

Congressional yahoos peddle 'big lie' on Cambodia

by Michael O. and Gail G. Billington

During the same week that the U.S. House of Representatives voted to launch a treasonous investigation into the impeachment of President Clinton, several leading Republican Congressmen succeeded in passing a "sense of the House" resolution, regarding the recently re-elected Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen, which ranks with the "big lies" in the tradition of Josef Goebbels. On Oct. 10, Rep. Dana "Beach Bum" Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), backed by Doug Bereuter (R-Neb.) and Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), passed House Resolution 533, calling for the United States to support an indictment of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, to stand trial "for violations of international humanitarian law after 1978 in Cambodia." Under the cover of rhetoric defending democracy and denouncing genocide, House Resolution 533 is actually part of a campaign by these Congressional yahoos to do exactly the opposite—to defend the perpetrators of the greatest genocide of the second half of the 20th century, the Khmer Rouge, and to overthrow the universally acknowledged free and fair election in the sovereign state of Cambodia.

Although the resolution is not law, and has no binding power, and although the Clinton administration has unequivocally dissociated itself from its content, House Resolution 533 is nonetheless a gross violation of Cambodia's sovereignty, and a threat to America's interests and influence in Asia and worldwide.

To understand why these Republican leaders, with backing from certain Democrats, are willing to peddle such outrageous lies about a small, impoverished nation like Cambodia, it must be recognized that the target of the anti-Cambodia campaign is not just Cambodia itself. Rather, it is part of the attack on President Clinton, and especially on the President's efforts to build a strong alliance between the United States and China.

A U.S. alliance with China is crucial if the United States is to take the steps necessary to lead the world out of the financial explosion and economic collapse now sweeping the globe. Cambodia, as a pivotal point of instability in Southeast Asia and on China's southern border, has long been a target of British geopoliticians and their allies in the

U.S. Congress to sow Asian disunity at the expense of the long-suffering people of that nation.

Three levels of lies

There are three overlapping categories of transparent lies in the campaign against Cambodia carried out by the United Nations Human Rights Center, led by Ambassador Thomas Hammarburg with some strong Western media support, and by a nest of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) run by the British-American-Canadian oligarchy. These are: 1) the lie that the July 26 election was fraudulent; 2) the lie that Prime Minister Hun Sen carried out a coup in July 1997 against his co-Prime Minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh; and 3) most important, the lie that the "concern" is Cambodia, when, in fact, the real target of the attack is U.S. relations with Asia, and with China in particular.

As to the July 26 election, Rohrabacher's backers in the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), two of the branches of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) set up by the Bush apparatus in the early 1980s, spent millions of dollars in an attempt to unseat Hun Sen, openly backing the two opposition candidates, Sam Rainsy and Prince Ranariddh. The NED expected that the army of "international observers" who monitored the elections would document government terror and intimidation against a frightened electorate. It backfired, as the monitors universally reported a joyful and patriotic population flooding the polling stations, with more than 90% of the electorate taking part. Far from stealing the vote, Prime Minister Hun Sen's party received a respectable but hardly overwhelming 41% of the popular vote, and a bare majority of seats in the Parliament.

A two-thirds majority under Cambodia's Constitution is required to form a government, and Hun Sen, after the election results became known, immediately called on both Prince Ranariddh and Rainsy to join him in a coalition government. Both have refused, with Rainsy leading the way in accusing the government of fraud, terror, and intimidation, and claiming that the method of counting the vote was rigged in Hun Sen's favor. The NED crowd and the



U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) (left) is shown early this year in the company of Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay, senior officer allied to Prince Norodom Ranariddh, at the O'Smach base camp on the Thai-Cambodian border. General Nhiek shares the camp with the remnants of the hard-core Khmer Rouge under the command of mass murderer Ta Mok, a.k.a. "The Butcher."

Western press hooted and hollered in support of these unsubstantiated accusations, which were refuted by nearly every other international agency, including the UN. Ironically, even the NDI's director for Asia, Eric Bjornlund, admitted that the "allegations of fraud in the balloting and counting do not appear to be significant enough in their totality to have affected the overall outcome of the election." The change in the vote-counting procedure, which, contrary to the opposition's charges, were duly reported to all parties, were corrections to a technical error, and the method adopted was internationally recognized as fair and accurate. The totality of the accusations concerning the elections amount to: "We don't like the results, so it must be overthrown."

