

Interchange



Fostering Cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba

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Double Issue: Summer-Fall 2003

Cambodia Holds Successful National Assembly Elections

by Susan Hammond

More than 5 million Cambodians came out to vote on July 27, 2003 a turnout rate of approximately 83% of the registered voters. International and local observer groups agreed that these elections were much improved from the 1998 national elections and the 2002 commune elections, pointing to the lessened level of pre-election violence, more equitable access to media for all parties, better training of polling station officials, and a more professional and transparent National Election Committee as some of the factors leading to the improved election environment and process.

The Official Results released by the National Election Committee show that the Cambodian People's Party won 73 parliamentary seats (a gain of 9 seats), FUNCINPEC won 26 seats (a loss of 17 seats) and the Sam Rainsy Party won 24 seats (a gain of 9 seats).

election coverage begins on page 16



National Democratic Institute sponsored debate in Takeo Province with candidates from the Sam Rainsy Party, Funcinpec and CPP.

Travel Agents Seek Freedom to Travel to Cuba

The Ad Hoc Coalition of Travel Professionals and Clients for Freedom to Travel to Cuba (CTPC) is being facilitated by the Fund for Reconciliation and Development (FRD) as a vehicle to inform travel professionals at the grass roots of the business potential of the Cuba market and to provide an easy way for them to join with peers nationwide (and their major clients) to call for the end of travel restrictions. They are invited to sign a petition at www.petitiononline.com/cubanow1/petition.html (linked from www.ffrd.org). As of mid-September 600 had signed.

The premise of this campaign is that local travel agents throughout the US, as independent well connected business persons, can be a new and influential force in the struggle for freedom to travel. Travel agents, just like farmers, have concrete very direct motives to change US policy. For them Cuba is not a political issue about Fidel Castro or George Bush. It is an economic question of gaining access to a desirable market that will attract new customers.

Text of the petition and related articles start on page 31.

In this issue:

Washington Update	3
VN Landmine/UXO Survey	11
VN Human Rights Bill Response	14
Cambodian Elections:	
Field Reports	16
A Preliminary Assessment	20
Background	25
Cuba	30
From the Editor	38
Resources	39

Cambodia Joins WTO

Delegates to the WTO meeting in Cancun voted to approve Cambodia as the first Least Developed Nation to join the trade organization. Minister of Commerce, Cham Prasidh, in his speech after the accession vote on September 11, 2003 stated that Cambodia accepts the challenges of membership in the WTO because it sees the benefits of fully integrating into the world economic system. Prasidh mentioned that Cambodia paid a high price to join the WTO and that Cambodia's least developed status was often ignored during the negotiations. He recommended that the delegates read a recent Oxfam International report titled "Cambodia's accession to the WTO: How the law of the jungle is applied to one of the world's poorest countries". Though he noted that the Cambodian government does not agree with all of the points in the report, he said it provides an understanding about what Cambodia had to accept to gain the benefits of membership in the WTO. A webcast of Minister Prasidh's speech can be found at http://wto.mvs.com/min03_webcast_e.htm. The Oxfam report is available at www.oxfam.org/eng/pdfs/doc030902_cambodia_accession.pdf.

Provincial VN Trade Delegation to Visit US

Representatives of the Trade and Tourism departments of 16 Vietnamese provinces will travel to New York, Washington, DC, Dallas, and Los Angeles from September 28 - October 11, 2003. This is a unique opportunity to establish personal, professional and corporate contacts beyond the Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh City metropolises. The delegation is lead by Mr. Nguyen Hong Duong, Deputy Director General Europe-America Department, Ministry of Trade. The purpose of the visit is for delegates to learn about doing business with US companies and to look for opportunities for export, import and investment between the provinces of Vietnam and American companies. For information about their visit contact: Le Xuan Duong, Embassy of Vietnam, Trade Office, Washington, DC. Tel: 202-463-9419, Fax: 202-463-9439, Email: lxduong@vietnam-ustrade.org, Website: <http://www.vietnam-ustrade.org>. For information about the Fund for Reconciliation and Development program with the delegation on October 2, please contact Susan Hammond at shammond@ffrd.org.

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Mission Statement:

The Fund for Reconciliation and Development (FRD) began in 1985 as the US-Indochina Reconciliation Project. It evolved from a program of the American Friends Service Committee established in 1972. FRD was the first American non-governmental organization (NGO) devoted solely to normal diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with Indochina and expanded its work to include Cuba in 1999. FRD carries out its own programs of cultural and educational exchange and humanitarian assistance. It also facilitates communication and cooperation between private business, NGOs, foundations and educational institutions interested in the region by publishing the quarterly newsletter *Interchange* and by organizing national and international meetings. FRD funding comes from foundations, US and European government agencies, international organizations, and private donations.

*The Fund for Reconciliation and Development
invites you to the*

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*on the occasion of the 58th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
celebrating cultural, economic, educational and humanitarian cooperation with
Cambodia, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam*

*Hosted by Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom
and Purchase College, State University of New York*

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Also attending will be Ambassadors to the United Nations and the United States.*

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Vietnam Human Rights Amendment Passes House

Incorporated as an amendment to the State Department authorization bill, the Vietnam Human Rights Act was passed on the House floor on July 16 by a vote of 382-42. Despite the sizeable majority, the vote count fell short of the near-unanimous count in 2001, which had only one dissenting vote. The most important provision of the present legislation is the prohibition on US non-humanitarian assistance, which comprises two-thirds of US aid to Vietnam, if movement on human rights, narrowly defined, is not seen. Particular emphasis in this matter is given to religious freedom and individual political dissidents, and no mention is made in the bill of improvements in the personal rights of everyday citizens, or the increasing public participation in policymaking, both of which have been cited in recent State Department reports.

The House action renders obsolete a recent Senate plan to offer a resolution criticizing Vietnam's human rights as a means of heading off a House victory. At this point, it is all but mandatory that the Senate offer a corresponding amendment to the Senate's authorization bill for the State Department, although the substance and recommendations need not follow the House version exactly. The Senate amendment could be defeated, but some moderates who oppose the legislation are now pinning their hopes on the conference process in the fall, when the House and Senate must reconcile differences between the two amendments. At that time, they hope to remove or soften considerably provisions which would be the most damaging to US-Vietnam relations. Opponents of the legislation in the broader public are well advised to continue making their views heard with both sides of Congress, tailoring their communications to the status of the legislation. (See FRD's sign-on letter to the Senate, p. 28.)

Textile Agreement Signed; US Now Vietnam's Largest Trading Partner

The Ministry of Trade of Vietnam has announced that the United States has become Vietnam's biggest market, the result of a dramatic leap - 238 percent - in Vietnamese exports to the US in the first quarter of 2003. Exports in both the seafood and the garment sectors rose, with the latter increasing ten-fold since last year.

Such dramatic growth in exports to the US is not likely to be repeated in the remaining quarters of 2003, because of new quotas on textiles which came into effect on May 1, the result of a textile and apparel trade agreement signed by the US and Vietnam

in late April. The agreement establishes quotas for 38 categories of garments and textiles, with increases built in for 2004. Although the agreement allows for a modest increase in the present levels of trade in this sector, opponents argue that it will in reality curb a greater expansion that would have occurred without the quotas. Combined with ongoing suits against Vietnam regarding catfish and shrimp exports, the textile quotas are predicted to bring disillusionment among Vietnamese who had anticipated that the 2001 Bilateral Trade Agreement would bring unfettered access to US markets. US importers have also expressed disapproval of the apparel agreement, since it will hamper expansion of their trade with Vietnam. The textile quotas are likely to be a regular feature of US-Vietnam trade, until Vietnam joins the World Trade Organization. Quotas on textiles and garments are scheduled to be abolished for WTO members in 2005.

Laos NTR Still in Trade Subcommittee

The period for public comment on extending Normal Trade Relations to Laos, set by the Trade Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, concluded in late April. Although a formal tally has not been released, an informal count has reportedly revealed that letters of support for NTR outnumbered those opposing by a ratio of three-to-one.

