
Interview: Samdech Hun Sen



Create a New World Order Shared by All, Fairly

On Sept. 9, Gail Billington interviewed His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, in New York City, following the United Nations' Millennium Summit. The interview is the third in a series of conversations with Prime Minister Hun Sen. Before leaving Phnom Penh for the summit, the Prime Minister said he would not discuss in New York the proposal for a UN-supported tribunal of Khmer Rouge leaders to be held in Cambodia. The National Assembly is in the early stages of reviewing the draft law for the tribunal, which deliberations will continue when the Assembly reconvenes in October. Prime Minister Hun Sen addressed the UN summit on Sept. 8, outlining five points related "to the challenges to the development of humanity and the creation of a new world order in the age of globalization": first, reducing poverty and closing the gap between rich and poor, which has resulted from the negative impact of globalization, in part, through increased investment flows, technology transfer, and new knowledge; second, reversing the decline in Official Development Assistance; third, tackling excessive external debt.

Samdech Hun Sen pointed out that the debt burden for several of the poorest countries, including Cambodia, date to the 1970s and "were contracted during the Cold War to finance the hot wars in the country and region. Under those circumstances, most of the loans were not utilized for development, therefore, there should be political will to write off these debts." Fourth, "human resource development is the most important and decisive factor for development and social progress." Fifth, Samdech Hun Sen said that "Cambodia agrees with the initiative to push for the creation of a new world order by establishing a new institution and putting forward a new agenda, or by improving and redirecting the existing one in order to ensure that all developing countries can benefit fairly and equitably from globalization." In this vein, he lent Cambodia's support to expanding the Security Council membership, specifically, for inducting Japan and India as permanent members.

In the following interview, Samdech Hun Sen discusses his government's domestic priority project of reducing Cambodia's current armed forces of 140,000 personnel, ultimately, by 79,000, of which 55,000 would be military and 24,000 police.

EIR: I'd like to start with the Millennium Summit. There have been some remarkable statements from the heads of state. I understand that Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's President Jiang Zemin have both talked about the need for a just, new world economic order. Iran's President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami talked about the need for a dialogue of civilizations to avoid the human catastrophes that occurred in the 20th Century. Would you please describe your sense of the mind-set of the heads of state who are here?

Hun Sen: Up to now we have not had enough time to make an assessment of the statements of the heads of state and government, in which they raised many issues, some are common issues and some are exclusive.

There are heads of state and government who raised common issues of the world, and some also raised exclusive issues. As for the position of President Putin and President Jiang Zemin about the new world order, it seems that this issue has now matured, because this subject has been raised since the 1980s. We could say that this issue now represents a consensus, especially from the developing world.

And especially in the age of globalization, which is more demanding of a new world order, such a new order should be in favor of all. However, we could say that the Millennium Summit is very important, as it could mobilize all leaders of the world to be together. It is easy to gather all the leaders of the world to be here, but it would not be easy to put into practice what has been agreed to by all the leaders here. I think we have to undergo many stages before we could achieve a common mechanism for that.

EIR: The summit is occurring in the context of a number of warnings, since June, especially, when the Bank for International Settlements warned of the possibility that the U.S. economy could face a "hard landing." The recent Federal Reserve symposium Jackson Hole, Wyoming, elicited more warnings, with economists pointing, in particular, to the U.S. trade deficit and the risk of a new financial crisis.

Hun Sen: This is a concern of the world as a whole, because the American economy is very influential. It could use its influence for economic recovery or economic recession. It would be a misunderstanding, or mistake, to wish to see the American economy declining, because once the Ameri-

can economy is in crisis, it would be a crisis for everyone.

In recent decades, we experienced economic crises in America and in Europe, but they not only overcame the crisis, but also made economic progress. So, if America, Europe, and other countries could overcome these earlier crises, I think they can solve a new one. We can learn from the recent crisis of the Asian economies, which was caused by the bubble economy, where real values were inflated. For example, the real cost of this glass of juice is \$1, but, because of pricing on the stock exchange, it is now \$3. So, if they face a crisis, they will collapse, but I don't think they will fall below the real price. Everyone learned a lesson from the recent Asian financial crisis, and others will learn also.

I am not an expert on the economy of America, but I do not wish to see any country in economic crisis, which would impact its people. Especially, I do not want to see the American economy in crisis, which would affect the whole world.

EIR: We have been following very closely the steps that Asia has taken in the last year, with the Chiang Mai discussions and the renewed discussion of the Asian Monetary Fund, to create some kind of regional mechanism. At the same time, there have been major efforts—the moves toward unification of the Koreas, the new level of dialogue going on between Japan and China. I'd be interested in your comments on this new spirit within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and between ASEAN and its "Plus 3" dialogue partners—Japan, China, and South Korea.

