

PDRM - the armed division of Umno
MalaysiaKini.com
May 02, 2012
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"I hate victims who respect their executioners" - Jean-Paul Sartre

"Policemen so cherish their status as keepers of the peace and protectors of the public that they have occasionally been known to beat to death those citizens or groups who question that status." - David Mamet

The ghosts of A Kugan, Aminulrasyid Amzah, Teoh Beng Hock and a host of others (whose names go unmentioned) watch silently as Prime Minister Najib Razak proclaims the police the victims of the state sanctioned violence that they (the police) perpetrated on the Bersih 3.0 marchers on April 28.

But in a sense he is right. The police are victims. They are as much victims of the Umno regime as any other citizen of Malaysia.

I realise at this emotional post-Bersih 3.0 moment, nobody is interested in any kind of discussion about the police other than how they are the armed division of Umno, but I would like to address certain issues regarding the violence that occurred during the April 28 protest.

NONETHis should not be read as some sort of apologia for the actions of the PDRM (Royal Malaysian Police) but rather my (hopefully) informed opinion on what has been troubling many men and women who have served, and who currently serve, in the various security apparatus of this country.

As a matter of public record, I would like to state that in my opinion any police officer who can be identified as abusing any marchers should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. They are a disgrace to the uniform, the public and finally the Agong.

On Sunday night (the day after Bersih 3.0), I received a call from an old senior police officer I knew from my Sarawak days.

"What the hell, Thaya, did you see the baby faces on parade there? What the hell were they (the government) thinking?"

We got into a long conversation and indeed I had the same conversation with many other retired and serving members of the various security forces in the country.

What amazed me the most of the police presence last Saturday was how young most of them looked. Many of my friends speculated that they looked fresh out of whatever passes for training these days.

Seeing the violence they committed in the various videos circulating on the Internet, it reminded me of schoolboys engaging in fist fights. There was no sense of any higher authority in command merely random violence targeted at anyone unlucky enough to get in their way.

Indeed, the protestors themselves seemed more organised, especially when they were shielding those unlucky police personnel who for whatever reason "accidentally" rammed into them from the anger of the crowds.

Siege mentality

Having been on the other side of protest marches gives one a particular perspective when it comes to

situations like this.

All military personnel receive some kind of public order training, or at least they did in my time, so I have some vague familiarity with what these men were going through. A long time ago, I too at various times in my career either stood guard or was giving the orders. The fear in their eyes was evident and so was the anger.

Wherever I went I made it a point to keep an eye on our boys in blue and sometimes even interacted with them. On numerous occasions, I realised that they had been standing still or milling about in the hot sun staring at the procession around them without having anything to drink.

NONE One of my biggest expenses last Saturday was buying drinks for them, which they at first refused but gratefully accepted after I spoke to their commanding officer. I was extremely happy seeing that other Bersih protestors doing the same thing at various points across the city.

Understandably those I engaged with in conversation were rather tight-lipped about what they thought of this whole affair, but something deep inside me knew there was trouble brewing.

"You know how it is now. The rot started post-69 or thereabouts," an old army comrade reminded me. "It infected all the services."

I want readers to think about how police officers or any other security personnel are infected with the Umno garbage of race and religion.

Remember how non-Malays are accused of being unpatriotic because they choose not to serve in the security apparatus of this country even though institutional racism is an open secret, much like it is in the civil service.

NONE I have no idea if there is a police equivalent of a Ridhuan Tee Abdullah teaching at whatever police training schools in operation now, but it doesn't take a genius to understand that these impressionable young minds who are supposed to be taught to serve and protect all citizens of the country are infected with that peculiar brand of Umno bigotry that excludes everyone even other Malays and Muslims if they don't subscribe to the party's ideology.

Add to this, the ranting of the two Alis (Ibrahim and Hasan) published in the racist propaganda organs of the state (which is probably the only news outlets they are exposed to) and what you get is a siege mentality acerbated by the fact that there is already an invisible line that separates security and civilian citizens.

When you are constantly indoctrinated with hate, sooner or later seeing the 'other' as not human and not fellow citizens but rather just another threat to 'national security' or to racial hegemony becomes part of who you are.

Imagine standing in the hot sun looking at people having fun, marching and enjoying themselves - crowds which consist of rebellious Malays and non-Malays who would wish to usurp your rightful place in the destiny of Malaysia.

Agent provocateurs

And if you think this indoctrination only affects the Malays, a former Malay Army major related to me that in a recent conversation, two Chinese and an Indian junior officers told her that Bersih was anti-government and anti-national (whatever that meant). Since she was attending, she didn't take too well to her patriotism being questioned.

And let's not forget that some protestors went out of their way to taunt the police. All that pent-up rage from both sides needed an outlet, but the difference is the police are supposed to maintain their calm in

stressful situations.

Understand now that I am not claiming all the police out there are like this or that the protestors were spoiling for a fight.

NONE Anyone who was there will tell you that the vast majority of protestors were law-abiding and peaceful participants in this process, but what they were up against was a police force poisoned by years of Umno interference.

It would not surprise me if they were agent provocateurs who were amongst the peaceful protestors. The so-called SOP (standard operating procedure) of retrieving recording devices from well, everyone, is evidence that the practitioners of the dark arts were out in full force.

But I also (and this where I will earn the scorn of Pakatan Rakyat supporters and maybe even Bersih supporters) would not be surprised if there were those within Pakatan who thought it would be a good symbolic gesture to reclaim Dataran Merdeka or at least make a go of it.

And anyone who has attended any of these demonstrations will tell there are always people who are there just for the sake of engaging in mindless violence for the sheer hell of it and were waiting for an opportunity to explode.

So there were all these elements for a perfect storm. Now of course the mainstream news organs beholden to their political masters will tell you it's all the fault of S Ambiga and Anwar Ibrahim and indeed we should all accept that in this struggle with this particular regime, scenes like this are bound to occur whenever mass protests are organised, but at the end of the day it is needed simply because if we are ever to get our police force back, to elevate them from their Umno victimhood, we need to constantly remind the regime that we are not afraid.

An old police friend asked me the other night, who I thought started the trouble. I said what I always say. In Umno I trust.

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