The Subcommittee is still debating the next steps, one of which is selecting a legislative vehicle by which NTR might be granted. The comment period has stimulated activity on both sides of the issue. A small group of lawmakers has circulated a letter recommending against NTR. In late April Laotian Minister of Commerce and Tourism Soulivong Daravong, accompanied by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General Vang Rattanavong and US Ambassador to Laos Douglas Hartwick, visited the United States for discussions on NTR with the executive branch, Congress and Laotian-American communities. Arguments in support of NTR were cited in an April 24 op ed in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* written by Edward Gresser, director of the Project and Trade and Global Markets at the Progressive Policy Institute, and FRD's Washington consultant, Catharin Dalpino. "Remove a Vestige of the Vietnam War" can be found at www.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/118902_laos.html.

Penalizing the Poor in Southeast Asia?

The 2002-2003 *Georgetown Southeast Asia Survey*, released in late May, offers evidence that the poorer countries of Southeast Asia — including Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia - are subject to some of the highest tariffs in US trade. For example,

The Washington Update is compiled monthly by Catharin Dalpino and is sent free by email to not-for-profit organizations with programs in Indochina. Other offices and individuals are asked to contribute at least \$25 annually to FRD. To be added to the email list, write update@ffrd.org.

although the Bush administration's 2002 decision to impose tariffs on imported steel from Europe and Northeast Asia was highly controversial, in that year the US collected more tariff revenues from Cambodian sweaters than from Japanese steel. The reasons for this ironic imbalance are two-fold. First, the kinds of goods that poor Southeast Asian countries typically export to the US - garments, shoes and other light manufactures-garner the highest tariffs. Second, in contrast to other regions in the developing world (Central America, the Andes, Africa), Southeast Asia enjoys no special trade programs as yet. The administration's Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative could remedy that, but that is expected to take several years to come into effect. Copies of the *Survey* will be available through the Georgetown University Bookstore.

Brookings Study Looks at Likely Recipients of Millennium Challenge Funds

In a similar dynamic, the poorer countries of Southeast Asia could well be excluded from the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which is designed to provide multi-year assistance to combat poverty in developing countries over a three-year period. In a study of the MCA entitled *The Other War*, the Brookings Institution speculates on which countries are likely to fulfill the administration's requirements, which range across a graded basket of sixteen criteria, for "ruling justly, investing in people, and economic freedom." Based on the Brookings model, no Southeast Asian country would be eligible for MCA funds in the first year, although Vietnam and the Philippines could become eligible in the second year. Cambodia would not qualify for funds, missing by one criterion in the second year, and Thailand would in theory become eligible in the third year but would also be disqualified by a single criterion. Laos, Indonesia and Burma would not be eligible in any year. Although qualification is supposed to depend upon a complicated mathematical formula, political considerations - from Congress or the administration - are likely to intervene in some cases. For a more detailed examination of the criteria for MCA funds, see the "Who Should Qualify?" chapter of *The Other War*, available at: www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/gs/research/projects/mca/otherwar_03.pdf.

UN Approves KR Tribunal

In early May the United Nations General Assembly approved the agreement negotiated with the government of Cambodia to set up special tribunals for former Khmer Rouge leaders accused of genocide. The tribunal would pioneer a new model of accountability, teaming international and national prosecutors and judges, with a "super-majority" formula that would give a slight edge to national jurists. Some international human rights organizations,

notably Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, oppose the agreement, arguing that it would not meet international standards of transitional justice. However, many previous tribunals have been organized in countries under international custodianship, or in countries in the immediate aftermath of a major conflict. The Cambodian tribunal reflects a different circumstance, of international cooperation with a sovereign state. Before it can be finalized, the tribunal must be ratified by the Cambodian National Assembly. The government estimates that a vote will take place in the fall, when a new Assembly will have convened after the July elections.

WHO Lauds Vietnam's Handling of SARS

On April 28 the World Health Organization declared Vietnam to be the first nation to contain and eliminate the Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). WHO official Aileen Plant cited quick response from the Vietnamese government to the crisis as one of the key factors: "...the speed, the leadership, the transparency, the flexibility, and the intensity with which they educated people what to do." In addition to its concerted outreach campaign, the government quickly organized itself to fight the epidemic, forming a steering committee led by the health ministry, and including the Ministries of transportation, customs, finance, education, and interior.

Using mostly traditional techniques of infectious disease containment Vietnam was able to stop the spread of the disease. SARS entered Vietnam through only one person, an American who brought it from abroad, who had caught it at the Metropole Hotel in Hong Kong where many early cases were contracted. After having fallen ill, the man was taken to Hanoi French Hospital, but later evacuated to Hong Kong where he died. Vietnam then closed Hanoi French Hospital to new patients and visitors, keeping most of the staff inside, giving SARS to each other but keeping it from spreading outside.

Health workers traced and monitored hundreds of people who had come in contact with workers or patients at the hospital, visiting them every day. An immigration screening system was set up, including seven \$50,000 infrared machines at airports and border crossings to detect people with high temperatures.

Executive Director of Vietnam Education Foundation Named

Kien Pham has been selected as the founding Executive Director of the Vietnam Education Foundation, the bilateral agency which will reprogram repayment of debt funds into educational assistance and other activities to promote development in Vietnam

and strengthen US-Vietnamese relations. Pham has extensive experience in both the US government and the private sector. He is a former White House Fellow and also served in the office of the US Trade Representative and the Department of Defense. In 1993, Pham established the Vietnam Forum Foundation, which provided funds for the construction of schools and college scholarships for Vietnamese students in cooperation with the Vietnam Union of Professionals and Technical Association. See www.vef.gov.

Declassified Report on Nuclear Option in Vietnam War Released

The Nautilus Institute has released a 1966 report by four American scientists which examined the option under consideration by American policymakers at the time, to employ tactical nuclear weapons against Vietnam, specifically to attempt to shut down the “Ho Chi Minh Trail,” which was believed to be the primary artery by which North Vietnam moved troops and equipments to its allies in the South.

The report recommended against the use of nuclear weapons, citing the possibility of counter-attacks by Vietnamese forces armed with nuclear weapons provided by the Soviet Union or China, as well as the likelihood of global threats to US interests as a result of the nuclear strikes. It also opined that the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam would be opposed by the American public.

The report, which was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, can be obtained at www.nautilus.org/VietnamFOIA.

Vietnam Launches Program to Strengthen Representative Government

The government of Vietnam, supported by funds from the United Nations Development Program, as well as from Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, has announced a five-year program to strengthen the capacities of Vietnam’s elected bodies at all levels. The program will focus on strengthening the legislative, representative and oversight functions of the National Assembly and the People’s Councils, including support for the budgetary process and oversight role of the Committee for Economic and Budgetary Affairs in the Assembly. One aspect of the program will provide training for the Assembly’s 350 newly-elected deputies.

This effort follows recent amendments to the 1992 Constitution that seek to improve representative and legislative bodies. Although the Constitution gave these bodies greater powers, their lawmaking and oversight capacities now require enhancement as well.

Recent decades have shown that strengthening the oversight and capacity of legislative bodies is a proven road to the development of more open systems in the Asia region. This phenomenon was seen in Thailand in the 1980’s, and has been seen in Indonesia and China since the 1990’s.

New York Times Editorial Criticizes US Catfish Policy

[excerpted from a New York Times editorial of July 22, 2003]

“The normalization of ties between Hanoi and Washington brought American trade missions bent on expanding Vietnamese free enterprise. One of these delegations saw in the Mekong Delta’s catfish a golden export opportunity, with the region’s natural conditions and cheap labor affording Vietnam a competitive advantage. Sure enough, within a few years, an estimated half-million Vietnamese were living off a catfish trade nurtured by private entrepreneurs. Vietnam captured 20 percent of the frozen catfish-fillet market in the United States, driving down prices. To the dismay of the Mississippi Farm Bureau, even some restaurants in that state - the center of the American catfish industry - were serving the Vietnamese species...

“Last year, with the aid of Trent Lott, then the Senate majority leader, the American catfish farmers managed to persuade Congress to overturn science. An amendment, improbably attached to an appropriations bill, declared that out of 2,000 catfish types, only the American-born family - named *Ictaluridae* - could be called “catfish.” So the Vietnamese could market their fish in America only by using the Vietnamese terms “basa” and “tra...”

