

Southeast Asian nations rebuff British assault on national sovereignty

by Michael O. and Gail G. Billington

Meetings held July 20-25 in Jakarta, Indonesia of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the security-oriented ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), were the occasion for a head-to-head confrontation between ASEAN and the European Union (EU) over the issue of national sovereignty. The EU, dominated by the new British-French Entente Cordiale, has attempted to coerce the ASEAN nations into acceptance of supranational policies in regard to their economies, as well as environmental, labor, and human rights issues, in an ongoing effort to impose a "world government" under the auspices of the United Nations and affiliated global entities, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These efforts were not only rejected at the ASEAN and ARF summits, but the ASEAN members threatened to redefine the criteria for membership in ARF so as to remove the EU from the organization.

The focus of the EU attack came in regard to Burma (Myanmar), which had been invited to participate this year as an observer in ASEAN, and as a full member of ARF. The July 15 EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels stopped short of imposing sanctions, opting instead for a condemnation of the ruling Burmese military council, SLORC, thanks largely to the intervention of the former colonial power, Britain, whose representative said the full weight of sanctions would not be felt without the backing of the United Nations. Two days later, EU Vice President Manuel Marin warned ASEAN that continued support of Burma would jeopardize future relations with Europe.

Such threats do not sit well with the growing sense of nationalism in Asia. Ajit Singh, secretary general of ASEAN, responded the following day by announcing that Burmese politics would not be accepted as an issue at the ASEAN meeting. "We have a policy," said Singh, "of non-interference and constructive engagement. We do not tell other organizations how they should run their affairs . . . and at the least, we expect the same kind of consideration. . . . The West and the media are going on a witch-hunt as far as Myanmar is concerned, because it is not an issue at all as far as ASEAN is concerned."

Clinton sidesteps British trap

Efforts to draw the United States into a confrontation with its Asian allies were avoided by careful and prudent diplomatic steps taken by President William Clinton. Leaders of the Anglophile "Conservative Revolution" in the U.S. Congress, led by Republican Senators Mitch McConnell (Ky.) and Alfonse D'Amato (N.Y.), and Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (N.Y.), have, in previous months, introduced bills calling for immediate sanctions against Burma, including a cutoff of all U.S. investment and humanitarian aid to the country, including in anti-narcotics areas. Clinton clearly recalls how McConnell and others last year manipulated him into permitting a visa for an (unnecessary) invitation to Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui to visit the United States, touching off a severe crisis in U.S.-China relations, which is only now being resolved.

Clinton acted preemptively this time to avoid a similar disaster in regard to the ASEAN nations. While agreeing that sanctions may become necessary if human rights conditions worsen in the future, he deployed two special envoys, William Brown and Stanley Roth, to tour Japan and ASEAN members Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines, to discuss the Burma question. While this trip demonstrated the administration's concern over the situation in Burma, it also gave the Asian nations a venue to express to the United States their deep concern that any supranational breach of sovereignty would be counterproductive, and that only through creating conditions of economic development in Burma, in league with its ASEAN neighbors, could the transformation away from military government be realized.

The importance of the Brown-Roth trip became evident at the ASEAN and ARF meetings. President Clinton stated before the meetings that the United States, in deference to its allies in ASEAN, would not join the EU in calling for sanctions, while instructing Secretary of State Warren Christopher to support the ASEAN policy of "constructive engagement." Thus, when Christopher spoke at the ASEAN meeting, although he used tough language to denounce Burma's military regime, and declared that "we retain the option of taking more forceful action as developments in Burma

warrant," he nonetheless acknowledged: "We recognize that ASEAN has a different approach—indeed, President Clinton's decision to dispatch two special envoys to the region last month reflects the importance we attach to hearing your views. We hope that the ASEAN nations will use their engagement in Burma constructively."

On July 26, the U.S. Senate voted up an amendment to the foreign aid budget, which outlines the conditions under which President Clinton can impose stiffer sanctions on SLORC, should the political situation deteriorate further. Drafted with the participation of administration officials, the rider supersedes the McConnell-Moynihan bill and, largely, codifies Clinton's standing policy.

