

Asian call for human rights review must lead to New Bretton Woods

by Michael and Gail Billington

In a stunning expression of unity and responsibility toward the unfolding global crisis, leaders of the nations of Southeast Asia, joined by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, turned the closing press conferences of the meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Malaysia on July 29, into a forum demanding a review of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The subject had not been addressed directly during the week of contentious debates, which were dominated by issues of national sovereignty and the criminal role of speculators in the currently unraveling global financial system. But when Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad raised the issue at the press conference, saying that the nearly 50-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights fails to address the needs of poor and underdeveloped nations, sparks flew from the Anglo-Dutch spokesmen for the European Union, and from U.S. State Department officials accompanying Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The Asian nation leaders responded with insightful analysis and a forceful defense of the call for a review of the Declaration.

The primary point was that the right to economic development of a nation and its people had not been the guiding principle of the 1948 Declaration, and that it has subsequently become a tool in the hands of some leaders of the advanced sector to impose continued economic backwardness on poor nations under the pretense of concern for human rights. Despite the howls of protest from “the West,” one after another of the Asian leaders rose, insisting that they did not wish to “water down” the true and just desire for human rights for all the world’s people, but to *improve* upon the badly flawed document prepared by the founders of the United Nations.

What was not said, but which is on every political leader’s mind, both in Asia and in the West, is that the flaws in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are exposed at this point because of the breakdown of the *other* primary policy established at the end of World War II, the world economic order designed at Bretton Woods in 1944. The Bretton Woods agreement set fixed currency exchange rates, based on a gold-reserve system, with the primary concern being the reconstruction of the devastated economic infrastructure of Europe after the war, while reestablishing stable world trade relations.

The dollar was pegged to a fixed weight of gold, and became “as good as gold,” as a reserve currency around the world. The agreements have progressively collapsed since 1971, when President Richard Nixon pulled the dollar off gold, and have disappeared completely in the 1980s and 1990s transformation of the world financial system into a deregulated gambling casino for derivatives, speculators, and drug money launderers (who are usually one and the same individuals).

The Asian leaders are aware of the growing movement for a New Bretton Woods Conference, a call initiated by American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, which now has the support of more than a thousand individuals, including former heads of state, state and local elected officials, civil rights, trade union, and religious leaders, and economists. The movement recognizes that the only way to successfully address the fundamental flaws in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is to simultaneously discard the bankrupt and corrupted International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and related UN economic institutions, and build a new, just world economic order predicated on the rapid economic development of all nations.

On Aug. 31, Mahathir brought the issue of the IMF’s criminal role into the public debate, when, during celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of Malaysia’s independence from British colonialism, he declared that the IMF had *sponsored* the speculators who were looting and destroying the economies of Southeast Asia. He described the world under IMF control as “a jungle,” saying that the leaders of small and developing nations must “develop the skills to handle the wild beasts which roam around inside it.” The IMF, he said, wants to stop or slow down all major development projects, and “is only interested in saying, ‘I told you so,’ even if they had to subvert our economy just to prove that they are right.” The oligarchy see the writing on the wall, and are not amused.

The UN Declaration

The 1948 Declaration was designed by the leading spokesmen of the British Empire, whose purpose in building the United Nations was to force upon all nations a “world government” along the lines of Bertrand Russell’s world parliamentarians committee. Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt had very clearly informed the British that the

United States would not tolerate a continuation of British, Dutch, and French colonialism after World War II, his untimely death in April 1945 left the United States in the hands of the pliable Harry Truman and his Anglophile controller, Averell Harriman. At the beginning of World War II, the British, anxious to get the Americans fully engaged in the war, had reluctantly conceded to an Atlantic Charter, in which those nations occupied by the Axis powers would become free and sovereign states. Churchill and the British had no intention of allowing this explicit pledge to apply to *their* colonies, occupied by the Japanese in Asia; and, with Roosevelt's death, the American side capitulated to the British Empire policy. Truman not only agreed to the reestablishment of the colonial empires in Asia (and elsewhere), but was manipulated by Russell's networks into dropping America's only atomic bombs on Japanese cities, acts of barbarism which had *no military purpose*, against a nation which, by then, was cut off by sea from its supply of essential raw materials, and was already preparing to surrender. The only purpose for the bombings was to so terrorize the world, that nations would willingly relinquish sovereignty to a world government, in order, they were led to believe, to avoid the horrors of nuclear war.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, although expressing the aspirations of many nations that the horrors of fascist oppression never again be tolerated, was carefully designed to ignore the issues of the economic rights to national development, while also providing a cover for the breach of sovereignty of any nation which refused to succumb to the "neo-colonialism" under the British Commonwealth or the British-dominated United Nations Organization (UNO).