“Not satisfied with its labeling triumph - an old trade-war trick perfected by the Europeans - the American group initiated an antidumping case against Vietnamese catfish. And for the purposes of this proceeding, Congressional taxonomy notwithstanding, the fish in question were once again regarded as catfish, not basa or tra...”

[On July 24 the US International Trade Commission voted 4-0 to impose permanent tariffs on Vietnamese frozen fillets, ratifying a preliminary decision made by the US Commerce Department in the spring. Effective July 31, tariffs ranging from 37% to 64% were mandated. This is guaranteed to impose hardship on the 400,000 Vietnamese catfish farmers in the Mekong Delta, and Vietnamese trade authorities are moving rapidly to shift a greater percentage of fish exports to Europe and Asia, as well as considering plans to process fillets in the US, since whole fish imports are not affected by the ruling.]

Agent Orange Meeting in Washington, DC

On July 8 FRD organized the first meeting ever held in Washington, D.C. on Agent Orange research and its effect on US relations with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The half-day discussion was made possible with support from Oxfam America and the American Friends Service Committee. Bringing scientists, advocates and policymakers together, the agenda was divided equally between reports on recent research on exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used by the United States during the Vietnam War and humanitarian needs the legacy of that use has created. The meeting concluded with an award-winning documentary film, *The Friendship Village*.

The keynote speaker was Representative Lane Evans (D-IL0, who urged the participants to continue to press their elected representatives for information on the use of herbicides during the war. Dr. Jeanne Stellman, Columbia University professor, presented new data on the extent and pattern of herbicide spraying in Vietnam. Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk of Hatfield Associates detailed his group's research on "hotspots" from former US military bases in Vietnam, which continue to present health and environmental hazards.

A second panel considered humanitarian needs in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia related to the legacy of herbicide spraying. Roger Rumpf, of Project Lao Agent Orange Survey, spoke on the legacy of the US "secret war" in Laos, the extent of which still remains largely secret. Diane Fox, from the University of Washington, shared research and slides of the social impact of Agent Orange, and the work of the Vietnam Red Cross Agent Orange Victim's Fund. Additional information on these and other topics related to herbicidal use in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia can be found at a number of websites, links to which can be found at www.ffrd.org/indochina/agentorange.html.

AO More Potent Than Thought

The April 17 issue of the journal *Nature* offers a potentially ground-breaking reassessment of military documents and other data on herbicides sprayed by the United States during the Vietnam War. It could encourage the first large-scale epidemiological study of the health of both American veterans of the war and the Vietnamese population. Written by Columbia University researcher Jeanne Mager Stellman, and several co-authors, "The Extent and Patterns of Usage of Agent Orange and Other Herbicides in Vietnam" suggests that the chemical dioxin contained in defoliants may have been double the estimate previously accepted. In addition, the reports indicates that a significantly higher number of Vietnamese civilians were directly exposed to the spraying than had earlier been found. The article can be viewed online at www.nature.com/nature.

Friendship Village Video



The Friendship Village concerns an international group of veterans building a village in Vietnam for children with Agent Orange-related deformities. Built on a former rice paddy near Hanoi, the Vietnam Village of Friendship stands not only as a symbol of peace and reconciliation, but as a testament to the potential for all people to come to terms with the past, heal the wounds of war, and create a better world. Following the story of the village's founder, American veteran George Mizo, *The Friendship Village* follows his experiences of war's horror to the personal transformation that led to the birth of the Village.

Video 51 minutes Color / Stereo Closed Captioned Grade Level: 8-12, College, Adult US Release Date: 2003 Copyright Date: 2002 Directed by Michelle Mason Produced by Cypress Park Productions. Available at a discount price of \$59 (rental \$25) for activists and grassroots groups (regular price \$250, rental \$85) from Bullfrog Films www.bullfrogfilms.com, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547, 610-779-8226, fax: 610-370-1978.

Catfish and Dioxins

A recent work by Arnold Schecter, MD, MPH, Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of Texas School of Public Health in Dallas has found that all catfish from Vietnam available for purchase in the USA, along with all other food, almost all fish, was extremely low in dioxins of all kinds including the dioxin from Agent Orange, TCDD. Interestingly, though, his team noticed somewhat higher dioxin levels in catfish or carp purchased in the USA or Israel, which they believe is from farm feeding using animal, usually fish, meal, thus bioconcentrating the dioxins. The new work on catfish and dioxins was recently published in the *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health*.

For further information, contact Dr. Arnold Schecter at arnold.schecter@utsouthwestern.edu, 5323 Harry Hines Blvd, Room V8.112, Dallas, Texas 75390-9128

more information about dioxins in food is available at http://www.ems.org/dioxin/agent_orange.html

NGO Profile: Doctors of the World-USA in Vietnam

In collaboration with a network of affiliates around the world and in partnership with local communities, Doctors of the World-USA works at the intersection of health and human rights. We provide essential care and services while training community residents to carry on the mission of health at the conclusion of our efforts.

In the Mai Chau District of Hoa Binh Province in Vietnam, Doctors of the World-USA is working to increase the availability and enhance the quality of maternal and child health services in order to reduce mortality and morbidity among members of ten ethnic minority communities.

Because of their isolation in the mountainous rural north of Vietnam, ethnic minority women and children in Mai Chau have historically had limited access to health care. As part of our program there, Doctors of the World-USA has worked with the local government to raise awareness about the role of gender in the delivery of healthcare, both for providers and recipients. As a result, 17 of the 21 villagers selected to participate in our training program for new village health workers are women from ethnic minority communities (Dao, Hmong, Muong and White Thai), raising the percentage of village health workers who are women to fifty percent. We anticipate that this increase in involvement by ethnic minority women will also raise the number of women and children from these communities receiving prenatal, maternal and pediatric care.

Working in partnership with district health officials, Doctors of the World-USA's major project objectives are to:

1. Improve the skills and coverage of district health workers.
2. Implement a safe water and sanitation program in the health facilities.
3. Develop the management capacity of district and commune staff to meet community health needs.

One example of Doctors of the World-USA's innovative work is our approach to teaching Hmong women to call for help at the time of delivery and to use a Clean Delivery Kit (CDK) so as to deliver on a clean surface and tie and cut the umbilical cord with clean tools. The project innovatively used a web-camera to record the training, then reinforced the training by playing back the footage to the trainees. The team also gave each trainee a small photo album showing actual Hmong women, so that village women could see their neighbours eating correctly, visiting the health station for antenatal care, and maintaining other good health habits.

In Thai communes, traditional music and dance were interspersed with playlets showing the 'four messages' -not to work too hard in the fields, to consult the health station antenatally, to seek help if danger signs arise, and to breastfeed without supplements. This performance has been given in five locales so far, and is received with interest and enthusiasm.

Doctors of the World-USA's work in Vietnam has been supported by generous contributions from the Agilent Foundation, Chatlos Foundation, Freeman Foundation, Lucius and Eva Eastman Foundation, International Foundation, McKnight Foundation and Palmer Foundation.

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Civic Organizations and their relationship with Governmental Organizations in Vietnam

a summary of results from an empirical survey of German-Vietnamese cooperation by Joerg Wischermann

The survey, from which some main findings are presented here started in July 1999 and ended in April 2002. The project was a German-Vietnamese cooperation. The author of this article was the German main researcher. The Vietnamese main researchers were Prof. Dr. Bui The Cuong (National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Sociology, Ha Noi) and Mr. Nguyen Quang Vinh, Sociologist (then head of the Centre for Sociology and Development at the National Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh-City).

The focal point of the research was to answer inter alia the following questions: Why and how do Civic Organizations in Vietnam come into being? What are their structural characteristics? How do Governmental Organizations react to the emergence of Civic Organizations and how do these organizations interact? What are the different modes in the relationships between Governmental Organizations? Upon which factors do modes of interaction between Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations depend?

We use the label Civic Organizations as a general term for a heterogeneous ensemble of (in the broadest sense) non-state, voluntary, non-profit-oriented societal organizations. Within this set we differentiate between Mass Organizations, Professional's Associations, Issue Oriented Organizations and Associations of Business-Men/women. All of them enjoy at least some leeway in pursuing their respective activities (readers may alternatively use the term local NGOs instead of the term Issue Oriented Organizations - for a precise definition of our terms and examples of our classification, see the list of references below).