To express their displeasure with the EU, ASEAN foreign ministers issued a declaration at the end of their two-day meeting, stating that, in the future, only sovereign nations, not organizations, would be admitted to membership in the security group, the ASEAN Regional Forum. The EU is the only organizational member of ARF. Promptly, Britain and France filed for membership.

Economic issues at stake

Behind the worldwide publicity over human rights-environmental-labor issues in Asia, lies the more fundamental confrontation over the direction of their economies. As *EIR* has reported over the past months, the British have responded to the unfolding global financial breakdown by actively restructuring the British Empire, centered on the existing structure of the British Commonwealth, with a principal focus on controlling the expanding economies of Asia.

The founding of ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting) in Bangkok in March, a project launched by the Entente Cordiale and their favorite Asian comprador, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, represented the British effort to transform the area into an expanded version of the colonial banking centers of Hongkong and Singapore, based on drugs, speculation, and cheap labor for the "globalization" of low-skilled process industry from the West. The included purpose, in addition to establishing British looting rights in Asia, was to prevent the implementation of the opposite policy, as proposed by *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche, for the joint development by Europeans and Asians of the Eurasian landmass, centered on the reconstruction of the ancient "silk routes," connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa with high-speed rail lines through Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

At a May conference in Beijing, sponsored by the Chinese government, called the "International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions Along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge," the two opposing policies were starkly contrasted. Helga Zepp LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute and wife of Lyndon LaRouche, was a featured speaker, detailing the current historical opportunity to reverse the impending global collapse through the imple-

mentation of this vast international development project, and through the collaboration of sovereign nations, East and West. British Vice President of the EU, Sir Leon Brittan, in an insulting display of colonial arrogance, insisted that neither European nor Asian nations would be allowed to implement national credit policies to finance the Continental land-bridge, that the international financial institutions would sabotage any approach which did not assure both short-term profits for private investors, and forwarded related demands that would ensure that the land-bridge project is never carried out. Sir Leon pointed to the Bangkok ASEM meeting as the model for "free trade" agreements, rather than collaborative dirigist methods, insisting that "the rules of the WTO" must supersede sovereign national policies.

Britain's leading asset within ASEAN, self-proclaimed British agent Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, in a July speech to Singapore businessmen, confirmed *EIR*'s charge that the underlying purpose of the ASEM organization is to *prevent* the development of the Eurasian landmass, while subjecting Asia to the dominance of British financial methods and geopolitical control. Europe and Asia, Lee said, share a fundamental strategic reason for forming the ASEM alliance, which is *containment of Russia!* He insisted that peace through development is impossible, because a strong Russia would necessarily be an imperialist threat to both Europe and Asia. "I don't care whether it's democratic or dictatorial or whatever. . . . It is in the psyche, in the ambition, in the historic memory of the Russian people." This is a classic restatement of the geopolitical methods which guided 19th-century British policy in creating divisions in Eurasia, to better maintain imperial power, through control of sea-borne trade and global finance.

The military aspect

The British have, since the founding of ASEM in March, gained considerable leverage over the economic policies in Asia, despite some significant resistance. The question arises: Why did they jeopardize this leverage by fighting with ASEAN over Burma? The answer lies in part in the role of the military in the defense of national sovereignty, not only within Burma, but across Asia.

As in Ibero-America, the military in several ASEAN nations have historically taken an active role in both forging the industrialization and modernization of their nations, as well as defending against subversion of foreign-sponsored ethnic insurgency and/or drug armies. While problems of corruption and abuse of power certainly exist, the role of the military has been and will continue to be crucial in defending both the economic and military security of developing nations. Not surprisingly, the UN apparatus pushing for a "world government" has been in the forefront of efforts throughout the Third World to remove the military from any influence in the government or in economic policy-making,

or, when possible, to eliminate the military altogether.

