

Thailand: Will Soros Strike Again?

by Michael Billington

Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has implemented several relatively effective measures to protect his nation from a possible recurrence of the 1997 George Soros-led speculative assault on the Thai currency and economy, which triggered the so-called "Asia crisis." But he is now, ironically, risking getting blindsided by the same George Soros on a different flank—drugs and international organized crime. On Aug. 26, Prime Minister Thaksin put out a proposal for the legalization of marijuana, supposedly to "lure" drug users away from the more dangerous drugs. His Attorney General, Wichian Wiriyaprasit, went even further, suggesting that the government produce and market methamphetamines, "to put big-time dealers out of business"—although Thaksin is reported to have opposed that idea.

If the Thai leaders have followed the nefarious career of Soros, from before his 1997-98 role in setting off destruction of many of the economies of Asia through speculative warfare against their currencies, and continuing through to today, they would know that he is the world's leading financier of the pro-drug lobby, trying every trick in the book (and spending millions of dollars from his ill-gotten fortune) to get drugs legalized around the world. He is now, for instance, financing the campaign to legalize marijuana in the State of Nevada—hand-in-hand with the casino industry (see article, p. 71). The excuses being put forward for legalization in Thailand are simply a few of the many lines used by the Soros front organizations to break down resistance to the "legalization" of organized crime's drug operations around the world.

Even the Soros assault on the Thai currency, the baht, in 1997 had a drug connection. The government of then-Prime Minister (now Deputy Prime Minister) Chavalit Yongchaiyudh was taking measures to establish better relations with Thailand's western neighbor, Myanmar—a policy much opposed by Soros, who is the leading financier and sponsor for the many anti-Myanmar non-governmental organizations, ethnic separatists, and opposition parties which exist along the Thai/Myanmar border, and often keep their offices in Bangkok. Soros continues the British imperial policy towards the infamous "Golden Triangle" drug production region, which centers on the mountainous border regions of northern and eastern Myanmar—that is, prevent any government control from Yangon over these regions, allowing

the continuous flow of drugs by “independent” drug lords to the international “Dope, Inc.” operatives.

Whenever Bangkok moves to establish closer relations with Yangon, as in 1997 and again today, the Soros “Dope, Inc.” networks move in to undermine the nation. If Soros is not already directly involved in lobbying for legalized drugs in Thailand today, he will not be slow in getting engaged in the process, with both his organizations and his money. Thailand should not let itself be burned twice.

Gambling and Organized Crime

Prime Minister Thaksin is being pressured on another flank of organized crime as well—gambling. Although there is a huge black-market gambling network within Thailand, the government has thus far refused to allow legal casino gambling within the Kingdom. However, numerous casinos now sit just across the border in neighboring Cambodia, in addition to the casinos to the south in Malaysia (where Muslim Malays are not allowed to enter!), which all draw Thai gamblers in large numbers. A Chulalongkorn University study estimated that over 100 billion baht (about \$2.5 billion) has been lost to the Cambodian casinos alone.

As a result, a group of nearly 100 members of Thai Rak Thai (Prime Minister Thaksin’s party) have called for legalizing casino gambling in Thailand. This act of desperation in a climate of continuing economic crisis will solve nothing; it will further invite organized crime into positions of power within the country, as has happened in the United States over the past decades as “Indian-run” casino gambling spread around the country.

Already, the loose visa policies in Thailand, intended to increase tourism, have facilitated an influx of international organized crime networks into the country. Interior Minister Purachai Piemsomboon recently said that the country had “better start taking action before we are denounced as a hub for transnational criminals.” Legalizing gambling and drugs are not the actions needed.

Such desperate measures will surely backfire against the otherwise serious efforts by the Thaksin government to defend the sovereignty of the nation, by expanding national and regional economic development policies to overcome the continuing crisis and to lessen dependence on the West.

The Alternative: Great Projects

Thaksin has withstood intense opposition from Western financial institutions, and their assets within Thailand, for his promotion of Great Projects on a regional scale, and for his “directed credit” policies, aimed at uplifting the general welfare of the population (see “Thailand’s Thaksin Draws Wall Street Fire,” *EIR*, Dec. 21, 2001). While continuing his policies of universal health care and credit for villages and for small business ventures, Thaksin has also resisted International Monetary Fund demands for increased taxes, firesale privatizations, and similar “conditionalities” that

proved so disastrous in the aftermath of the 1997 collapse. He is now considering land reform policies, to seize the land of large holders who have not developed it, and give it to the 1.5 million landless families.

Great projects of infrastructure are also on his agenda. The Thaksin government has succeeded in winning China’s interest in participating in the construction of a canal across the Isthmus of Kra. This appears to be the missing ingredient which was needed to jump-start this crucial, but long-stalled project. Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit, a long-standing champion of the Kra Canal, said that it would “open a new chapter for the Thai economy,” and would be “instrumental in laying down a new economic structure, with Thailand serving as a fully integrated industrial service hub, particularly for shipping-related businesses.”

Thaksin has also pushed through a major gas pipeline and industrial complex with Malaysia, despite massive international “environmentalist” opposition (which also has a Soros connection). Together, the Kra Canal and the gas project would transform the underdeveloped southern regions of the country, while contributing to regional development as well.

Other projects include the Mekong River Development and the Asian Road and Asian Railroad, enhancing transport through Thailand from Jakarta, Indonesia to Kunming in China. These great infrastructure developments, stalled by the 1997 financial collapse and by lack of interest during the government of Chuan Leekpai, who replaced Chavalit as Prime Minister in November 1997, until Thaksin’s election in January 2001, are again moving forward. The East-West road and rail complex from Danang, Vietnam, through Laos and Thailand, is being completed, while discussions for extending the project through to Myanmar and on into India are moving ahead, although slowly.

It is through such regional development projects and cooperation, transforming the backward border regions—where “Dope, Inc.” now has a free hand—into new agricultural and urban centers, that the problem of drug control can be solved. Such development also provides the basis for cultural optimism and economic progress, necessary for a sense of a national mission, which is ultimately the means of turning the population towards more noble aims than drugs and gambling.

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