Hun Sen: The idea of the Asian Monetary Fund has been raised since 1997, but it has been quiet for a while. This question was raised again in the last meeting of the Ministers of Finance of the "ASEAN 10 Plus 3" in Chiang Mai. Even though it has not been realized yet, it is a topic for consideration of all concerned countries, and if it could be realized, it could help countries in crisis, or help countries' social and economic development.

If it could be realized, it would also contribute to the needs of many countries and help those countries not to rely only on the IMF [International Monetary Fund]. This Asian Monetary Fund is not to replace the IMF, but to complement funds provided by the IMF.

For Cambodia, and other poor countries of ASEAN, we are very pleased with this plan, but for the plan to materialize, we need also help from other countries, such as Japan, China, and South Korea.

EIR: In a speech in Beijing at the end of August, Japanese Foreign Minister Mr. Yohei Kono said he was looking forward to the trip of Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji to Japan in October, which he said could lead to "a great leap into the 21st Century." In particular, he suggested cooperation between China and Japan for moving the Greater

Mekong River Subregional Development projects forward. Russia also has a conference coming up on Eurasian transportation, to link the Russian Far East to Central Asia and on into Europe.

Hun Sen: This relates to development of the Mekong riparian countries. In February this year, there was the meeting of the ASEAN 10 and, later, during the meeting of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Bangkok, I raised to the ASEAN working group, on the one side, and, on the other side, Japan's working group, and also, possibly, the Asian Development Bank, to work out the master plan for the development of the Greater Mekong project. The reason I raised this vision, or this plan, is that each of the Mekong riparian countries have their separate plans for development.

All my life I have heard talk of development of the Mekong River, but nothing has been realized, perhaps for lack of a master plan and the means to carry it out. For example, each country had its own project for development, but they did not take into consideration the common project. For example, if they would like to have a rail link, how and where do the two countries decide to make that link?

Because there is no master plan, it is also very difficult for the donor countries to provide assistance to projects that would benefit all countries. During my visit to Singapore and the Philippines, I asked the leaders of the two countries to support my initiative to set up the working group so that the master plan for development could be drawn up, and the two countries gave their support to the idea.

EIR: In the context of the Greater Mekong Subregional Development, what are your priorities for Cambodia?

Hun Sen: Cambodia is concerned with both conservation and development. Before the start of the interview, we were discussing the flooding of the Mekong River—the worst floods in 40 years—which is related to conservation measures that must be taken into account in the greater subregional project. The shallowness of the river poses many obstacles to the countries, especially in relation to water transportation, preservation of the fish population, erosion of the river bank, and flooding. Conservation measures have already contributed to improve transportation and protect the fish population. All of the riparian countries must agree with each other not to transfer the water from the Mekong River, otherwise it would be detrimental to the countries in the lower reaches of the Mekong. So, if there is greater cooperation among all the Mekong riparian countries, including Yunnan Province in China, these criteria can be respected. There are still several Mekong riparian countries that are very poor, including Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, and so development of the Greater Mekong Subregion area would also benefit these countries, so that we can narrow the gap between the new members of ASEAN and the original members of ASEAN.

EIR: When I was preparing for the interview, I went back and found Secretary General Kofi Annan's speech from April, where he outlined some of the themes he wanted addressed at this summit, and one was what he called a "Blue Revolution," related to water control, clean water, and water for sanitation in developing countries, so this discussion of the Mekong is very relevant from that standpoint.

I would like to turn to some of the things you said in a recent interview with a Singapore Chinese-language newspaper about your priorities on poverty, land access, and national stability, and, in that context, the status of the demobilization of the military.

Hun Sen: Demobilization is our main target, first, because it would allow us to reduce expenditures on security and national defense, which now accounts for 30-40% of the budget. Second, those savings could be put into education and public health. Third, we can turn non-productive into productive forces by expanding the total land area under cultivation. We are proud to say that we have been working effectively on demobilization.

This has also allowed us to tackle the issue of corruption, especially eliminating "ghost" soldiers, which add up to 15,000, plus 150,000 "ghost" dependents. This disease is a

carryover from the 1970s. We started the pilot project of demobilization with 1,500 soldiers, beginning in May and completed in August, which involved soldiers in the provinces of Kampot, Kampong Thom, Battambang, and Kampong Cham. This was well received by the donor community.

Before the start of the pilot project on demobilization, I was very concerned because many donor countries had pledged their assistance to us, but they did not deliver on their promises, except for Germany. So we had to use the government counterpart fund to carry out this pilot project. Then I made a statement to tell the people of Cambodia, the armed forces, and the donor community that Cambodia could not go forward with this demobilization plan if the pledges from the donor community were not fulfilled.

But before leaving Phnom Penh for the UN Summit, I received a letter from the World Bank's representative in Phnom Penh, that they had received so far \$15 million for demobilization, and so the money is now in Cambodia's account for the old and the new plan.