Not only did the Declaration ignore the issue of colonialism, it explicitly references, approvingly, the idea of "limited sovereignty" for territories and countries, demanding that only individuals within such "non-self-governing" entities be entitled to personal liberty.

Ignored is the conception of man that arose in the Golden Renaissance, and the concept of the nation-state, its necessary complement. Man's freedom and dignity do not derive merely from restrictions against repression, but from the capacity of each individual for that which uniquely distinguishes man from beast, the God-given power of cognitive reason. The power of humankind to discover ever more perfectly the laws of the universe, and apply such discoveries to the increase and improvement of the condition of the human race, requires the existence of a political entity dedicated precisely to that principle for each and every citizen. This was the seed crystal of the sovereign nation-state, which gave birth to the explosion in *global* demographic, scientific, and cultural development, following the European Renaissance of the 15th century, despite many atrocities brought on by the colonial policies of the Enlightenment and the continuing grip of oligarchical power.

The most profound articulation of the necessary fight for these two interrelated ideas—the concept of the nation-state,

and the concept of man in the image of the Creator—occurred during the battle for independence of the British colonies in America. Following the tradition of the Renaissance, as transmitted through, especially, the works of the 17th-century genius G.W. Leibniz, and then to the circles around Benjamin Franklin, the Founding Fathers of the United States explicitly defined their new-found nation as a Republic, based on natural law, including such "unalienable rights of man": "Among these, are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This is a formulation of the ideas of Leibniz, who recognized that the source of joy in man lies in the creative act of discovery, which makes each individual capable of assimilating the discoveries made throughout human history, and to conceptualize the future as the basis for his or her own creative contributions to the shaping of history. The Founding Fathers explicitly rejected the British notion, associated with John Locke and the Enlightenment, that natural law only protected "life, liberty and *property*," the view of the oligarchy that the purpose of government is the protection of the personal riches of the wealthy.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights took the side of the British on this issue, against the Renaissance, Leibniz, and the American Founding Fathers. The Declaration says: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person," replacing the positive notion of man's true freedom, located in the exercise of reason and improving upon mankind's progress, with the negative restriction against threats to one's security (although the British authors probably would have preferred the term "securities").

The British hopes for the UN to become the world government were not entirely realized, in part because of the powerful impulse for technological optimism in the United States, following World War II, and in part due to the development of a nuclear capacity by the Soviet Union and, later, the People's Republic of China. But with the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Bretton Woods economic system in the West, the British have been reforming both the Commonwealth and the UNO to function according to their original design—world government over a new colonialism, now called "globalization."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, during his four-nation tour of Southeast Asia in late August, has emerged as the self-appointed spokesman to reiterate the imperial view that "no change" is the *only* change that will be tolerated. Speaking in Kuala Lumpur on Aug. 28, Cook warned against tampering with the Universal Declaration, "There is room for debate about the implementation, but not about the principle. . . . Every country is a member of the international community and it is therefore reasonable to require every government to abide by the rules of membership. They are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. . . . All members of the United Nations are required to hold these rights to be self-evident." In Indonesia, Cook was downright insulting on the subject.

