

## Southeast Asia by Sophie Tanapura

### What's at stake for the Non-Aligned?

*30 years after the Bandung Conference, the questions of sovereignty and development are even more acute.*

**T**he 30-year commemoration of the April 1955 Bandung conference of Asian and African nations, which took place April 22 to 24 in Indonesia, left no doubt that the major concerns of the developing countries have not changed. In resolutions and speeches, the assembled representatives of 80 governments, including eight foreign ministers, expressed their grave concern with the issues of national sovereignty and peace; and the creation of a new, just international economic order that would permit the underdeveloped countries to realize their potentials as growing, sovereign nations.

Numerous speakers called for the convening of an international conference to reorganize the international monetary system, an idea that has regained momentum with the January call put out by the Schiller Institute for an Indira Gandhi Memorial Summit to End the World Depression. In a press conference before leaving for Bandung, Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savestila said he would propose a North-South conference on monetary reform, an idea, he said, Japanese leaders are also interested in.

Reporting on the Bandung conference in the press, however, tended to treat these vital issues as if they were points of rhetoric only, concentrating instead on the diplomatic maneuverings for which the conference provided an arena. The presence of Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian prompted much speculation on the publicly stated desire of both China and Indonesia to re-open diplomatic relations. Wu did have a two-hour meeting with Indonesian Foreign

Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmaja and expressed regret that he was unable to meet with Indonesian President Suharto. There was also notice of the fact that the North and South Korean delegations sat next to each other (the seating was mostly alphabetical), for the first time without flying into bouts of acrimony. And a lot of ink was spilled on whether or not Kampuchean Prince Sihanouk's professed resignation as the head of the Khmer resistance coalition, would be permanent (it is not).

These diplomatic maneuverings are merely symptomatic of the dire and fundamental problems the assembled developing countries continue to face daily in their fight for survival. The declaration of the Bandung conference, unanimously signed by all countries present, came right to the point. In paragraph number 12, the resolution states:

"It is a matter of deep concern that three decades after the [first] Bandung conference, the just demand of developing countries for the eradication of economic backwardness, domination, and exploitation, and for the achievement of equitable development and progress is yet to be fulfilled. . . . The world has experienced the most prolonged recession of the postwar period, accompanied by stagnation . . . and the accumulation of a staggering debt burden."

"The participating countries express deep concern at the critical economic situation in Africa, particularly in countries affected by drought, desertification, refugees, and other external factors.

"In the face of the global nature of the challenges confronting mankind, an equally global response is called for. The Asian and African countries . . . recognize that global economic recovery can be sustained and durable only if it is accompanied by urgent measures to reactivate the development of the developing countries *inter alia*, through the enlargement of the transfer of technological resources to the developing countries, dismantling of protectionist barriers in the developed countries, and a long-term solution of the debt problem."

The Bandung Conference in 1955, which was attended by then Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, and Indonesian President Sukarno, was the prelude to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement. The "Five Principles" emerging from the conference were an attempt to forge links between the developing nations based on the principles of sovereignty and mutual cooperation. As the subsequent wars which have wracked the Third World attest, these countries have been largely unable to resist becoming assets of the geopolitical chessboard games of the Soviet Union, China, and the Anglo-American empire faction. The Third World remains in the grip of an imperial world order, which is now bringing entire nations to the brink of death.

In his speech to the conference, Indonesian President Suharto sounded the warning to the advanced-sector countries, if they do not work to restore equity in a new international world order: "Prolonged backwardness of the developing countries, which represent the majority of the human race, sooner or later, will undoubtedly become the beginning of disaster for the advanced countries."