

**Zahid's speech to Umno wings, sign of 'yes-men' times to come**  
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COMMENT If you read between the lines, and consider the nuances, last night's speech by Umno vice-president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in opening the Umno wings' annual assemblies seem to herald the coming of the 'yes-men' and 'yes-women'.

The speech by the hitherto 'acting' deputy president itself was a first in two ways.

It was as admitted by Zahid himself in the speech, the first time he stood before the Umno delegates from Wanita, Youth and Puteri.

And as he himself admitted, a lofty perch for one who has climbed the ranks from a mere member, to now just one step below party president Najib Abdul Razak, 'acting' or not.

A showcase perhaps of the rewards one can reap if one were in agreement with those up above.

But what is more glaring is that it is the first time that one who wears the mantle of Umno deputy president, temporarily or not, stood before the wings to open their various AGMs, since the practice and tradition was abruptly halted in last year's party AGM.

At the time of course, the rebellious Pagoh MP Muhyiddin Yassin was still Umno deputy president when the wings all at once seemingly decided to hold their own openings with their own chiefs, instead of following the hallowed Umno tradition of giving the deputy president that honour.

Muhyiddin (*photo*) was then highly critical of Najib and had been making his views known out loud, something which Umno under Najib now frown upon. He was not the only casualty of the 'silencing' dragnet either as other members and grassroots who asked too much about 1MDB to Najib also felt the heat, or the boot.

It was noted by political observers that the discontinuation of the deputy president's opening of the wings was engineered to keep him from speaking to the delegates, just as the actions against members who were too vocal.

And Zahid's speech yesterday was the first time that the practice was continued after its short hiatus. The implications of which vis-a-vis Muhyiddin all the more clearer when you linked it to the loyal-to-Najib 'acting' deputy president's own words in the same speech.

**Stand behind the ship's master**

Zahid thanked Najib for giving him the trust to discharge the duties of deputy president, and then went on to say that this duty of opening AGMs is a test to evaluate his loyalty to the party president.

"I promise to stand behind the ship's master to sail this ark across the oceans to the isle of victory. This is the promise from Zahid Hamidi," he said, in what is a clear indication that loyalty is all.

In what may be a Freudian slip, he also mentioned that this honour is not '*ghanimah*' or spoils of war as it is known in ancient Arabic times, and denied that his promise is that of Niccolo Machiavelli, whose work *The Prince*, written during Europe's renaissance period is a manual for political intrigue.

But somehow those two terms struck a different chord if one were to follow current events, that his position is the *ghanimah* for blind loyalty, and that it was a product of Machiavelli's instructions to princes, on draconian actions to curtail dissent.

Indeed this may be the message that Zahid is imparting to the wings last night, bringing into focus his promise to 'reward' the wings with their own *ghanimah*, that is more candidates in the next polls, if they were to fall into line.

His 'instructions' for them to toe the line being to redouble efforts to help the rakyat reinterpret democracy through Umno's eyes and lenses, an echo of Sukarno's 'Demokrasi terpimpin' perhaps, eschewing other interpretations of democracy.

Ironically the 'acting' deputy president of a party that was born out of the free expression of political dissent and 'spirited' street demonstrations also asked the wings to help weed out street demonstrations from the meaning of democracy.

I wonder which definition of 'acting' should we apply here?

While his warnings of the need to curtail influences via IT platforms and gadgetry, harkens to what one would think that Big Brother out of Orwell's *1984* would warn against, or even the fascist government faced off by V, in *V for Vendetta*. I really hope he is 'acting' in this one though.

And the bigger worry, is, if the omens above hold true, all we will have soon will be a party of yes-men and yes-women and "*Hidup Umno!*" may sound and mean "Heil Umno!" and "Heil Najib!" instead.

And woe will it mean for the nation, for what he [compared the opposition](#) to in this self-same speech, is what Umno may frighteningly become, if not already.

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