem, *Cultures at War: The Cold War and Cultural Expression in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010). <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/9120175-cultures-at-war>

Videos

1. Dinh Q. Le, *Light & Belief: Sketches of Life from the Vietnam War* (2012). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bss-uuqTuX8>
2. Dinh Q. Le, *Vision in Darkness* (2015). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9O7YtV66xw>
3. Amir Muhammad, *Apa Khabar Orang Kampung? [Village People Radio Show] trailer* (2007). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVVcvTGLNUk>
4. Tan Pin Pin, *To Singapore, with Love* trailer (2013). <https://www.tosingaporewithlove.com/>
5. Lau Kek Huat, *Absent without Leave* trailer (2016). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fftTeD0B0Dc>
6. Sim Chi Yin, *One Day We'll Understand*, video documentation of performative reading (2018). <https://vimeo.com/269269952>

7. Wah Nu & Tung Win Aun interview (2016). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSmuKvARov0>
8. Rithy Panh, *S-21, The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3UoFMllooHk>
9. Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Act of Killing* (2012). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tLLiqotj7Y>
10. Adrian Mulya, *Supervivere* (2016). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PAFww_KYRw
11. *Museum Bergerak 1965 [1965 Mobile Museum]*, organized by cultural collectives in Yogyakarta (2015). <https://engagemedia.org/2016/museum-bergerak-1965-refusing-to-look-away/>
12. Five Arts Centre, *Emergency Festival catalogue* (2008). https://www.academia.edu/7880258/Emergency_Festival_and_Research_Source_2008
13. Mark Teh, *Baling* (2016), performance excerpts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM9xPqODkal>
14. Ho Tzu Nyen interview about *The Nameless* (2015) and *The Name* (2015). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ViTdyQQ5G0>
15. Ho Tzu Nyen interview about *The Mysterious Lai Teck* (2018). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojmd_IdvQc
16. Hsu Chia-Wei, *Huay Mo Village* (2012). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShOmQVJYm6Q>
17. Rithy Panh, *The Missing Picture* (2013) trailer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY7UmV0jtOk>
18. The Propeller Group interview about *AK-47' vs. M16* (2015). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLff-KRck_8