The empirical phase of the project was organized in two stages: After the identification of 706 Civic Organizations in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City we carried out standardized interviews with 257 representatives of different sorts of Civic Organizations in the capital (133 organizations) and in Ho Chi Minh City (124 organizations) between June and September 2000. Additionally we carried out in-depth interviews with 50 representatives of selected Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations in both cities between April and June 2001.

Some main findings can be summarized as follows.

A striking fact in respect to the time Civic Organizations came into being is that after the start of the reform policy in 1986, Ha Noi lags behind Ho Chi Minh City in the establishment of new Civic Organizations, with a remarkable delay of at least 2 to 3 years. Qualifying what we perceive to be the importance of political conditions is this interesting fact: Only one-third of the representatives of Issue Oriented Organizations in Ha Noi and less

than one-fifth of the representatives of such organizations in Ho Chi Minh City indicate that the economic, political and cultural conditions were favourable for what they intended to do.

The motivations of the founders of Civic Organizations point towards political and professional interests, but also to very personal reasons as driving forces leading to the establishment of their organizations. In both cities a majority of organizations indicate their wish to participate in solving urgent social problems as the most important reason for establishing their respective organization. The founders of Civic Organizations in Ha Noi are more interested in influencing and changing policies. Accordingly it could be said that they are more politically motivated than their counterparts in the South.

Civic Organizations based in Ha Noi tend to operate nation-wide as well as at the city level whereas those in Ho Chi Minh City are predominantly locally active organizations. The number of Civic Organizations in Ho Chi Minh City may be large, but their respective sizes, however, are not. Civic Organizations in Ho Chi Minh City, especially the Issue Oriented Organizations, tend to be closely connected to grassroots-level initiatives by ordinary people and members of the intelligentsia. In both cities, all types of Civic Organizations have a high percentage of full-time staff members, but the organizations based in Ha Noi have a much higher percentage of full-time staff members than those in Ho Chi Minh City.

Although the distribution of the sources of funding differs somewhat in respect to the various types of organizations in both cities, the scheme of the distribution indicates a certain balance between different sources. The extent to which the varied types of organizations are able to make use of different resources indicates the respectively different opportunity structures which are available to a given type of organization. For example, Ho Chi Minh City-based Issue Oriented Organizations can take more advantage of certain traditions such as that of private donations to either charities or other social welfare organizations.

In general the representatives of interviewed organizations in both cities tend to assess their relationships with Governmental Organizations as being unproblematic rather than as being burdened with conflicts. More than half of the interviewed representatives in Ha Noi and two thirds in Ho Chi Minh City classify their relationships with Governmental Organizations as "easy". Only a quarter of interviewees in Ho Chi Minh City and a third of interviewees in Ha Noi indicate having problems with Governmental Organizations. There is a clearly decreasing extent of assent to the statement "it is easy to work with Governmental agencies", with the Mass Organizations indicating the highest per-

centage and Issue Oriented Organizations indicating the lowest percentage, Professionals' Associations are somewhere in between. Only 36% of the Issue Oriented Organizations in Ho Chi Minh City, but 52% of these organizations in Ha Noi indicate that "sometimes there are problems" in their relationships with Governmental Organizations. There are multiple reasons for the emergence of "problems" between Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations.

The majority (Ha Noi: 56%; Ho Chi Minh City: 65%) of the representatives of the Civic Organizations in both cities indicate a relatively high degree of independence. Less than a quarter indicate outside influences controlling and guiding activities. Data from interviews, however, indicate a general trend towards more controlling and guidance of the activities of Civic Organizations by Governmental Organizations in Ha Noi. In Ho Chi Minh City the trend is towards more "independence" for Civic Organizations and less trouble between them and governmental agencies. The empirical data disclose that Mass Organizations and Professionals' Associations enjoy a relatively high degree of independence. Issue Oriented Organizations enjoy a certain degree of independence: 52% of the interviewed representatives in Ha Noi and 63% of their counterparts in Ho Chi Minh City indicate: "we can work independently." But there are also representatives of these organizations in both cities who claim that there is a high degree of "control and guidance" and even direct intervention in some of their activities. In both cities Issue Oriented Organizations founded between 1995 and 2000 indicate more "control and guidance" in their relationship with Governmental Organizations and less "independence" than those set up between 1990 and 1995.

Statistical and content analysis on the material we gathered unveils that eight factors have an impact on the relationships between Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations (not listed in ranking order): objectives, activities, key persons, political connections, resources, issue-culture (i.e., the dominant ways to deal with, for example, social problems), negotiations with governmental agencies at local level, state traditions (i.e., how central a role the state should play and which areas of life are the state's responsibility). From a statistical point of view the most important factors are the following: The availability of different resources has at least an indirect influence on the different roles taken by Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations in relation to each other, and also on the various modes of relationships that emerge. The tradition of social work practices in Ho Chi Minh City may help to ease problems between societal and governmental organizations. The absence of such an issue-culture may lead to more strained relations. State traditions are a major factor in precipitating strained relations between Issue Oriented Organizations and the Governmental Organizations in Ha Noi. The indication of there being a bias against non-state ("private") activities on the part of governmental officials, Governmental Organizations and Mass Organizations runs through all interviews with the representatives of Hanoi-based Issued Ori-

ented Organizations like a thick red thread. 'Statism' seems to be less of a problem for Issue Oriented Organizations in Ho Chi Minh City.

For further empirical details and theoretical explanations see the following articles published on the Internet, in journals and books:

-Wischermann, Joerg/Bui The Cuong/Nguyen Quang Vinh, The Relationship between Societal Organizations and Governmental Organizations in Viet Nam - Selected Findings of an Empirical Survey. Paper presented to the Workshops "The Relationship between Societal Organizations and Governmental Organizations in Viet Nam" at the "National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Sociology in Ha Noi on March 1st, 2002 and at the "Center for Sociology and Development at the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Social Sciences in Ho Chi Minh-City" in Ho Chi Minh-City on March 4th, 2002, see: http://www.fu-berlin.de/polchina/current_research.htm

-Wischermann, Joerg, The Relationship between "Civic Organizations" and "Governmental Organizations" in Vietnam: Selected Findings of an Empirical Survey, in: Vietnam's Socio-Economic Development No.27, Autumn 2001, 19-34;

-Wischermann, Joerg/Nguyen Quang Vinh, The Relationship between Civic Organizations and Governmental Organizations in Vietnam: Selected Findings of an Empirical Survey, in: Kerkvliet, B.T./Heng, R./Koh, D. (Eds.), Getting Organized in Vietnam - Moving In and Around the Socialist State, Singapore 2003 (forthcoming);

-Wischermann, Joerg, The emergence and development of Issue-Oriented Organizations and their relationship with Governmental Organizations in Vietnam in the era of doi moi <policy of renovation> (1986-2002), in: Asian Survey, 2003 (forthcoming).



NGO Profile: International Trachoma Institute in Vietnam

The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) is dedicated to the elimination of blinding trachoma, the world's leading cause of preventable blindness. Nearly 10 percent of the world's population is at risk of blindness due to trachoma, an infection of the eye caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which can be spread easily by hands, clothing, or flies that have come into contact with discharge from the eyes or nose of an infected person. Repeated infection leads to scarring, thickening of the conjunctiva, and distortion of the eyelid. The eyelashes turn inward, painfully scraping against the cornea and eventually causing complete blindness. For centuries, trachoma has incapacitated families and communities in the poorest regions of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Australia.

Founded in 1998 by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Pfizer Inc, the International Trachoma Initiative seeks to eliminate blinding trachoma by putting into action the SAFE strategy (Surgery to correct advanced stages of the disease, Antibiotic distribution of Pfizer-donated Zithromax to treat active infection, Face washing to reduce disease transmission, and Environmental change to increase access to clean water and improved sanitation to eliminate disease altogether). Working in countries where the World Health Organization has documented widespread disease, ITI collaborates with national ministries of health and other partners to select regions where trachoma control will be targeted, develop a plan for implementing the SAFE strategy, and mobilize people and resources. Today, ITI is active in ten countries: Morocco, Tanzania, Sudan, Vietnam, Mali, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nepal, Niger, and Egypt, building on growing international momentum to support the World Health Organization's goal to eliminate this leading cause of preventable blindness by 2020.

