

U.S. targets Thailand's military to dismantle national sovereignty

by Michael O. Billington

In *EIR's* June 12 issue, we warned that the crisis which brought down the government of Thailand in May was orchestrated by U.S. government organizations, to the purpose of causing the disintegration of the sovereign institutions of that nation, beginning with the military. The report documented how the U.S. government, through various government-funded organizations, ran the subversion of a nation which has historically been one of the closest allies of the United States in Asia. More recent developments show that this process is well under way. The military, the only institution in Thailand capable of defending the nation's sovereignty, is being removed from positions of influence in the government and from strategically important areas of business and industry. Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department and U.S. press whores are demanding that the Thai military be deployed to fight wars with its neighbors, rather than defend the nation against subversion from within and without.

Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, appointed under heavy pressure from the U.S. embassy (in place of the candidate of the duly elected, military-linked coalition), removed the military from any role in suppressing riots or domestic subversion. During the May crisis, troops which had been poorly trained in riot control reacted to provocations from violent elements by opening fire on demonstrators, a tragedy which has served the purposes of those who intend to dismantle the military by any means.

The removal of military protection against domestic threats must be seen in the light of two recent developments: 1) an announcement by the leading international spokesman for Thailand's various radical protest movements, Sulak Sivaraksa, who told a June meeting of the National Endowment for Democracy leadership in Washington that a new national coalition is being formed which intends to use terrorist methods of sabotage against the national economy, such as the cutting of power lines; and 2) the renewed belligerence of the Maoist Khmer Rouge in neighboring Cambodia. Following the 1976 military coup, many Thai student leaders went into the jungles, where they were trained by Chinese Communist agents, while some went directly to China itself. Opposition leader Chavalit Yongchaiyuth, generally known as an asset of the CIA, brought several of these leaders into his political organization, after they had "mended their ways." In a period of severe crisis, the potential is great that the genocidal tactics

of the Khmer Rouge could be used in Thailand.

Prime Minister Anand has also removed two military leaders from their roles as directors of state-owned companies. Army Chief Gen. Issarapong Noonpakdee was removed from his position as director of the strategically critical telephone company. Air Chief Marshal Kaset Rojanil, the head of the Air Force and Supreme Military Commander, is in the process of being replaced as chairman of Thai Airways International, a 90% government-owned corporation. Existing rules give the position automatically to the head of the Air Force, for obvious strategic reasons. These rules have now been dropped, and Kaset will be replaced by a civilian.

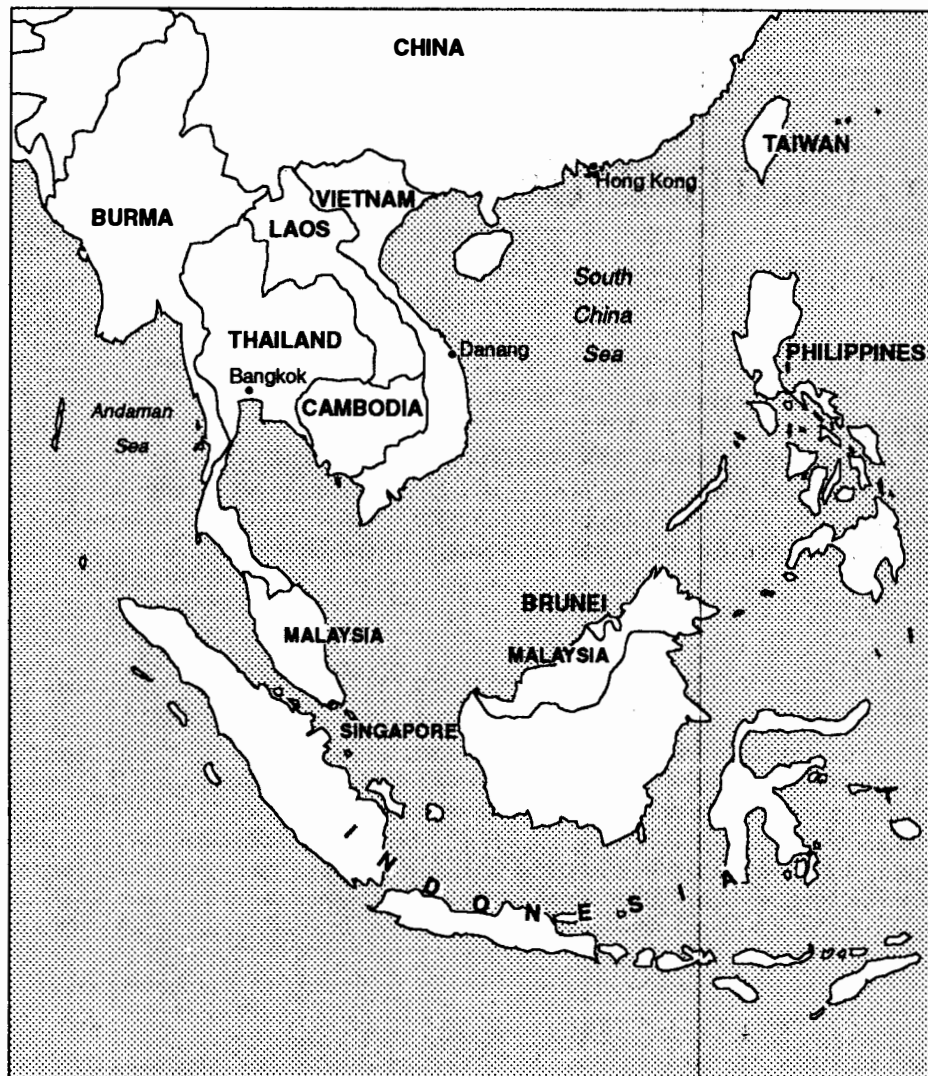
The *New York Times* praised these moves in a July 25 editorial, which complained that the Thai military has "exercised a stranglehold over key state enterprises like airlines, banks, phone, and transport companies, distorting economic priorities." The priorities which the *Times* attacks are those that have assured at least a minimal flow of directed credit into those areas of infrastructure that are essential for both economic development and for strategic defense.