His Excellency Var Huoth, the Kingdom of Cambodia's Ambassador to the United States, raised serious questions about the commitment to democracy of HR 533's instigator, Rohrabacher, suggesting that "the author of the Resolution should encourage the Cambodian parties to work together instead of dividing them for an ulterior motive, thus obstructing the formation of the new Royal Government of Cambodia. The action of Rohrabacher has mainly contributed to the division among Cambodian political parties and Cambodian people, the slow-down of the peace process, and the reconstruction and development in Cambodia." In other words, so much for democracy.

Whose coup?

The second lie, and the core of Rohrabacher's resolution, is that Hun Sen is an unreformed Khmer Rouge murderer,

who conducted a coup in July 1997, seizing total power from the shared-power arrangement between himself and Prince Ranariddh, who had served as co-Prime Ministers since the UN-brokered 1993 elections. To back up his accusations, Rohrabacher charged Hun Sen with bloody, genocidal crimes going back to the 1970s, even calling him a "former Pol Pot trigger man." Even most of the human rights NGOs choked on this one. Hun Sen is most admired within Cambodia precisely because he helped lead the liberation of the nation from Pol Pot and the reign of terror under the Khmer Rouge.

Hun Sen, like many young Cambodians, had responded in 1970 to King Norodom Sihanouk's call to resistance against the U.S.-backed coup of Gen. Lon Nol, only to witness subsequently that a then-little-publicized, but nonetheless ruthless, communist cadre organization, which King Sihanouk named the Khmer Rouge, would emerge as the dominant force in that anti-Lon Nol resistance, toppling the Lon Nol government in 1975. Then, the horror of Cambodia's nightmarish four years under the Khmer Rouge began. Hun Sen, who was near fatally wounded shortly before the Khmer Rouge seizure of Phnom Penh, the capital, was a deputy commander of units along the Vietnamese border, and was ordered to conduct murderous raids against Vietnamese villages by the Khmer Rouge leaders. Instead, he went over the hill, seeking support from Vietnam to defeat the Khmer Rouge. For his efforts, he was jailed by the Vietnamese, and only subsequently did Hanoi support a Cambodian-led force, including Hun Sen, to oust the Khmer Rouge, who, by 1979, were estimated to have killed 1-2 million of Cambodia's 7.5 million people.

As Prime Minister in the 1980s, Hun Sen successfully held the Khmer Rouge at bay, despite the fact that the Republican administration in the United States (for which Rohrabacher worked as a special assistant, 1981-88) unconscionably supported the deposed Khmer Rouge as the legitimate government.

As *EIR* has documented over the last year, the events of July 1997 were anything but a coup by Hun Sen. In fact, the opposite was the case—and, again, the evidence is incontrovertible. Co-Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh and Rainsy, faced with an almost certain election defeat to the popular Hun Sen, took the criminal measure of forming an alliance with the remnants of the Khmer Rouge, against Hun Sen. This renewed an alliance that had existed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. When this illegal pact was exposed, revealing formal signed documents between the conspirators (which broke several laws against collusion with the Khmer Rouge), Prime Minister Hun Sen moved to carry out his constitutional responsibility, crushing the insurrection and coup. Khmer Rouge forces that had been covertly deployed into Phnom Penh, and a small faction of the Army under Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay, who remained loyal to Prince Ranariddh, were driven out of the capital. The rapid suppression of this Khmer Rouge

revival was carried out with extremely little bloodshed—about 100 deaths were reported, mostly of Army personnel in Nhiek Bunh Chhay’s faction. Prince Ranariddh and Rainsy fled the country before the scheduled coup attempt.

Any doubt about the existence of the alliance with the Khmer Rouge was dispelled when Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay proceeded to set up military operations with the Khmer Rouge killers, led by Ta Mok, a.k.a. “The Butcher,” in the village of O’Smach, along the Thai-Cambodian border—operations that continue to the present.

Thus, while Rohrabacher accuses the man who saved Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge of being a “Khmer Rouge trigger man,” he himself is aligned with political figures who tried to bring the Khmer Rouge back to power. Incredibly, it has recently been revealed that Rohrabacher travelled to this illegal base camp of Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay and his Khmer Rouge allies at O’Smach, proudly posing for a photograph with the general himself.