I wrote a letter in response, that I was very thankful to the World Bank, and that the demobilization plan, due to start in November, involving 10,000 soldiers, could not be carried out unless the funds were transferred to Cambodia's account. If there were only pledges without the actual money, and then we carried out the demobilization, it would be very dangerous for Cambodia. There would be political risk. I also drew the World Bank representative's attention to the fact that, in carrying out demobilization, we had to be flexible, too, because the soldiers are coming from many backgrounds—some used to be farmers, some were workers, and some had other occupations, so we have to adjust to the reality.

Even though there is a slow response from the donor community, in reality, the donor community welcomed very much the plan for demobilization, and I am also hopeful that we will receive the assistance from the donor community, because during the last 40 years many of the former governments of Cambodia, and many warring factions, sought foreign assistance to increase the armed forces and to buy weapons. But right now the new government is seeking assistance from foreign countries for demobilization, so this plan, this budget, should be encouraged.

EIR: I'd like to extend this a little bit to two aspects related to UN peacekeeping. There has been a lot of coverage in the United States recently on the HIV/AIDS crisis in southern Africa, and on the debate, if you will, that South African President Thabo Mbeki triggered when he came up with proposals on this. There is also a new report on the UN's role in bringing HIV/AIDS to Cambodia. I wonder if you would want to say anything about that?

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Hun Sen: I remember that in 1998, on Election Day, I went to vote, and then journalists caught up with me at my house and asked me what the United Nations had left behind in Cambodia. My response then was that what they left behind for us was AIDS, and it is the reality that with the multinational forces going to Cambodia, AIDS spread so quickly.

There is one ridiculous thing that happened with the UNTAC [United Nations Temporary Authority in Cambodia] operation in Cambodia. During the operation, some UN vehicles and equipment were stolen from UNTAC, and then they did not know how to get it back from the thieves, so they just announced that they were donating all the stolen vehicles and equipment to Cambodia.

Later, we discovered that the way in which the vehicles and equipment had been stolen stemmed from the cooperation between the UNTAC official and Cambodian thieves. That is a lesson for other countries to learn, once they have UN forces in their country.

Another lesson for other countries that would receive UN peacekeeping forces, is that they need to check all the forces sent to a country, to make sure beforehand that they are not infected with HIV/AIDS.

I think it should also be one of the criteria in recruiting UN officials and UN peacekeeping forces to be sent to other countries, in order to curb the spread of AIDS from one country to another.

EIR: I understand that one of the issues on the table at this UN General Assembly session is a discussion of revamping the whole peacekeeping approach of the United Nations. There was an editorial in the *Bangkok Post* on Aug. 26, in which the *Post* was recommending to the new Thai commander of the task force in East Timor, that he, General Boonsang, should point out to the UN that “the United Nations’ failure to disarm the Khmer Rouge played no small part in the political instability that followed the UN general election in 1993 and which culminated in the fighting that took place in Phnom Penh in July 1997.” Do you have any advice, given your experience with UN peacekeeping missions?

Hun Sen: People used to talk of the successful operation of UNTAC in Cambodia. That is only to see the operation from one angle, but we have to talk about realities. Whose role was more important in bringing the Paris Peace Agreement to fruition? Frankly speaking, if there had been no forces of the former government, named the State of Cambodia, to contain the Khmer Rouge forces, then I do not know how many of the UN forces would have been arrested or killed by the Khmer Rouge. It would be like the case of Sierra Leone right now.

Just one small example of what happened in an area in which the UNTAC forces had been replacing the forces of

the State of Cambodia: What happened is that the UNTAC force there had been taken hostage by the Khmer Rouge. Without the forces of the former State of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge would have controlled many places in Cambodia, and then it would be very hard to organize elections. It was because of the Paris Peace Agreement that the forces of each of the three factions were allowed to regroup in a given area. That allowed the Khmer Rouge to expand their area of control. It created difficulties for our forces after the election in dispersing the Khmer Rouge from their area.

For the mobilization of the State of Cambodia and the other two factions that respected the Paris Peace Accord, including the election, we could say that it was successful, but we can say it was a failure for UNTAC in face of the Khmer Rouge. The key to the success of the UNTAC operation in Cambodia is the role played now by King Norodom Sihanouk, because he facilitated all the winning parties to form the coalition government, and it is King Sihanouk who helped bring unity to UNTAC, not UNTAC which helped King Sihanouk. The party that won the election also contributed to the success of UNTAC.

As for other places, I am not so sure, but for East Timor, I can say that if I were the United Nations, I would not do what they have been doing over years. The time for multinational forces in East Timor is more favorable than it was for Cambodia. Given this favorable time, why did the so-called UN government not build up the mechanisms for an independent East Timor? They should avail themselves of this opportunity to build up the armed forces, the police forces, the government, and all the institutions for the independence of East Timor. They should not use this opportunity for the UN just to control one nation.