One of the great success stories of trachoma elimination efforts is Vietnam, where the national trachoma program is on pace to eliminate blinding trachoma by 2010, making it the first Asian country to eliminate the disease. The International Trachoma Initiative has been working in Vietnam since 2000, where trachoma has been an important part of Vietnam's health agenda for decades. Prior to ITI's involvement, the Vietnamese government had already reduced the prevalence of trachoma from more than 60 percent in 1960 to less than 10 percent in 1996, but pockets of the debilitating disease remain.

In just three years, ITI has performed over 18,000 surgeries to correct the advanced stages of the disease and distributed over 740,000 treatments of Zithromax in a program area with an estimated population of 3 million people residing in 24 districts. Program partners include the Ministry of Health, the District Steering Committee, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Hanoi School of Public Health, and the International Development Enterprises.

Blinding trachoma is both treatable and preventable. The International Trachoma Initiative has been working since 1998 to eliminate this leading cause of preventable blindness, and will continue its efforts until trachoma no longer threatens to rob millions of their sight.

For more information,
please visit www.trachoma.org

Or contact:
Jonathan Struthers
Director of Communications
& Development
441 Lexington Avenue, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10017
(212) 490-6460
iti@trachoma.org

*Health worker checks woman's
upper eyelid for signs of
trachoma in rural Vietnam.*

Photo: Martin Bullard, IDE



Madame Ninh Leads VN Assembly Delegation to US

by Tara McAuliff

On May 19, 2003 a delegation from the National Assembly of Vietnam lead by Mdm. Ton Nu Thi Ninh, Vice-Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, spoke to members of the New York not-for-profit, education, business, government, and development community at a meeting organized by FRD and held at the Institute of International Education. Other National Assembly members in the delegation included Mr. Vu Xuan Hong, President of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations; Mr. Duong Trung Quoc, Member of the Committee for Culture, Education, Youth and Children; Mr. Nguyen Duc Hung, Assistant to the Foreign Affairs Minister, Director of the Americas Department, MOFA; Prof. Tran Dong A Deputy Director of Pediatric Hospital 2, Ho Chi Minh City, and Mr. Tran Hanh, Vice-President and Secretary General, Vietnam Veterans Association.

John McAuliff, Executive Director of FRD, welcomed everyone, and introduced Mdm. Ninh by reminding people that while the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam has improved dramatically from ten years ago, there were still many potential bumps in the road ahead, and that the work to strengthen the relationship between the two countries had not yet ended.

Mdm. Ninh explained that the delegation from the National Assembly was here for both long and short-term reasons. She noted that the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam was a special one that needed to be nurtured by both sides because of the history that they shared. Nurturing that relationship, despite having normal diplomatic relations, was the long-term goal of the delegation's trip. The National Assembly and the U.S. Congress can maintain this people-to-people relationship longer than can their respective executive branches. Mdm. Ninh noted that in meetings with the State Department, the delegation was told that America's relationship with Vietnam was now considered normal, which had both positive and negative implications. The negatives included no longer being given special understanding in areas such as human rights. While Vietnam welcomes this improvement in relations, Mdm. Ninh reiterated that both sides have to continue to work hard.

Mdm. Ninh then discussed the human rights initiatives on the part of the U.S. government in further detail. The Human Rights Bill currently being debated in Congress was the short-term reason for the delegation's visit. She noted that in meeting with Congress people on Capitol Hill, it became clear that many did not really know the substance of the bill, and some did not know that a similar bill had been debated in 2001, or even that they had voted for it. Mdm. Ninh and others in the Vietnamese government are concerned that there are people lobbying for this bill and raising human right's issues in Vietnam less out of concern for the human rights conditions for the average Vietnamese citizen than a desire to scuttle any improvement in bilateral ties with the U.S. She noted how difficult it was to sell Vietnam's (or any

foreign country's) image in America today when there is so little coverage of international issues in the press.

Mdm. Ninh concluded her remarks by saying that the National Assembly of Vietnam will continue to build bridges with American institutions, particularly more conservative law makers and think tanks that they might not have considered approaching in the past. It is her hope that they will come to Vietnam to see the real situation in the country. However, Mdm. Ninh also stressed that the government would continue to engage NGOs who were involved or interested in becoming involved with Vietnam.

Mr. Vu Xuan Hong, then spoke of the role of INGOs in Vietnam's development. He drew on Mdm. Ninh's discussion of image promotion by noting that American NGOs had changed the image of their country for the Vietnamese from a nation that wages war to a people that provide great help. Today, there are nearly 200 American NGOs working in Vietnam. Their work is highly appreciated by the government and people of Vietnam in the areas of poverty reduction, education, health care, the environment, the legacies of war and sustainable development.

Mr. Hong then gave details of the financial and resource commitment, and breadth and scope of NGO supported projects in Vietnam. The government asks for assistance from the INGO community in the areas of poverty reduction (particularly in mountainous regions), education, landmines, UXO and Agent Orange, and integration into the world economic system. Mr. Hong concluded by noting that the Vietnamese government had shown its commitment to INGO involvement in Vietnam by creating a committee to facilitate their work, and hopes to hold a conference on INGO assistance in Vietnam by the end of 2003.



Madame Ninh

More comments from Mdm. Ninh:

In response to questions from the audience, Mdm. Ninh discussed Vietnam's efforts to balance socialism and capitalism. She noted, in relation to the SARS epidemic, that the Vietnamese people tend to come together in the face of a crisis, which may be why they were able to handle things so well in comparison to other countries affected by the virus. Vietnam also worked with international organizations like the WHO right from the start. She feels that medicine is one area where Vietnam has real strength.

Mdm. Ninh noted that there was no model for what Vietnam was trying to do with their economy – for a market economy with socialist tendencies – so they have to do their own thinking and devising of strategy. Vietnam has to continue growing, or it will be left behind. When Vietnam entered the *doi moi* period, Mdm. Ninh believes they moved too far away from socialist values in the provision of services such as medicine, as that is one area where the state has to play a leading role. Medicine was opened too much to market mechanisms. In internal debates, there have been a lot of complaints about the current quality of services such as health care and education. Some say Vietnam is moving too fast, some say it is not moving fast enough.

The people in Vietnam who have suffered the most due to economic changes are in the countryside and mountainous areas. If the economic growth that Vietnam is enjoying is sustainable, it would be very ironic if there were people who were poorer than before *doi moi*. There is some trickle-down to be seen in the cities, but not enough of it outside major economic hubs. The market doesn't reach all areas, and that is where the state, and international organizations and NGOs are needed. Today, Vietnam has come to understand the role and contribution NGOs can bring to social programs.

On foreign affairs, Mdm. Ninh discussed Vietnam's opposition to America's war in Iraq, and how it effected U.S.-Vietnamese relations. While it was too early to say how it might permanently effect relations, it does mean that Vietnam is no longer on the radar screen for U.S. policy makers. However, it is her hope that when the U.S. has time to focus again on the East and Southeast Asian region, it will see that Vietnam has an important role to play in the relations among regional players. The admission of Vietnam into ASEAN is seen as a good thing by all members. It is a very unique organization because it is a group of nations with very different political systems, and there is hope that ASEAN will eventually have the same achievement as the European Union, that of sustained peace.

Vietnam is increasingly being seen as an important economic player. Mdm. Ninh, however, is disappointed that the conditionality-style negotiating that was a hallmark of the cold war seems to be appearing again in the U.S. government, this time in the guise of religious freedom. She feels it is very counterproductive. But if the two countries keep the long term goal of improved relations in mind, they should be able to get past these types of issues.



Vu Xuan Hong



Tallying the votes in Kratie Province. Photo by Joel Montague. Cambodian Election coverage starts on p. 17.

**FRD's Annotated List of
North American Not-for-Profits
Working in Indochina
has been updated!**

**See order form, inside back cover,
or view online at
www.ffrd.org/indochina/directory**

NGO Letter on Vietnam Human Rights Bill

On July 16, an amendment to the State Department Authorization Act, sponsored by Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ), to sanction Vietnam on human rights grounds was adopted by a floor vote of the House of Representatives of 382 to 42. Although considerable, this margin was less than that of the House vote on similar legislation in 2001, when only one member voted against. The amendment contains the substance of the Vietnam Human Rights Act, introduced for consideration by Smith in March, and seeks to prohibit non-humanitarian US assistance to Vietnam unless changes are noted in human rights in the country, according to criteria set down in the bill. The Act's findings are heavily focused on individuals, suggesting that its supporters view promoting change as a matter primarily of "dissident poker."

