

## **Sheraton Move: The day Dr M resigned himself to betrayals**

**Malaysiakini**

**21 November 2021**

**Marina Mahathir**

Walking past the TV room, I saw Anwar Ibrahim in the chair opposite Dad, the latest in the line of visitors. Downstairs I found his wife, Deputy Prime Minister Dr Wan Azizah (Wan Ismail), dressed in a light grey pantsuit and her customary hijab, about to leave in her official car, smiling as usual. She had already had her turn with Dad and did not look particularly worried.

Having received my urgent message, my brother Mokhzani was the first to arrive.

Standing by the front door, I quickly told him what had happened. As we talked, trying to make sense of events, Anwar came down the stairs and joined us. "I tried," he said, a wan smile on his face. He put his head on my brother's shoulder. I noticed his shoulders shook a bit. Then he straightened himself, his face dry-eyed, bid farewell and left.

Before long on that fateful morning, the house began to fill with people:

Muhyiddin (Yassin), Azmin (Ali), and the others who had gathered at the Sheraton the night before. They were shown straight to the dining room. Azmin arrived and saw me sitting with my brothers in the living room and unlike the last few occasions I saw him, did not smile.

Zuraidah Kamaruddin, the heavysset head of Wanita PKR, in her usual long tunic and pants headed towards me. I had always been friendly with Zuraidah. She had a good grasp of women's issues and had supported the women's groups when we marched in protest against child marriage. I always thought she would make an excellent women's affairs minister, but Dad had made her minister of housing and local government where she was doing well.

As she headed towards me with a smile on her face, I couldn't help but ask, "Why are you doing this to Dad?" Her smile disappeared. Without a word, she turned and joined the rest at the dining table.

I could not believe the array of people who were arriving. Faizal Azumu arrived inexplicably with his wife who came and sat with Mum, a move that made us all uncomfortable. How do you talk to someone whose husband was about to betray yours?

Shortly after Dad came down and sat grim-faced at the dining table facing the

rebels. His jaw was set, his brow furrowed as he listened to their arguments. I was in the living room some five meters away but the only voice I could hear distinctly was Azmin Ali's. He seemed the one most determined to carry out the deed, to leave the government that voters had given the mandate to rule and team up with the losers.

By lunchtime, they did not seem to have gotten anywhere with Dad and finally left. Dad went upstairs to rest.

### **'With Umno and PAS?'**

At 1.26pm, I had a call from Saifuddin Abdullah. Unable to pick it up at that moment, I texted him to say I couldn't talk. OK, he said. About an hour later I was forwarded a media statement that said that 11 members of PKR including Azmin, Zuraidah and Saifuddin were leaving their party to form an independent bloc in Parliament.

I forwarded it to Saifuddin with the query, "You're leaving to join this Muafakat thing?" He replied that Azmin and Zuraidah had been sacked from Keadilan and this was to show solidarity with them. "Yes, we are for the new coalition."

I had known Saifuddin for close to 20 years, having met him when we were both sent to a short course for NGOs at Harvard Business School when I was president of MAC (Malaysian AIDS Council) and he was heading the Malaysian Youth Council. We became friends and I remember in one class, he complained about political interference in the running of his NGO. I had always known him to be a reasonable and open-minded person.

I asked him again, "With Umno and PAS?" He never replied.

In the afternoon, after the first lot had left empty-handed and we had lunch, another set of people arrived, this time the ones the rebels wanted to team up with. My eyes widened as Zahid Hamidi, the president of Umno facing 47 corruption charges and Hadi Awang, dressed in his usual white turban and looking a lot younger than I expected, scuttled in smiling, sure that they would be able to persuade Dad.

They too sat around our long dining table facing Dad at the head of it, his face possibly looking more disgusted than before. The presence of these people made the house feel unclean; if Najib Razak had walked in then, I think I would truly have lost it.

**Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd**

Source: <https://www.malysiakini.com/columns/599525>