Indonesia is the crucial test case in Asia. Since the time of its hard-fought and bloody war for independence against the Dutch after World War II, Indonesia has assigned the military a dual role, such that military personnel are constitutionally included in every branch of government, and in social institutions across the country. Indonesia, the fourth most-populous country in the world and the largest and most resource-rich country in ASEAN, has been the most resistant to IMF demands for the elimination of protective economic policies, policies which have allowed the utilization of their considerable natural wealth for the industrialization of the nation. Again, it is not surprising that the international non-governmental organization (NGO) apparatus has escalated a global campaign against Indonesia, promoting the efforts of Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the first President of independent Indonesia, Gen. Achmed Sukarno, to destabilize the regime in the name of "democracy." The British news service Reuters even crowed that "democracy movements overshadow Asia security talks," reporting that Megawati and Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, these "daughters of independence leaders," were both calling on the *Western* members of ASEAN and ARF to take action against Indonesia and Burma, respectively.

Indonesia has, in fact, played a critical role in Burma's emergence from backwardness and isolation, as the Burmese military government has called on the Indonesian government and military to help in the shaping of a constitutional republic based on the Indonesian model, capable of bringing both security and economic development. It is precisely this effort to create a constructive role for the military which has been denounced and rejected by British darling Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi, the daughter of the leader of the independence movement in the 1940s, Aung San, was deployed back into Burma from her home in London (and her British husband) in 1988 to activate the populist movement against the military regime. The international NGO apparatus, with primary financing from the godfather of the drug-legalization movement, speculator George Soros, has provided Suu Kyi with massive international publicity for her demands for the cutoff of all economic aid and investment into her country.

The government released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest last year, and invited her party to participate in the preparation of a new constitution at a special convention for that purpose. Suu Kyi, however, pulled her party out of the convention, refusing to participate unless it was agreed that the military would not be permitted any role in government.

ASEAN leaders should take note of similar, and more advanced, efforts to destroy the military institutions in Ibero-America. During the administration of George Bush, junior partner of Margaret Thatcher, the U.S. State Department joined international institutions in demanding the disman-

ting of the military forces in South and Central America, to be replaced by multinational forces from the United Nations or from the Organization of American States (OAS). This news service published a book in 1994, *The Plot to Annihilate the Armed Forces and the Nations of Ibero-America* (the original was published in Spanish in 1993), reviewed in the Spring 1996 *Joint Forces Quarterly* of the U.S. National Defense University. The review grudgingly admitted that the book "has sold thousands of copies in Latin America, and the Mexican military printed a special edition. . . . It is reportedly on the required reading lists at several regional military academies and staff colleges. Students of Latin American affairs will ignore this book to their own detriment."

In the same issue, the principal architect of this plot against the military institutions during the Bush administration, Luigi Einaudi, argues that changes in military structures are required to fit a post-Cold War world in which the new security concerns center on stopping "truly transnational forces, some with appalling destructive powers," such as global warming, pollution, "population overflow . . . and the evils of dictatorships and protectionism."

Without explicitly naming *EIR*, Einaudi complains of the wide acceptance of "conspiratorial depictions . . . that the U.S. wants to abolish all national military forces in the region," which has stalled the creation of an OAS supranational military force.

A similar plan in store for Asia

As confirmation that the British have the same, or at least a similar plan in mind for the ASEAN nations, the leading British intelligence think-tank for Asian affairs, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, released a new report entitled "The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security." The report, by London School of Economics Prof. Michael Leifer, dismisses ARF as an "imperfect diplomatic instrument for achieving regional security goals." He makes clear that the "security goals" he has in mind are those of the new British Empire, not those of peace and development in Asia. Leifer complains that the ARF has refused to intervene in conflicts such as the Taiwan-China confrontation over the past year, a conflict which was largely created by the British and their allies among the Conservative Revolutionaries in the U.S. Congress. In a review of the IISS report by journalist Sally Patten in the July 16 *Asia Times*, Leifer is paraphrased as follows:

"One of the central problems is ASEAN's insistence on retaining the central diplomatic role in ARF. This has resulted in ARF's approach resembling that of ASEAN, which is based on a quasi-familial culture of consultation and cooperation. Consequently, the forum is based on informal confidence-building and preventative diplomacy alone, under

the assumption that the process of open dialogue will improve [the] political relationship.”

