

Sulak's U.S. support apparatus

From the United States, the entire array of non-governmental organizations founded by Sulak Sivaraksa and his followers receives logistical and conceptual support from a handful of "human rights" organizations. Among those organizations directly aiding Sulak's ventures are:

- **Freedom House**, New York City. Chairman of the executive committee is Leo Cherne, a member of President Reagan's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and an advisory board member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University. Another key individual in Freedom House was Carl Gershman, now executive director of the National Endowment for Democracy. Freedom House overlaps with the Jay Lovestoneite International Department of the AFL-CIO. Sulak was a featured speaker at Freedom House in May to a room full of reporters and representatives of foundations.

- **Democracy in Asia**, Washington, D.C. Its head, Michele Bohana (see interview below), has been squiring Sulak around most recently; Sulak is reportedly on the organization's board. Also on the board is Elsie Walker Bush, who maintains regular political contact with her cousin, President George Bush, according to Bohana.

- **Amnesty International**. The U.S. branch of the organization is running support operations for Sulak and company, and claims opposition leader Gen. Chamlong Srimuang as "definitely democracy movement." Amnesty was founded in 1961 and was exposed by its nominal founder as an offspring of British intelligence.

- **Asia Watch**. One of a number of "Watches," it maintains close links with Freedom House. One of its operatives in Southeast Asia, Therese Caouette, is in constant touch with Sulak (see interview). Among other actions, Asia Watch is demanding that the United States "actively lobby at the World Bank for a suspension of multilateral loans to Thailand," according to a May 21 release.

- **Asia Resources Center**. Working with a left cover, the center has close links with the National Council of Churches, and organized a pro-Sulak demonstration at the Thai embassy May 23.

- **Lawyers Committee for Human Rights**. Funded by many of the country's most prestigious law firms, the committee is currently working on a project to prove that the amnesty granted by King Bhumipol of Thailand to former Prime Minister Suchinda is against international law. The

committee works closely with the Union of Civil Liberties in Bangkok, one of the key NGOs in organizing the "democracy movement." The Union of Civil Liberties also gets direct funding from the Ford Foundation.

From outside Thailand, these organizations direct the NGOs. As one source explained, "In the last months, the NGOs have been particularly crucial in ensuring protection for the students, and providing support and that kind of thing, against reprisals. In making declarations, in formulating principles, etc., so that this didn't just become another discontented student uprising kind of thing. NGOs played the role of ensuring in the public's mind what the struggle was about."

Among the NGOs in Thailand receiving direct support from these organizations are: Asian Cultural Forum on Development, Union of Civil Liberties, Coalition for Peace and Development, Project for Ecological Recovery, People's Plan for the 21st Century, Democratic Doctors, Democracy Heroes' Fund, the Coordinating Group for Religion and Society, the National Institute of Development Administration, the Campaign for Popular Democracy, the Foundation for Children, the Duang Pratheep Foundation, and the Law Society.

Documentation

The following are excerpts from interviews made available to EIR:

Michele Bohana, director, Democracy in Asia

I think half the battle is won, but the other half is trying to firmly root democracy in the political process, when so much of the military is part of the picture, when Suchinda is head of the military. . . . He's not the entire military. The infrastructure of the military in Thailand is all-pervasive. . . . They have got to disengage the military from the political process if this is going to last more than a month. Otherwise we're going to be right back to square one. That's my feeling. . . . So the students are saying two things: Don't give amnesty to Suchinda and the military thugs, and two, get the military out of our process, and those are two very just things that they are asking for. I'm all for holding these murderers accountable according to somebody's international standards. It's like Idi Amin leaving Uganda and going to Saudi Arabia, living in glory. I don't buy that. You don't necessarily hang them, but if we took the Nuremberg Tribunal as one step, that might be a good idea, everyone seems to agree with that. Hold them accountable. What other deterrent is there?