The proposed legislation now awaits action in the Senate.

The Vietnam Human Rights Act, and the related amendment, are strongly opposed by the business community, and non-governmental organizations that work in Vietnam as well as Amnesty International, which views the legislation as divisive. Below is a letter to Congress urging opposition to the original bill, signed by NGO representatives and other concerned individuals, spear-headed by FRD.

Dear Representative or Senator,

Once again this year you will be asked to vote for legislation that purports to support human rights in Vietnam. We recognize that it is very hard to vote against any legislation offered under the rubric of human rights.

Nevertheless, we urge you to consider carefully the substance of this legislation and decide whether in fact it advances either the cause of human rights in Vietnam or US national interests. Based on our extensive experience in Vietnam, we are convinced that this bill does neither.

Furthermore, the bill's requirement that the Secretary of State submit to Congress an annual report on human rights conditions in Vietnam is redundant. The US government already produces four annual reports on human rights in Vietnam, including three reports by the State Department and one report by the Commission on International Religious Freedom. In addition, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003, stipulates eight monitoring and reporting requirements for human rights issues in Vietnam. Funding is already allocated to the National Endowment for Democracy which supports the work of many of the groups that the bill is proposing to fund. There are already enough tools in place to monitor human rights concerns in Vietnam. There is no need for an additional bill.

Principles of human rights are an important dimension of US foreign policy and should not be distorted to serve the agendas of decreasing minority of exiles and other ideological opponents of the substantial progress in bilateral relations between our countries.

We write to you based on our own practical experience in Vietnam. We draw on the experience of many of the 140 American non-governmental organizations as well as the US academic institutions that have programs in Vietnam.

We have witnessed the profound transformation of life in Vietnam that has taken place in the past two decades. Our personal, daily interaction with Vietnamese colleagues, government counterparts and project beneficiaries is significantly different from what was possible twenty or even ten years ago. The transformation has affected personal and religious freedom, as well as legal and business practices and created an atmosphere far more congenial to US concepts of human rights. Limits on the independence of the media and on opposition political parties are still present, but to a steadily diminishing degree and are not uncharacteristic of other countries in Southeast Asia.

Many of the improvement in human rights-related areas over the past decade can be attributed to international assistance, including that from the US Government and NGOs. These include programs on the rule of law, disability rights, gender empowerment, labor rights and small business management. By putting some of these programs at risk, the proposed bill may directly set back the cause of advancing human rights in Vietnam. International NGOs and educational organizations support respect for human rights through humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance and constructive cooperation with the Vietnamese people.

Frankly, the Vietnam described in this legislation is not the Vietnam we know from our daily unimpeded interaction with all manner of Vietnamese in all parts of the country. Were the hostility evident throughout the bill enacted into law, it could seriously worsen our work environment in Vietnam and bring under suspicion the very people it claims to benefit.

We urge you to defeat this legislation. It reflects bias and ignorance of actual contemporary life in Vietnam, ignorance that can readily be dispelled by a personal visit to the region.

As American citizens deeply engaged with the Vietnamese people, we would also welcome an opportunity to have further contact with you or your staff in person or by e-mail.

- * Steve Sherlock, President, Aid to Southeast Asia, Minneapolis, MN
- * Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA
- * Lady Borton, Quaker International Affairs Representative, American Friends Service Committee, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Catharin Dalpino, Brookings Institute, Washington, DC
- * C. Scott Harrison, President, Cure International, Harrisburg, PA
- * Sally Benson, Board of Directors, Cheer for Vietnam, Washington, DC
- * Chris Deegan, International Education Consultant, Deegan Communications, Brattleboro, VT
- * Lawrence Holzman, Country Director, DKT International, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Anne Wigglesworth MD, MCommH, Program Manager, Doctors of the World-USA, New York, NY
- * Mark Stewart, Former Executive Director, East Meets West Foundation
- * John McAuliff, Executive Director, Fund for Reconciliation and Development, New York, NY
- * Andrew Wells-Dang, Regional Representative, Fund for Reconciliation and Development, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Le Ly Hayslip, Founder, Global Village Foundation
- * C. David Thomas, Indochina Arts Partnership, Hanoi Fine Arts University, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Linda James, Project Manager, Health Volunteers Overseas
- * Anne Shirk, International Voluntary Services AA
- * Tom O'Brien, Representative, Maryknoll, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Betsy Headrick McCrae, Director, East Asia Division, Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA
- * Allen Epp, Country Representative, Mennonite Central Committee, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Dan Pellegrom, President, Pathfinder, MA
- * Robin J. Lewis, Associate Dean, School of International and Public Affairs, New York, NY
- * Arnold Schecter, MD, MPH, Professor of Environmental Sciences, University of Texas Houston School of Public Health, Dallas, TX
- * Judith Ladinsky, Chair, US Committee for Scientific Cooperation with Vietnam, Madison, WI
- * Mark Ashwill, Executive Director, US-Indochina Educational Foundation Inc., Getzville, NY
- * Beatrice Eisman, US-Vietnam Friendship Association, San Francisco, CA
- * Ken Crismer, Vetiver Network Viet Nam, Bellview, WA
- * Robert Muller, President, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Washington, DC
- * Alexander Rietveld, Country Representative, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Hanoi, Vietnam
- * Ann Thuy Le, Vietnam Program Director, Volunteers in Asia, Stanford, CA

Please add me to the list of signatories for the Vietnam Human Rights Bill NGO Letter:

Signature _____ Name (printed) _____
Title* _____ Institution* _____
Address _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Fax _____ e-mail _____

“*Listed for identification purposes only.

Please return to:
Fund for Reconciliation and Development
355 W. 39th St., New York, NY 10018
fax 212-760-9906; e-mail indochina@ffrd.org.



Cambodian Election Section



Cambodia Holds National Elections (from cover)

CPP is nine seats shy of the 2/3 majority needed to form a government independently. However, the Sam Rainsy Party and FUNCINPEC have joined forces forming the “Alliance of Democrats” and have refused to join in a coalition government that has Hun Sen as its Prime Minister. They plan on traveling to the US and Europe this fall to gather international support for a Cambodian government without Hun Sen.

The Constitution requires that the new government is formed within 60 days of the elections in the meantime the current government continues. If a new coalition agreement is not reached at the end of the 60 days, there are no provisions within the constitution to call for a new election, and as a result the current government will continue indefinitely.

Cambodian Election Field Reports

by FRD staff

Cambodian Campaign Nears Close, Shows Major Improvements over Previous Elections

July 22, 2003

On July 27, Cambodia will hold its third national parliamentary election since the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. For the past week, leaders of the International Volunteer Observers (IVO) team have met with officials of the major Cambodian political parties, the US and Canadian Embassies, NGOs and human rights groups and visited key provinces such as Kampot, Takeo, Kandal and Svay Rieng. While the pre-election period has not been problem-free, our findings demonstrate progress in many important areas, including the following:

(1) **General atmosphere.** The campaign has been considerably less tense than during the last parliamentary elections in 1998. All parties are campaigning freely, particularly in urban areas, but also in the countryside. Provincial all-candidate debates (sponsored by the US National Democratic Institute) have been well-attended and effective. Candidates are focusing on the issues to a greater extent than in the past, and inter-party criticism is more open.

(2) **Security and safety.** There appears to be a generally secure environment for the campaign. However, there were 11 murders in the pre-campaign period, 2-3 of them confirmed to have been politically motivated, followed by 5 more killings in the first week of the campaign. Following appeals for peace from the King and party leaders, violence has lessened and is at a much lower level than in 1998 or 2002.

(3) **Coercion and vote-buying.** While the IVO delegation has not witnessed any instances of coercion first-hand, we have heard stories of harassment of candidates and activists, destruction of

property, or seizure of voting cards in several rural villages. These appear to be localized issues, not pervasive incidents as alleged in past campaigns.