Why the Schiller Institute was founded

The international Schiller Institute was founded by Helga Zepp LaRouche precisely in order to prevent this descent into a new colonial barbarism, and to redress the fatal flaw in the structural design of the United Nations. Aiming to establish a worldwide movement dedicated to the highest principles of universal natural law, the Schiller Institute adopted a "Declaration of the Inalienable Rights of Man," at its founding conference in November 1984. That Declaration states, in part:

"The history of the present international financial institutions is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world. They have refused their assent to our plans of development, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. They have forbidden their banks to engage in business of immediate and pressing importance for us, and on equal terms. . . . They have overthrown legitimate governments repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness their invasions on the rights of the people. . . . We, therefore, Representatives of the Peoples of the World, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world, do . . . solemnly publish and declare that all countries of the world are and of right ought to be free and independent States. That all human beings on this planet have inalienable rights, which guarantee them life, freedom, material conditions worthy of man, and the right to develop fully all potentialities of their intellect and their souls. That, therefore, a change in the present economic and monetary order is necessary and urgent to establish justice among the peoples of the world."

ASEAN sounds a universal alarm

The backdrop to the debate at the ASEAN conference was the multibillion-dollar looting of nearly every Southeast Asian nation by global speculators, led by the notorious George Soros, during the months of June, July, and August (see *EIR*, Aug. 15). Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir, with backing from his ASEAN partners, denounced the speculative attacks on ASEAN currencies by super-rich individuals, as willful, criminal acts of theft from nations which lack the resources to defend themselves. Mahathir and others demanded that the world take steps to correct a system that tolerates such overt criminal activity by the so-called "free market." Mahathir also linked the speculators' actions to the *political* efforts of Soros and others to prevent ASEAN from admitting Myanmar and Cambodia into the association, due to supposed "human rights" concerns. (As *EIR* has documented, drug-legalization advocate Soros and his allies are far more interested in maintaining control over the vast sources of drugs in the Golden Triangle than in the rights of the people of Southeast Asia.)

Mahathir then dropped his bombshell, calling for a review of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. U.S. Undersecretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Stuart

Eizenstat, who had foolishly leapt to defend Soros earlier in the week (as did Secretary Albright), stuck his foot in his mouth again, denouncing Mahathir's proposal as an effort to dilute the universal value of human rights. "Universal values don't have a time period," he said. "They are universal and transcendent." Even more incensed was Dutch Deputy Foreign Minister Michiel Patijn, who said the European Union would be "extremely reluctant to review the charter," which he described as the cornerstone of all international relations. "I was particularly surprised," he pontificated, "that this conference discussed the declaration's review."

This hypocrisy was met head on by one after another of the Asian leaders. Indonesia's Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said he was equally surprised that the proposal was interpreted as an effort to "dilute" the value of human rights. He insisted that there is a need to have uniform standards, in order to strengthen human rights, including economic as well as social, pointing out that over 120 newly independent states are now in the UN, which did not take part in the drafting of the 1948 convention. He was supported by the foreign ministers of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen then pointed out that while the United States releases a report on human rights around the world every year, it publishes no report on human rights abuses *within* the United States, nor does the Western press cover China's reports on human rights problems in the United States and Europe. Qian's role in this debate is critical. President Clinton, while concerned about continuing restrictions on freedoms of speech and assembly in China, has firmly supported the idea of constructive engagement with the world's largest nation, and his administration has increasingly expressed support for the "great projects" approach being followed by the Chinese government, such as the Three Gorges Dam and the historic Eurasian Land-Bridge project to rebuild the ancient Silk Road connections between China and the West. It is precisely in this framework of collaboration in nation-building that a New Bretton Woods *and* a new, enhanced declaration on all human rights, can be brought into existence.

On Aug. 22, during a state visit to Malaysia, Chinese Premier Li Peng supported Mahathir's call for a review of the UN Declaration, and added that this will require a solution to the mounting economic crisis. "Let us join hands in a concerted effort to promote the establishment of a fair and just new international political and economic order characterized by peace and stability," Li Peng said.

The rapidly unfolding collapse of the world financial system demands that national leaders think beyond their national problems to address the crying need for a new, just world economic order. The call by Asia's leaders for a review of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, if linked with support for the Schiller Institute's call for a New Bretton Woods Conference, can become the trumpet call for a new era of development and peace.