

RPK reloaded: Running dog or watchdog?

MalaysiaKini.com

March 21, 2012

By S Thayaparan

'In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.'

- Winston Churchill

COMMENT I have to say I much prefer the controversies Anwar Ibrahim finds himself embroiled in rather than the prosaic but more egregious ones Prime Minister Najib Razak crudely ducks.

The latest involves luminaries such as Raja Petra Kamarudin (RPK, Anwar's former cheerleader now rabid forward striker) and Salman Rushdie, an author who's perilously close to confirming the adage, "everyone has at least one good book in them" but who is mostly remembered as the man who earned a death sentence for insulting Islam with a little read work of fiction.

NONE Anwar's non-participation in the India Today Conclave conference because of the presence of the controversial Rushdie is regrettable because once again it shows Anwar's subservience to the corrupt forces at work here that would use his own faith (Islam) as a weapon against him.

The Conclave's theme, 'The Asian Century: Securing the Global Promise' conveniently unveils the mendacity of those who want to lead us and those who are in power.

Everyone here understands why Anwar would not want to paint a bull's eye on his back (backstabbing being the preferred method of these hypocritical Islamist) but I wonder just how long Anwar's defense of his Islamic credentials will be the determining factor of the face of Islam which Pakatan Rakyat wants to project here and abroad?

If ever he becomes prime minister, will he be cowed by the minority forces which would seek to diminish his official powers and the supposedly multicultural voice of Pakatan?

Perhaps the answer to this question is really a leap of faith and (considering Najib's metaphor of an election as war - all those bodies defending Putrajaya at any cost) best not asked during this election season clouded by the fog of war.

School yard taunt from Raja Petra

However closer to home, Anwar's spurning of RPK in a forum about the "global political scenario" (whatever that means) with Wikileaks front man Julian Assange is a little harder to dismiss.

Details are sketchy but it would seem that (according to RPK via Wikileaks); "Anwar does not agree that I (RPK) be included". This, of course, is all very amusing for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, what we have is an organisation (Wikileaks) which is supposedly for the free flow of information sanctioning the censorship of one of its partners. Secondly, this forum is supposed to be part of a documentary for Wikileaks, which begs the question, will Anwar's request for the exclusion of RPK be part of the documentary?

WikiLeaks chief Julian Assange And, of course, there's Assange himself, that mercurial proponent of free speech under house arrest in London awaiting possible extradition to Sweden to answer sexual assault charges, who is planning to run for a Senate seat in Australia. Obviously freedom of expression and political candidates are mutually exclusive.

RPK's school yard taunts of calling Anwar "chicken" is extremely juvenile but it does contain a good portion of accuracy considering the fact that RPK is not just some partisan "blogger" off the information superhighway but a one-time confidant of Pakatan, not to mention a close ally of Anwar.

So as far as debates or discussions are concerned, I don't dismiss RPK out of hand. I mean, if you don't want to attend an international forum because of your religious beliefs (and not attending the India Today conclave because of Rushdie) is just that, but you have no problem sitting in on a forum (by Skype, no less) with an individual charged with sexual assault, surely the participation of a one-time ally should not pose a problem for someone who has braved the scurrilous attacks of the mainstream propaganda organs of the ruling regime?

And consider the stakes. RPK is vilified by almost every Pakatan supporter. There's a snowball chance in hell that what he says now will have any effect on people who are sympathetic to the aims of Pakatan or even the ABU (Anything But Umno) crowd.

The only people interested in what RPK has to say, or should I say reveal, are the die-hard BN lackeys who collect every breadcrumb of innuendo or allegation he drops like it was manna from heaven. And this is not really a "debate" of any kind but rather a discussion most probably punctuated by random potshots by RPK.

All this is really is a publicity stunt which would have been entertaining but which would have probably not changed any minds. As it stands now, it's just chin wagging between someone who is currently facing sexual assault charges and another who was recently acquitted of some.

Pakatan's 'inconsistencies'

Understand now that I don't think Anwar is obligated to "debate" RPK, but to have a hand in his dismissal from a panel seems crude and yes, inconsistent with the principles that Pakatan supposedly stands for.

NONEOf course, Najib has no business questioning the principles of Pakatan since this is something the BN would do and the only consistency the BN has shown is its consistency to suppress the freedom of expression, a propensity for looting and a willingness to stoke the embers of racial/religious hatred.

However, I believe holding Pakatan to a higher standard is a necessary prerequisite if ever we are to have a government we deserve.

I can rationalise Pakatan's occasional banning of the regime's propaganda organs from their events as keeping attack dogs from one's premises but at the end of the day, these small "inconsistencies" build up and it's incumbent on objective observers to point this out before the "inconsistencies" of Pakatan Raykat become indistinguishable from the "consistencies" of BN.

I am very well aware of a small vocal cadre of haters of Pakatan and BN who say they is no difference between the two and whose apathy probably translates to abstaining from the voting process.

Needless to say, until they choose to pick a side (which they will have to since there is a dearth of credible third-party candidates), they are not part of this conversation.

The 'truth' about RPK

I have already stated my stand on RPK's apparent political conversion but the manner in which Pakatan has chosen to deal with RPK or rather his "revelations" is a strategic misstep in my opinion.

Forget about the credibility of the messenger for a minute and consider the veracity of his claims. Is there any truth in them? Are his claims of corruption in Pakatan-run states accurate?

Considering how in his 'pre-conversion' days his 'truths' were consider gospel, maybe what Pakatan

should be doing is investigating any claims he make and ensuring their supporters and would-be supporters that credible official action would be taken if such claims are grounded in reality.

Instead because this is a "war" after all, everything RPK says is now considered turncoat enemy action worthy only of glib dismissal all the while questions keep cropping up from sources, both credible and propagandistic in nature, of governmental malfeasances that seems to be spreading in Pakatan-controlled states.

Of course, supporters of Pakatan will plead that the corruption of Pakatan pales in comparison to that of BN and this is true, but it all starts somewhere and I would think that it's better to confront these issues now then later. This does not mean withholding support for Pakatan but reaffirming a disdain for corruption.

So it really doesn't matter if RPK has been "bought". What matters most is, is there any truth in what he says?

And a good first step is not treating him like a pariah for abandoning the cause, whatever his reasons, but either exposing his lies or dealing with his truths.

Since governmental agencies at the moment are beholden to the Umno regime, it would serve the public better and definitely Pakatan if they viewed RPK not as a running dog but a watchdog.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/192680>