(4) **Election administration.** The National Election Commission (NEC) is operating competently, transparently and openly. However, it does not use its power to investigate and punish alleged cases of violations of the law. The provisions of the election law are well known in advance of the election and agreed on by all contesting parties.

(5) **Media.** Access to media for all parties has improved since 1998. While major television and public radio stations are government-owned, the junior coalition partner and largest opposition party have their own media outlets and are doing an effective job of reaching voters.



ballot instructions



Election observers and party agent witness the closing up the Ballot box in Bavel, Battambang Province. Photo by Theodore Ross

July 23

International and Domestic Observers Prepare for Cambodian Elections

With four days remaining before national parliamentary elections, thousands of official observers are deploying to Cambodia's 23 provinces and 12,000 polling stations.

The vast majority of observers are Cambodians: 20,000 with the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (COMFREL) and 6,000 with the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC). These observers will be stationary, assigned to each polling station and commune counting center nationwide. Many observers, along with agents of governing and opposition political parties, will sleep in a room with the ballot boxes between election day and counting day.

While not as numerous as in past national elections, international observer groups, with over 500 members on 13 delegations, also play a significant role in ensuring the openness and accuracy of the election process. Many delegations are government-sponsored, such as a European Union team and groups from the New Zealand, Canadian, Australian, Japanese and US Embassies. Both the EU and US have funded long-term observers who have been in each province since the end of May. The US observers are administered by the Asia Foundation with a grant from USAID.

Other international groups are non-governmental, such as the Asian Network for Free and Fair Elections (ANFREL) and the Fund for Reconciliation and Development's International Volunteer Observers (IVO). Each of the observer teams is accredited by Cambodia's National Election Commission (NEC), on the basis of abiding by an official Code of Conduct and showing no publicly demonstrated bias in favor of any candidate or political party.

International observers will move from polling station to polling station, focusing on heavily populated and contested areas, but with the right to travel anywhere freely. Each delegation will write a group report after the election process is complete. In cases of complaints or irregularities, international observers' reports may be compared with those of local observers and party agents. These multiple layers of accountability reduce the possibility of election fraud and will make the assessment process more transparent.

Cambodia is not yet a fully mature democracy, and election observers should not expect perfection. We should and do expect that the elections will take place according to the laws and regulations set by the NEC. The presence of neutral, unbiased observers—both Cambodians and foreigners—helps to ensure that these procedures are followed in every polling station in the country.

July 25, 2003:

Election Campaign Ends

Friday, July 25 was the last day of campaigning for Sunday's election. All parties had rallies throughout the country; in Phnom Penh, we witnessed those of the Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP), the Royalist FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), the latter two addressed by their leaders, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy.

Campaign rhetoric has heated up in recent days. Both Ranariddh and Rainsy, predict victory and promise dramatic change, especially an end to corruption. Ranariddh has made personal attacks on Prime Minister Hun Sen, leader of the CPP and claimed that if FUNCINPEC should not win the election, it would be because of fraud. In this morning's rally he turned on opposition leader Rainsy, claiming that the CPP's objective was to fix things so Rainsy would get 30 seats and thus become the CPP's "puppet". If the CPP should be defeated, he plays the "king" card (something Sihanouk would not be pleased with) saying that the monarch will come out and "protect us". Ranariddh's own royal aunt, Princess Vacheara, running for FUNCINPEC in Phnom Penh, has publicly claimed he has not ended corruption in his own party.

Sam Rainsy staged a demagogic *tour de force* this afternoon, arriving an hour late at "Democracy Square" near the National Assembly, after a rousing warm-up by his wife, Tioulong Saumura. He told a crowd of over 5,000 that he would be the next Prime Minister. He vowed to "eliminate Communism" and claimed the election was now between the CPP (representing Vietnam) and the SRP, since FUNCINPEC has "vanished".

Whatever the outcome, it seems likely that there will be demonstrations, both by losers and winners, but these should be short

term. The issue will be how long it takes FUNCINPEC, still expected to finish second, to reach a coalition agreement with CPP. Rainsy, who makes much of his US connections in speeches and brochures (featuring pictures of Sen. McConnell and other American political leaders) may try to involve the US in his post-election efforts to discredit the process. It is a process, of course, to which he himself signed on several months ago.

Our discussions with Princess Norodom Rattana Devi ("Nana"), daughter of Ranariddh, and Son Chhay, a senior SRP MP now running in Phnom Penh, indicate quiet confidence, although they do complain about CPP intimidation and vote buying. Nana suggested that foreign observers should guard ballot boxes overnight. The atmosphere overall seems fairly relaxed.

Tom Minter's CNN report of a climate of "fear and intimidation" is off the mark. His main source for this was evidently Dr. Kek Galabru, head of the NGO Licadho and of the election coalition NICFEC, who detests Hun Sen. COMFREL, the larger Cambodian monitoring coalition, however, has reported that FUNCINPEC had the best media access this past week. The long-term observers of the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), which criticized the results of the 1998 and 2002 elections, put out a pre-election report today that comes very close to praising the process so far.

Late today we met the former Japanese Ambassador, Yukio Imagawa, a respected scholar of Cambodia, whose assessment is that the prolonged demonstrations and violence that marred the 1998 post-election period will not recur. He believes the CPP will do about as well as last time, but SRP will take votes from FUNCINPEC. The latter, if it wishes to share the spoils of victory, will have to succumb quickly to offers to form a new coalition, and will probably enjoy fewer Cabinet positions.



Polling station in Phnom Penh. This and all otherwise uncredited election photos by Susan Hammond.

July 27, 2003:

Election Day Peaceful

Voters lined up at crack of dawn for polls that opened at 7:00 am throughout Cambodia; most had already voted by noon. The weather cooperated, at least in the capital city of Phnom Penh, and a festive atmosphere prevailed, as it had in 1998. Reports from our IVOs in the countryside have yet to come in, but we have heard informally from Cambodia's second city, Battambang and from Kampong Speu that the election went peacefully and correctly in those areas. Though it was thought that heavy rain and flooding may disrupt voting in some remote communes, the National Election Committee confirmed that all 12,826 polling stations opened on time. In Phnom Penh, a small homemade bomb exploded across the road from FUNCINPEC headquarters, causing no damage and reportedly slightly injuring one person, and two unexploded devices were removed from the park in front of the Royal Palace. There are no convincing explanations for these events — they could hardly be called intimidation as they were reported only after most people had voted.

It is estimated that some 80 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots in Phnom Penh; foreign observers including IVO visited a variety of polling stations in several disparate areas, from Russey Keo, where there are significant Cham and Vietnamese minorities, to middle class Svay Prey Commune, to the rural southeast corner of the city. We met agents of all political parties and several observers, both foreign and Cambodian; most, including the President of NICFEC, thought the process was going very well. Rumors, as usual, were rife, with one unsubstantiated report of ballot box theft in Phnom Penh. The NEC confirmed that one voter was arrested for trying to take a ballot out of a polling station in Phnom Penh; he claimed to be taking it to his wife waiting outside. Our observation of the polling stations indicated that voting officials were well trained and carried out their duties throughout the long, hot day with zeal, good humor and professionalism.

We observed the closing of the first station we had visited in Russey Keo, and followed the securely sealed and packaged ballot box and polling materials to the counting station at a local high school, where they will be kept overnight. The boxes will be under the surveillance of party agents and local observers who will remain with them through the night. Counting commences at 7:00 am Monday and is expected to be completed about noon. By late afternoon or early evening, we should have a preliminary idea of the outcome in terms of raw votes; official results and a determination of seats will take some days.

In the meantime, there are likely to be complaints, requests for recounts, etc., and we expect that the NEC will be more forthcoming than in 1998 in satisfying the most serious of these. Nonetheless, veteran observers foresee accusations of fraud, intimidation and violence, leading to demonstrations in the days following the election, by both losers and winners.

July 29, 2003

International Volunteer Observers Positive on Cambodian Election Process

On July 27 and 28, the Fund for Reconciliation and Development deployed 36 International Volunteer Observers (IVOs) to 12 provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia, including Phnom Penh Municipality, to observe the conduct of the National Assembly Elections and the vote counts that followed. Members of this voluntary team, led by Gordon Longmuir, former Ambassador of Canada to Cambodia, came from the United States, Australia, Switzerland and Indonesia. They were dispersed widely and at random throughout the country, some in very remote areas.