After this burst of cynicism, Leifer concludes that what is required is a “balance of power” in the region, the classic colonial methodology for maintaining divisions and conflict among subject nations, by purposely accentuating the apparently conflicting interests of each nation, rather than forging alliances between sovereign nations based on common interests. The security arrangement which the British have in mind for such a “balance of power” is a supranational defense force, to function in the same manner as the occupying army in the colonial era, intervening against the sovereignty of any nation that refuses to submit to the “balance,” as determined by the “world government.”

The ASEAN nations did well to repulse this diplomatic assault. It were even better if this experience strengthens their resolve to withstand equally deadly demands from the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization for dismantling their protective economic regulations and state-directed development policies. That ASEAN leaders are aware of the consequences of “globalization,” Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad made clear in a speech in Kuala Lumpur July 25, just as the ASEAN meetings concluded in Jakarta. Mahathir warned, “A globalized world is not going to be a very democratic world. It will belong to the powerful, dominant countries. They will impose their will on the rest and the rest will be no better off than when they were colonies of the rich.”

The option of joining with China and Russia in the Eurasian land-bridge great project, is very much on the agenda, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. During his first state visits to the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on July 17-20, Prime Minister Mahathir reached agreement for Malaysia to participate in tying Kazakhstan into the railway project along the southern silk route, and the rail extension southward through peninsular Malaysia. In mid-June, Malaysia hosted a five-day meeting, attended by China, the seven ASEAN members, and three prospective members, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, to discuss further ASEAN’s “beautiful vision” of developing the 2.3 million square mile Mekong River Basin.

The Chinese took a step in the right direction at the ASEAN conference, confirming their willingness to negotiate with ASEAN on a multilateral basis, rather than their previous insistence on bilateral talks only, in regard to the South China Sea, where sovereignty over the Spratly Islands is contested by China and several ASEAN member nations.

Viewing the South China Sea as an internal Asian waterway, much like the Great Lakes of North America, can facilitate the ASEAN nations taking their rightful place as crucial contributors to the development and security of Eurasia as a whole.

British games sink Burundi into war

by Linda de Hoyos

On July 24, the military in Burundi took power directly in a coup that sent President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya to seek refuge in the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Burundi Rusty Hughes. Although initial reactions from the White House and the U.S. State Department indicated hopes that the military would uphold the Burundi Constitution and democracy, by July 25, the coup was official. Burundi Defense Minister Firmin Sinzoyiheba, a participant in the coup, declared: “The Constitution is suspended, the National Assembly is suspended, and the political parties are banned. That’s the end of the story.” Pierre Buyoya, a retired major and the military dictator of Burundi from 1987 until elections imposed on Burundi by the United States in June 1993 turned him out, emerged as President of Burundi once again.

The next day, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns reported that the United States would cut off all financial and economic assistance to Burundi, as per U.S. law. However, although on July 24, he had stated that the United States would “work to isolate” any regime that did not uphold the Burundi Constitution, on July 26, Burns appeared to renege on this, stating, “I think on a practical basis we will have to work with these people”—meaning, Pierre Buyoya.

Burns’s statement was but a milder echo of the enthusiastic endorsement of the Buyoya coup appearing in the London *Times* July 26, under the headline: “Tutsi Ruler Rekindles Hope.” The military coup, said the *Times*, especially in that it brought Buyoya back to power, “is the most promising sign in a bleak picture. . . . In the absence of any rapid decisions with regard to foreign intervention in Burundi, it is the best thing that could have happened under the circumstances.”

The proffered logic behind the London *Times*’s endorsement is the stated hope that Buyoya, will be able to restrain the Burundi military from a full-scale slaughter of the 80% of the Burundi population who are Hutus. The Burundi military is 99% taken from the Tutsi ruling military caste, and its top leaders, including Buyoya, come from the Hima sub-caste of the Tutsis, based in the southern district of Bururi. Buyoya has won backing from London, and Washington, by presenting himself as the “moderate Tutsi,” who will keep at bay his Presidential predecessor, Jean-Baptiste