Demonstrations coordinated by terrorists and foreign nationals

There has also been an enormous hue and cry among the NGOs and in HR 533, about the supposed “violent crackdown on thousands of unarmed demonstrators,” who protested the election results. Perhaps the best response to these charges is that made by Prime Minister Hun Sen himself—a response which, not surprisingly, has gone almost unreported in the Western press. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Hun Sen to Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.), whom he describes as “two old friends of Cambodia,” who have been “recipients of false and misleading information” about the situation in Cambodia.

“When the public demonstrations began on 23 August 1998, a request had been made by the opposition parties for a single day of protest regarding the elections to last for about three hours. On the basis of the constitutional rights of free speech and assembly, as well as the relevant municipal laws and regulations, this request was granted.

“In a totally illegal action, the demonstrators took over a park across from the National Assembly. They set up a squatters’ camp and refused to move for two weeks. I would humbly suggest that if protesters illegally occupied a park at the U.S. Capitol, it would not take your police long to have them vacated.

“In our case, the Royal Government bent over backwards to avoid a confrontation. Not only did we allow them to stay in the park without benefit of a permit, but we provided security and sanitation facilities.

“How was our restraint rewarded? The opposition parties set up loudspeakers where they encouraged the crowd to violence. In the most vitriolic terms, Mr. Sam Rainsy called for the overthrow of the government, asked the U.S. govern-

ment to bomb my house, demanded that I step down, and referred to me as a ‘*yuon*’ puppet. In case Your Excellencies are not familiar with the term, ‘*yuon*’ is a highly derogatory and racist term used to denigrate those of Vietnamese ancestry. In fact, his repeated use of the word, designed to inflame the passions of the people, places Mr. Sam Rainsy in the category of a David Duke or a Pauline Hanson.

“These racist diatribes and calls for military action, made not only by Mr. Rainsy but many other opposition speakers as well, got their desired results: Over the two weeks of protests, the level of violence rose considerably; pro-government demonstrators were beaten by the mob, persons of Vietnamese heritage were bludgeoned to death by the crowds, monuments dedicated to the ouster of Pol Pot destroyed, etc. Finally, when my home in Phnom Penh was attacked with hand grenades, the situation was out of control, and we were on the verge of anarchy. We then authorized the police to close the illegal demonstration at the National Assembly. The closure itself occurred peacefully and without major incident.

“This is why I was so surprised to hear the allegation that there was a ‘violent repression of peaceful demonstrators.’ I can assure you that the demonstrators had a number of *agents provocateurs* who were anything but peaceful and that our security personnel acted with great restraint, acting forceful only when forced to do so by the mob.”

As to the presence of *agents provocateurs*, Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay admitted that he had a number of his troops, perhaps Khmer Rouge cadre, under cover in Phnom Penh at the time of the demonstrations. Exemplary of this manipulation, Western press played up that “Buddhist monks” had taken a leading role in the later phase of these demonstrations. However, the Sept. 22 *Phnom Penh Post*, a paper not sympathetic to Prime Minister Hun Sen, ran pictures of two such monks, one of whom confessed to being a former bodyguard of Prince Ranariddh, and another, who had led chants calling for the lynching of Vietnamese, was revealed to be working with the Sam Rainsy Party. As Hun Sen added in his letter: “It was clear that the demonstrations were well coordinated by terrorist groups and a handful of foreign nationals who provided support and protection to their leaders.”

Rainsy’s racist provocations

Even more damning is the evidence demonstrating Rainsy’s racist provocations. Increasingly, reports around the world have caught up with the truth about this French-trained banker, anarchist, and Khmer Rouge ally. The October issue of the monthly *Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie* described Rainsy as “a controversial oppositionist,” who spent the most traumatic 30 years of Cambodia’s recent history in France, cultivating an image as “an elegant and modern man endowed with a gift for communication,” but who built his

Sam Rainsy Party from the ranks of former Khmer Rouge, both in Cambodia and abroad. In the demonstrations that followed the July elections, “in a few days, Rainsy lost his credibility . . . beginning with Americans.” According to one observer, “Rainsy, the Westerner, put his extremist vision of American-style democracy ahead of peace and the pressing interests of a country coming out mournfully from 20 years of war. His speeches seduced only those who had not experienced the Khmer Rouge. Rainsy misread the country. He could, perhaps, be a good Cambodian opposition leader, but in 20 years.”

