

ASEAN heads of state in an ASEAN-plus-three informal summit. Vice President Hu said: "Top priority should be given to strengthening supervision, regulation, and control over the flow of international capital. It is not only an urgent task to safeguard the economic security of the East Asian countries, but also a long-term need for ensuring sustained and steady growth of the East Asian economy." China's support for ASEAN continues the historic diplomacy of the past months between China, Russia, India, and Japan, which has dramatically increased the potential for the Eurasian Land-Bridge to become the centerpiece for a new strategic and economic alliance of sovereign nations—and a means for reversing the on-rushing new world depression.

In spite of the disinformation in the world press, which generally denigrated the ASEAN conference for failing to implement further self-destructive free-trade measures, the truth is that crucial collaboration between Southeast Asia and East Asia on new economic architecture is now a reality.

Cambodia overcomes NED subversion

by Michael O. and Gail G. Billington

Despite extensive international efforts to subvert the results of the popular election held in Cambodia last July, a new coalition government was finally formed in November, ending the threat of yet another era of foreign-instigated warfare in this long-suffering nation. The success in forming a government was greeted at the United Nations by the re-establishment of Cambodia's seat. That seat had been suspended in July 1997, after the attempted coup by troops loyal to Prince Norodom Ranariddh and remnants of the Khmer Rouge, and Prime Minister Hun Sen's military suppression of that attempted coup.

In mid-December, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also decided to admit Cambodia, a move postponed in 1997, because of the government crisis. Cambodia's entrance completes the unity of the 10 nations of Southeast Asia (see accompanying article).

The July 1998 election saw the enthusiastic participation of more than 93% of the electorate, and was almost universally praised by international observers as both free and fair. Prince Norodom Ranariddh had been pardoned by King Norodom Sihanouk (with Hun Sen's approval), for his criminal collaboration with the Khmer Rouge in 1997, in order to allow him to participate in the elections. His Funcinpec party won 31% of the vote, as against 41% won by Prime Minister Hun

Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The third candidate, Sam Rainsy, the favorite of the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED), won only 14% of the vote.

Nonetheless, Sam Rainsy, with full backing from his sponsors in Europe and the United States, immediately launched an international campaign to overturn the election, including violent demonstrations in Phnom Penh, replete with incitement to military attacks on the government and racist diatribes against Cambodians of Vietnamese descent. Although Prince Ranariddh put his name on all the public statements issued by Sam Rainsy, he generally stayed in the background.

Because the constitution requires a two-thirds majority to form a government, Hun Sen could not form a government on his own, except by changing the constitution. He made repeated offers for a coalition government to Prince Ranariddh, and even to Sam Rainsy, which were all rejected, leaving the country in a dangerous crisis for nearly four months. Finally, in November, Prince Ranariddh broke his unholy alliance with Sam Rainsy, and joined Hun Sen in forming a legitimate coalition government. This constitutes a dramatic victory for Cambodia, and for all of Asia, against the subversive efforts of the NED.

What is the NED?

The role of the United States in Cambodia is full of contradictions, which go a long way toward explaining the current crisis in the United States itself. President Clinton played a crucial role in preventing Prince Ranariddh's efforts to revive the Khmer Rouge, and later Clinton exerted extensive pressure on the Prince to accept the election results and form a government with Prime Minister Hun Sen. After the coalition was created, Prince Ranariddh told the press that "enormous international pressure" was applied, and that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth and U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering "telephoned me personally, asking me to return to negotiate the establishment of a new government."

At the same time, however, the NED, financed by the U.S. government, was instigating Sam Rainsy into a rebellious insurrection against the election and against the government, and trying to tie Prince Ranariddh to the Sam Rainsy subversion. What, then, is U.S. policy?

The answer lies in the nature of the NED, made up of a Republican half, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and a Democratic half, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). The NED was created by the associates of former President, now Sir George Bush, in the 1980s, representing those elements of both parties committed to defend the geopolitical status quo of the increasingly bankrupt Wall Street and London-centered International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial system. As the rate

of collapse of that system has accelerated since the onset of the “Asian contagion” in July 1997, the NED has served as a key vehicle in trying to sink a new strategic combination of nations, centered on the positive results of the early summits between President Clinton and China’s President Jiang Zemin, and in collaboration with the new Russian leadership around Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov. The new strategy aims at bringing in India, Japan, and key developing nations around collaboration in great global infrastructure projects, and a return to the best principles of stable financial policies under the Bretton Woods system.

The IRI is dominated by the same Republican yahoos who are leading the treasonous impeachment effort against Clinton, while the NDI is closely linked to the Al Gore faction of the Democratic Party, which staunchly defends the IMF system and opposes Clinton’s policy commitments toward Russia, China, and the Middle East. Exemplary is Gore’s most recent disgusting insults to Malaysia, and all of Asia, at the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Kuala Lumpur, and his collaboration with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in bullying President Clinton into the disastrous bombings of Iraq.

The constitutional crisis in the United States has had a direct impact on the Cambodian situation. The attempted subversion of Cambodia’s government would not only destabilize Southeast Asia, but would undermine China’s efforts toward regional peace and development, and threaten the U.S.-China relationship. The victory against the NED operation in Cambodia by the establishment of the new government is a significant blow to that subversion.

In the new Cambodian government, Hun Sen will be the only Prime Minister. Prince Ranariddh will become president of the National Assembly; however, that post will no longer serve as head of state, during King Sihanouk’s frequent absences for medical care in China. Instead, an upper house, a Senate, will be created, whose president will assume that authority. Chea Sim, president of the CPP, and former president of the National Assembly, will preside over the Senate.

The primary economic and foreign policy cabinet positions will be filled by the CPP, but the Funcinpec will hold several cabinet posts. The Defense and Interior ministries will be shared, with co-ministers from the two parties. In addition, several generals loyal to Prince Ranariddh, who had joined forces with the Khmer Rouge over the past year, were pardoned, as were two members of the royal family, earlier convicted of plotting coups against Hun Sen.

The peace is fragile, but real. The Dec. 25 defection to the Royal Government of two of the three remaining top Khmer Rouge leaders at large should give hope that the 30-year civil war may, literally, be on its last legs. However, continuing disruptive efforts by prominent members of the U.S. House Foreign Relations Committee aim to undercut the new coalition. U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), while addressing a campaign fund-raising event with the Cambodian com-

munity in California, on Oct. 30, 1998, told his audience that in the next six months, it is imperative to stop Hun Sen from establishing a “dictatorship.” Rohrabacher even suggested that they encourage a mutiny of Cambodian armed forces against the duly elected Prime Minister.

Rohrabacher, whose congressional career has been punctuated by close ties to Ollie “I’m a Contra, too” North, and sponsorship of the pro-Taliban Afghanistan Foundation, told his Cambodian ex-patriate audience: “Hun Sen is tied to the worst people in the world. . . . There are many people in the army who take orders from Hun Sen . . . but they’re not bad people. . . . If someone is a patriot in the Cambodian army, he should not be using his weapons against the people of Cambodia, he should be using his weapons against the Hun Sen dictatorship. . . . And the troops that come over should be treated as heroes.”

Sam Rainsy continues to identify with such disruptive efforts by opposing crucial aspects of the new coalition, such as the creation of a Senate, and, as recently as Dec. 22, he appealed to the U.S. Congress to pass resolutions denouncing Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Even more dangerous is the fact that Cambodia’s new chance at peace, after 30 years of bloody war, comes in the early stages of the worst global financial crisis in 500 years. The hard work must now begin.

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