Regional wars

More ominous is the U.S. effort to engage the Thai military in a military adventure on either or both of two borders. The same *New York Times* editorial took a page from the handbook for sabotage published by Trilateral Commission member and U.S. military strategic adviser Samuel Huntington (see *EIR's* July 3 review of his book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*). Huntington argued that the military forces of Third World nations should be cut in half and their officer corps purged, and that they should then be sent to war against their neighbors: "Reorient your military forces to military missions. For good reasons you may wish to resolve conflicts with other countries. The absence of a foreign threat . . . may leave your military devoid of a legitimate military mission and enhance their inclination to think about politics." Or, as the *Times* put the same thing in reference to Thailand: "Refocusing the armed forces on legitimate defense concerns would simplify peacekeeping tasks in Cambodia [and] cut a key lifeline to Myanmar's [Burma's] tyrannical military dictatorship. . . . The army's role in quelling civil unrest has provided a pretext for frequent coups."

This policy was very evident in the blustering tactics of

Southeast Asia



U.S. Undersecretary of State Robert Zoellick and Secretary James Baker at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting in Manila on July 24. The Asian participants were quite aware that the recent U.S. Supreme Court approval of kidnaping and murder by U.S. agents and military forces within foreign nations places the United States outside of international law. Zoellick's threat to Asia, therefore, cannot be taken lightly. Said Zoellick: "As the United States demonstrated in the Gulf war, we will not stand by when new tyrants threaten our national security interests. We have national security interests in the Pacific, too."

Zoellick and Baker especially denounced ASEAN (with Thailand considered the primary target) for refusing to follow orders on the question of imposing sanctions on Burma. In language reminiscent of Bush's thyroid storm before the Iraq war, Zoellick said: "The illegitimate and brutal actions in Burma were both an offense against the civilized world and a source of instability. Isn't it time to say, enough is enough?"

A similar threat exists on the border with Cambodia. The U.N. Security Council has rubber-stamped a U.S. resolution cutting all aid to the Khmer Rouge, who have torpedoed the recent peace settlement and relaunched military operations in Cambodia. The resolution specifically demands that all nations, "in particular neighboring countries," must help the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to implement the aid embargo. The Security Council is whitewashing the well-known Chinese control over the Khmer Rouge, while attempting to blame Thailand for allowing border trade. For Thailand to attempt to enforce a cutoff of aid to only one of the four armed groups in Cambodia, along a lengthy and generally open border, and with thousands of Cambodian refugees still living in camps within Thailand, would be virtually impossible, and would invite a military conflict. Thai military officials have privately expressed deep concern that a U.S. military adventure in Cambodia under the auspices of the U.N. could well drag Thailand into a Vietnam-style quagmire.