I met His Excellency Xanana Gusmao, chairman of the National Council of Timorese Resistance, when we attended the reception for the Japanese Prime Minister, and I invited H.E. Xanana to visit Cambodia, where I would receive him as the head of state and government of East Timor, but I requested just one thing of him: not to be accompanied by officials of the United Nations. I told him, frankly, that I felt displeased when I saw that the leader of East Timor, Xanana himself, walked after the UN official, and I even told him the name of the official, that is Mr. Sergio Viera de Mello, the UN’s chief administrator in East Timor, who used to work with UNTAC in Cambodia. If I were the United Nations, I would consider Xanana as the head of state, and we would help him to lead the country, East Timor, to increase his authority little by little, while the United Nations, little by little, withdrew from East Timor, as the Vietnamese helped Cambodia at one stage.

When the Vietnamese first helped Cambodia, there were more Vietnamese armed forces in Cambodia. But later, the Vietnamese withdrew little by little, while we built up our

armed forces, until there were no more Vietnamese armed forces in Cambodia.

I do not know what the United Nations has been doing to prepare for the independence of East Timor because, for us, at least by this stage if I were the leader, I would print the money to be used in East Timor already.

EIR: I saw a recent report that Cambodia is assisting Vietnam in reclaiming the remains of their soldiers missing in action (MIAs), Vietnamese who died in Cambodia. I thought that it was very important, because the United States is just now beginning to discuss assisting the Vietnamese in reclaiming their 300,000 war dead.

Hun Sen: We have been helping America account for those missing in action for more than 10 years, and now, I think, there remain about 70 cases, which we continue to account for. America highly values the cooperation they receive from the Cambodian side on this question, and they consider Cambodia the best in cooperation in this field. If I am not mistaken, Vietnamese armed forces have been to Cambodia three times already to pursue cooperation in accounting for their MIAs. In general, we will provide cooperation to all countries that have remains of their people in our country, and shall consider it a humanitarian act.

We understand very well the concerns and worries of the families of the victims, as fathers, brothers, husbands, regarding information that could clarify their concerns. We will even push further the cooperation with America on the question of the MIAs. My son has also been working on this.

EIR: We have a Presidential election coming up in the United States. Do you have any observations, and what do you hope would come after?

Hun Sen: That is the right of the people of America to choose the leaders they like. The result would be responsive to what the American people would like to have. They are now in the electoral campaign. Every party, every candidate, has equal opportunity, and normally the result would go to the winner.

EIR: We know both of these candidates too well, I think.

Hun Sen: It is the American people who know these two candidates more than others.

EIR: About half of American voters are not taking part in the elections.

Hun Sen: That is the political right of the American people, whether they would vote or not vote, and, if they vote, vote for the one they like.

EIR: We say they are voting with their feet.

Hun Sen: Maybe some people prefer to take Election Day to be with their family.

Who Is Provoking the Neo-Nazis?

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Mrs. LaRouche is the chairman of the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo), a German political party. In this capacity, she issued the following statement, which has been translated by EIR. Editorial interpolations are in brackets.

Representatives of the Red-Green coalition [the national government] are flattering themselves at the moment with diatribes against right-wing radical violence. According to them, this violence is supposed to be stopped by the full might of the police and judiciary apparatus, and a suit should be launched in the Federal Constitutional Court to outlaw the NPD [Nationalist Party of Germany]. If the government thinks that this will allow them to bring under control the violence against non-Germans, the handicapped, and the weak, they are mistaken. If the government were really so tremendously upset about the neo-Nazis as it pretends to be, it would go at the problem at its roots. It would not only cut off the neo-Nazi propaganda, which is spread primarily from the United States and Canada over the Internet, but it also would get the violent videos under control, which are also spread over the Internet, through games, and other brutalizing aspects of the so-called "youth culture" (heavy metal rock, satanic songs, etc.). But, that means that the government would have to take on Hollywood and the producers of Nintendo video games.

The American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association had documented already in 1972 the direct connection between violence in the media and the real violence of youth and children. In the 28 years since then, violence among youth and the phenomenon of "killer kids" has become perhaps the greatest domestic threat to American society. Incidents such as the massacres at Littleton and Paducah, where 14- and 17-year-olds killed their fellow students and their teachers, are only the tip of the iceberg. Similar incidents on a smaller scale are an almost daily occurrence. In Michigan, a six-year-old boy killed a six-year-old girl in the Spring of this year. In all cases, the children and youth were addicted to violent videos.

Lt. Col. David Grossman (ret.), professor of psychology and military science, who has taught at the West Point academy, among other places, investigated the history of this violence, in books and published studies, among them the highly readable *Stop Teaching Our Children to Kill*. He describes