Closer to Rohrabacher’s back yard, the Oct. 17 *Los Angeles Times* quoted David Hawk of the UN Center for Human Rights in Cambodia, commenting on the anti-Vietnamese diatribes of the post-election demonstrations. “This violence has not been a spontaneous outbreak of Khmer against Vietnamese, but deliberately planned, incited or instigated by political leaders to advance their cause.” The *Times* goes on to report, “The most strident anti-Vietnamese voice has been that of Rainsy, a bespectacled intellectual who touts himself as a progressive.” In an interview with the *Times* at his home in Phnom Penh, Rainsy said that he does not attack the Vietnamese people, but holds the Vietnamese government responsible for putting Hun Sen in power. But, as the *Times* adds, while Rainsy may make that distinction, “it’s clear that many of his followers don’t. The animosity is almost palpable in the capital, where virtually any mention of Vietnamese triggers an instinctive ‘I hate them’ response from Cambodians.”

Furthermore, Rainsy does not hide his slavish adherence to British-orchestrated efforts to undermine the sovereignty of Third World nations. In an interview with the English-language newspaper *The Nation* of Thailand, Rainsy said: “There is no government, no legal authority, so the country needs assistance and scrutiny—monitoring from the UN, friends like the U.S., ASEAN, EU, Japan, and Australia.”

Both Rainsy and Prince Ranariddh are now refusing even to meet with Hun Sen to discuss a compromise on the forming of a government, unless Hun Sen agrees to meet outside of Cambodia. Rainsy made clear in an Oct. 14 interview with Belgium’s *La Libre Belgique* that the two parties are united in stonewalling the formation of a new government, with all of the elected deputies from Rainsy’s party and half of elected royalist Funcinpec deputies deliberately going abroad, in order to deny the National Assembly the necessary quorum to act on pressing matters of government. Perhaps these two gentlemen would not be offended by the *New York Times* correspondent Henry Kamm, who recently published a book, *Cambodia: Report from a Stricken Land*. According to a review in the *Los Angeles Times*, Kamm concludes that “Cambodia cannot save itself. . . . The country’s only chance is the most unlikely one: *outsiders must take over* and keep it until a new generation of Cambodians,

better prepared and not haunted by their history, comes of age.” The White Man’s Burden revisited.

Target: Clinton and China

The third lie, the unstated targetting of President Clinton and his administration’s commitment to a strong U.S.-China relationship, is most clearly revealed by a look at the man reported to be the architect of Rohrabacher’s diatribes against Cambodia: Al Santoli. Santoli is a virulent anti-Vietnam and anti-China lobbyist, who led efforts to use the POW-MIA issue to disrupt the reestablishment of relations between the United States and Vietnam. Since 1997, Santoli writes for the *China Reform Monitor* newsletter, published by the American Foreign Policy Council, whose propaganda lays emphasis on warnings about China’s military power and ambition, and accusations that the Clinton administration is guilty of contributing to that supposed threat. The *China Reform Monitor* was established in the months preceding Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s historic visit to the United States one year ago, when the Republicans and the radical New Age wing of the Democratic Party launched a barrage of China-bashing propaganda aimed at disrupting Jiang’s trip.

That anti-Clinton and anti-China coalition is the same “bipartisan” coalition behind the attack on Cambodia. In fact, Rohrabacher led an earlier effort to sabotage U.S.-China relations by denying Most Favored Nation status to China.

President Clinton’s administration, through the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, has stated that it “does not support the establishment of a tribunal . . . as called for in House Resolution 533,” adding that, if passed, the resolution “does not have the force of law and is not binding on the administration.” Congressional Democrats, with backing from the State Department, are reported to have prevented Rohrabacher and his crew from allowing Rainsy to spread his lies in testimony before a Congressional hearing, cautioning that a foreign national cannot be allowed to so testify. In addition, a spokesman for Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party, Khieu Kanharith, expressed Cambodia’s anger at the insult to their nation, but said that “it won’t affect the relationship between the American government and the Cambodian government at all.”

Nonetheless, Cambodia’s UN Ambassador H.E. Ouch Borith released a statement protesting the resolution as an assault on Cambodia’s democracy and announcing an investigation into “this immoral attack, and the recent visitation of Mr. Rohrabacher to O’Smach,” the base now occupied by Ranariddh’s Gen. Nhiek Bunh Chhay and his Khmer Rouge allies. H.E. Ouch Borith also points out that Rohrabacher’s Oct. 10 statement condemning Hun Sen “is the same statement made by Ta Mok, the Khmer Rouge butcher who is the most wanted by the international community, as quoted by the *Phnom Penh Post* on Oct. 2, 1998.” An investigation could be most revealing.