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Propaganda machine of eunuchs

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IT was reported that Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail refused to respond to questions from journalists after reading out a statement from Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on the statutory declaration by former Bank Negara Assistant Governor Datuk Murad Khalid.

One could not fault her evasiveness as Murad's damning allegations which ranged from accusations of corruption and abuse of power to vile machinations and subversion, came just as the Barisan Alternatif was reeling from the damaging fallout of the arsenic poisoning fiasco.

Anwar's rebuttal consisting of the mouldy "how dare you" and "attack the accuser" (instead of replying to the specific allegations) ploy was no help either.

Before dissecting this crucial issue, the credibility of the allegations requires scrutiny, since even as this is written, the pro-Anwar websites have begun demolishing Murad's integrity.

It must be pointed out that Murad made the allegations in a formal public document, hence he was aware of being fully accountable for his remarks. His bold and responsible stance was unlike the political demagogues who hurl slander while cuddling in the bosom of parliamentary legal immunity.

Like the proverbial eunuchs of the Manchu courts who tugged at the tail coats of their emperor for personal redress when in difficulty, the same charlatans would also unabashedly "tug at the tail coats" of the judiciary, seeking contempt proceedings against their detractors, ostensibly in the name of justice.

Murad also did not hide behind the skirt of anonymity, in contrast to the myriad of putrefying ghost writers and propagandists of the pro-Anwar websites. In addition to his senior position in Bank Negara and close ties with Anwar which gave him wide access to sensitive transactions, the marked contradiction between the bold, responsible and transparent manner in which Murad made his allegations, and the craven, irresponsible and puerile slander hurled by the Opposition within legally protected domains and covert forums, had significantly elevated the standing and credibility of Murad.

Despite the wide-ranging implications of Murad's allegations, I wish to highlight only the modus operandi of Anwar's propaganda machine, specifically, the covert use of foreign and local think-tanks and non-governmental organisations to meet his need for power.

The implicated NGOs and think-tanks may justify their foreign links as a virtuous and positive move to foster ties for the good of the nation. However, an objective and detailed analysis of contemporary literature has revealed otherwise.

To begin with, the use of covert means such as psycho-political devices to further the imperialist agenda is neither balderdash nor a bogeyman propaganda.

James Baldwin, a Vice-Admiral in the US Navy wrote (in the foreword of On Political War by Paul A. Smith of the National Defence University (1990) that: "Another, more subtle means - political warfare - uses images, ideas, speeches, slogans, propaganda, economic pressures, even advertising techniques to influence the political will of an adversary."

A more damning revelation by Harry Rositzke, a retired chief at the Central Intelligence Agency, in a 1988 book called The CIA's Secret

Operations: Espionage, Counter-espionage and Covert Action alleged that "Covert propaganda operations in the Third World were, in effect, a fight for the media ... Foreign editors and columnists were recruited, newspapers and magazines subsidised, Press services supported. Propagandists ranged from paid agents to friendly collaborators."

The proof of the existence of such a sinister agenda and its propagation by capitalising on the US leverage in information technology, is reinforced in comments made by Joseph Nye, a former Assistant Secretary of Defence for international affairs and William Owens, a former Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in their paper *America's Information Age* (Foreign Affairs, 1996), which boldly claimed that "This new political and technological landscape is ready-made for the United States to capitalise on its formidable tools of soft power, to project the appeal of its ideals, ideology, culture, economic model, and social and political institutions, and to take advantage of its international business and telecommunications networks".

The role of the NGOs' network as a vital adjunct in accomplishing these imperialist objectives was reflected in the "Guarded Openness" policy advocated by their strategic think-tanks which called for the "Continued support for worldwide access to cyberspace and access of NGOs as well as state and market actors to it, including where this runs counter to the preferences of (purportedly) authoritarian regimes".

The allegation of huge fund contributions by Anwar and his cronies to the Asia-Pacific Policy Centre is of no surprise either as the costs of large-scale propaganda and image enhancement campaigns are substantial. This is because they involve establishing global contacts, underwriting news operations, setting up of proxy entities, laundering funds, messages and themes genesis, and masking the depth of foreign involvement, while simultaneously ensuring that the "desirable ideas" are aired prominently and repeatedly in a style suited to the local sentiments.

This would ensure that the desired mindset (which otherwise would have been rejected by the target population) be imbedded in the people i.e. the audience is lulled into supporting values - that otherwise would have been rejected as alien.

The implicated NGOs and think-tanks may also argue that the era of globalisation and seamless communication, which enabled direct dissemination of propaganda to the target population, obviated the need for local collaborators.

This argument is erroneous as the use of local collaborators such as NGOs, covert financing of local operations, etc. is vital in enhancing the message's credibility.

Ideas that appear to emanate from within are more likely to be accepted by the gullible segments of the local population. This is a more subtle and sophisticated refinement from the "black propaganda" techniques employed by the US and its allies during World War II.

One is not disputing Anwar's or for that matter, any politician's pursuit of popularity per se. Rather, it is the Faustian trade-off between Anwar and his foreign spin doctors which is unacceptable and nefarious, as it involves the covert barter of not just his political soul but the economic lifeline, ethnic harmony and sovereignty of our country.

Anwar had also unwittingly denigrated traditional Malay values (such as respect for elders and gratefulness) to abysmal depths of depravity as his vile machinations were orchestrated using the facade of uprightness, while the "Brutus" within him insidiously plotted to betray his mentor, father figure and trusting benefactor, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

A knee-jerk reaction from the Government may involve tighter scrutiny of such NGOs and foreign think-tanks, particularly their legal status and

source of funding, but it must be realised that the imperialists' subtle subversion seeks to prevail over the "hearts and minds" of our people.

This requires remedial measures to make our people less vulnerable to such forces.

Therefore, educational and awareness programmes together with swift and accurate information dissemination, via both conventional and interactive media (especially the Internet) must be implemented.

Finally, Malaysia's relatively smaller stature and limited material resources may preclude her from directly confronting the sinister cabal elements of Langley. Nevertheless, we are not bereft of the moral resources - national unity, patriotism, self-belief and perseverance - to stem the destabilising tide of foreign domination.

These home-brewed attributes must be fully harnessed and galvanised.

Simultaneously, truly patriotic, moderate and peace-loving Malaysians must reject the unholy servile politics of Anwar and his so-called Barisan Alternatif, which in truth is no more than a "devil's alternative" of mega-Faustian nature.

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