**Therese Caouette,
Asia Watch**

I just talked to Geneva right now: We are now trying to push for the International Committee of the Red Cross to have access to the jails and to the people who are still being detained there and to be able to investigate more specifically what the conditions of the releases are, if the charges are still there. What we are trying to push for in Thailand is that there be allowed to be set up some sort of accountability for those who are missing or lost. In the paper today, in the faxes I received from Thailand today, they said there are several groups that are setting up such an office. Now we just have to watch and see that they are not threatened or harassed, because when they did that two days ago, they were forced to close by the military.

[I was there] 10 years. And actually I just returned on Saturday [May 16]. I was there all during the prelude to this. I saw it building up. We all knew it was coming. There were supposed to be demonstrations and they were called off a week ago, because Chamlong ended his fast, hoping they could negotiate. . . . So we knew that on Sunday there would be demonstrations. When I left on Saturday, by Friday, they had 8,000 military troops already brought into the city. So it was already quite tense. People were quite clear about what would happen next. I think the point is that we encouraged the negotiations, but to say that the question is not quite so simple as just changing the Constitution, we have to take it a bit further. . . .

Our Washington, D.C. office has been doing some research into the arms trade with the U.S. and Thailand. Officially they are not to be trading at all since the military coup. However, there is a loophole where they have been able to if Thailand actually purchases weapons themselves, then it is not actually government assistance. . . .

You really need to look at the corruption of the military and how that is tied into the political system. Mostly because I worked with refugees along the borders, you can see both in heroin trading and also in logging teakwood from the borders, the military is in very, very tight control of the economy and sort of the black market trade. It really needs to be exposed and to encourage a government that's a bit more accountable to the people. I just signed a contract with those who are organizing the demonstration, actually, that they would come here and help work on it back and forth, and we would try to do one this summer, because there has been a lot of very subtle intimidation and people missing in Thailand since the coup and others who have been forced to leave the country.

There is one Professor Sulak, have you ever heard of him? He was exiled for speaking out against the military and especially for their deals with the Burmese military. And he has been in exile since October. He's a very, very wise and respected Thai. . . . I have run into him everywhere. . . .

The royal family is really very, very weak. They're just a showpiece, really. They are very weak. I often wonder, like at this time, what they really have over them. What keeps them so unable to act? I don't really know about this, but they are really cornered. They very rarely do anything. They are very slow to act.

**Clarence Dias, International Center
for Law in Development, U.N.**

Chamlong is not the leader of this movement; or at least he wasn't until three to four weeks ago, because of the fast. See, several people went on fast; some broke the fast. Chamlong was the one person who went through almost to death's door. It was at this point that the movement coopted him as their leader; it was not the other way around. . . .

It is all interrelated in a uniquely holistic kind of way. The democracy movement is the name being given now, because that is a priority, but it is linked with maintaining the cultural life-styles; namely a society not completely overrun by the mad rush to industrialize; to urbanize; a very strong environmental movement. There isn't a very strong anti-poverty movement, because there isn't the kind of poverty you find in other Asian countries in Thailand. It is a movement to prevent poverty from coming as a result of this rapid industrialization; this property development; the Japanese development investments in Thailand.

These things are interrelated. And interestingly enough in the male-dominated society, there is also a strong women's movement.

In Thailand, this is not separate. The people in the human rights movement are the people in the democracy movement, the environment movement, the women's movement—they are the same people. And often the same organizations. You have a meeting on prostitution in Thailand, and you have some of the leading environmental groups being at the forefront of that meeting. There has been a whole kind of social revolution that has been democratic, participatory, human rights sensitive, gender-sensitive, going on. The democracy movement is getting more visibility right now, because that's the immediate struggle.

The environmental movement showed its strength by having won so many battles. They won the imposition of the logging ban all over Thailand; of course the people making money off it then went and began logging in Burma and other places, but still they won that. They won against the construction of a very environmentally damaging dam. The Pak Moon dam project was blocked. They won in the World Bank governors' meeting the blocking of another environmentally damaging dam. . . .

But still you see the environmental movement had made significant gains. The women's movement has made a lot of gains in terms of working mothers' rights, and the whole AIDS issue.