On the basis of their observations of polling stations and communal counting centers, the IVOs found that the elections were carried out in an open and inclusive manner, with painstaking attention to detail to ensure the secrecy of ballots and an accurate vote count. Election officials, both at polling stations and counting centers carried out their duties with evident impartiality, professionalism, zeal and good humor, for which they are to be commended. IVO noted also with approval that a large percentage of polling officials were women.

Some IVOs reported isolated incidences of possible intimidation, irregularities or fraud, but none of these were likely to have affected the outcome of the elections. It should be emphasized, however, that the majority of international observers, including the IVOs, were in Cambodia for only a matter of days before, during and after election day. Although many had previous experience in Cambodia, their mandate did not extend to an analysis or conclusions related to allegations of pre-election intimidation and violence.

It is clearly for the Cambodian people, not the international community, to judge these elections. The IVOs wish to congratulate polling officials, party agents and observers who worked so diligently to ensure the transparency and integrity of the voting and counting process, and the voters who came out in large numbers to exercise their democratic rights. All 22 parties that participated had agreed in advance to accept the ground rules laid down in the National Election Law and in the regulations of the National Election Commission.

Final results of the elections are not yet available. The IVOs' experience, taken together with that reported by other national and international observer groups, leads us to conclude that the election process of July 27 and 28 was administered in a transparent and accurate way. We urge all parties to accept the final results when they have been certified and published, and to work together to create an effective and productive National Assembly and a government dedicated to the welfare of the Cambodian people.

Cambodia Elections: A Preliminary Assessment

by Gordon Longmuir

The International Volunteer Observers (IVO), deployed by the Fund for Reconciliation and Development (FRD) in 12 provinces — including Phnom Penh — for the National Assembly Elections and the counting process that followed, concluded that the elections were conducted in a satisfactory manner. This is reflected in the IVO Statement, issued as a Press Release on July 29. We are encouraged especially by a comment by the spokesperson of the European Union mission who said that these were “the most democratic elections in [Cambodia’s] history”.

The Setting:

Cambodia, by general consensus, is not yet a fully functioning democracy. National and local elections, however well-run, are not the determining factor in defining a democratic society under the rule of law. The purpose of sending national and international observers to oversee elections in a developing pluralist society is mainly to establish whether the election process, including the campaign, the conduct of the polling process and a tally of votes won by each party, has been impartial and transparent.

This does not imply that international observers should ignore the political environment in which the elections took place. There is no doubt that instances of vote buying and intimidation preceded the July 27 elections, starting weeks or months before the campaign. The local election monitoring NGO coalition *COMFREL* has credibly reported some 31 deaths, probably politically motivated, in the eight months before the elections, but it was pointed out that 11 of the alleged victims were members of the ruling Cambodian People’s Party, and that 9 others were from its coalition partner *FUNCINPEC*.

Voting “incentives”, moreover, were a common device used by all three major parties. In rural areas, where the power and influence of local authorities such as village chiefs and commune officials are acknowledged, it is quite likely that people were more inclined to support the CPP. For 25 years, especially in remote regions, the distinction between government and party has been blurred. As development expands beyond the urban areas and main highways, it is to be expected that the situation will change, especially now that there is a more pluralistic system in place for local elections.

The campaign of 2003, which ran for one month from late June, was evidently more issue-oriented than any in recent history. While the personalities of the main political leaders were still a major factor, all made clear undertakings with regard to economic development, corruption and, in the case of *FUNCINPEC* and the Sam Rainsy Party, immigration — the latter being a code word for “illegal” Vietnamese migrants.

Observing the Elections

The head of the International Volunteer Observers (IVO), former Canadian Ambassador Gordon Longmuir, arrived on July 11, followed by FRD Deputy Director Susan Hammond. Together they had meetings with a wide variety of personalities, including the Chairman of the National Election Committee, Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, senior party officials of all three major parties, the Canadian and United States Ambassadors, other senior diplomats and foreign experts and heads of key NGOs, both national and international. The mood was generally optimistic, with only some local NGOs, SRP and *FUNCINPEC* officials predicting serious problems associated with apprehended violence and intimidation. Human rights organizations were concerned that there would be attempts by local authorities to manipulate voters, especially in rural areas. A request to meet the king was politely declined on the grounds that he could not meet all the international observer groups. Similar requests to meet Prince Ranariddh and opposition leader Sam Rainsy received no response in spite of several follow-ups; we have sent them our findings.

Unlike in 1998, there was little evidence of intervention by military or even police authorities, who kept a low profile throughout the campaign and the weekend of the elections themselves. A major concern had been that the ruling CPP would dominate the media, especially radio and TV, which are the major sources of news for rural Cambodians. Doubtless, the government continued to con-



CPP campaign procession in Battambang. Photo by Theodore Ross

trol coverage not directly related to the elections. The NEC, however, with assistance from the UN, orchestrated a series of 15-minute news broadcasts each day with equal time for the major parties. TVK, the state TV network, broadcast debates and other events that equitably laid out the party platforms — with the approval of the Prime Minister. This was a major improvement on 1998, although paid political announcements were not permitted by any private network, clearly under pressure from the government. Progress in this area will be slow, but TVK has indicated that it may continue to cover more open political debate even after the elections. The Voice of American (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA) reportedly carried more balanced news of all party campaigns than in 1998.

During the week before voting day, the 34 additional IVO members arrived; all but a half dozen had previous experience in Cambodia; some had observed the elections of 1998. After an in-house orientation and a training session generously provided by the Asia Foundation, the observers were deployed to eleven provinces and the capital area: two in Phnom Penh, four in Battambang, four in Kampot, four in Kandal, two in Kratie, four in Kampong Cham, four in Prey Veng, two in Preah Vihear, two in Kampong Chhang, two in Kampong Speu, two in Siem Reap, and four in Takeo. Armed with Polling Station Observation Forms, Vote-count Reports and other guidance manuals provided by the Asia Foundation, all observers had a consistent set of questions to address concerning the conduct of the elections. These forms are available on line at www.CambodiaVote.info or, in Khmer, at www.BohChnout.info. Observers were provided also with background material including a fact sheet from the Asia Foundation, a political-economic assessment, maps, and contact information for the Long-Term Observers — LTOs (two or three in each province, funded either by The Asia Foundation or by the European Union). The LTOs were most helpful in arranging local accommodation, transportation and interpreters in rural areas.

The findings of the Observers are briefly described in the Statement of July 29. The observers were enthusiastic about their experience. Their original documents will be kept at FRD headquarters in New York and are available on request to the National Election Committee and Cambodian political parties, provided individual observers have no objection to their release. It should be emphasized that these are not official documents and have no legal status in the Kingdom of Cambodia — they reflect the personal views of the independent observers.

The administration of most polling and counting stations was generally considered to be meticulous, sometimes to a fault, and some wondered if the system could not be streamlined to make it faster. Others thought that the very deliberateness of the process gave voters more confidence in its honesty. It was agreed that we should congratulate the authorities in including such a large number of women in the electoral process.

Most observers viewed the election experience as positive, although some irregularities were observed. Among the most fre-

quent comments was that the village chief or commune officials were present in the vicinity of the station, which may have been intimidating. There also seemed to be an unusually high number of persons who were not on the voters' list. In some areas, uniformed officers came to vote; this was noted but not contested by party agents. There were instances of handicapped persons not being able to enter polling stations. Several observers noted that the ballots, printed for the first time in Cambodia, stuck together where the NEC serial number had been embossed, thus causing the ballots to rip. Crowd control was poor in some areas. At a number of locations, there were party signs (of all parties) within 200m of the polling stations. And a few persons did complain of incidents of intimidation prior to July 27. One "death threat" was heard ("if you come back, we will shoot you") to an observer's driver/interpreter, but it evidently was not election-related.

Confusion around the registration process may partially explain why the voter turnout was lower this year than in 1998 (although it is disingenuous to make too much of the fact that "only" 83 per cent voted — this was still a high turnout by world standards). Persons who swear they registered correctly and had proper ID were not on the list. Their omission did not necessarily correlate with their political affiliation, so it may be a structural issue, but one that must be addressed before the next elections, probably for the Senate in 2005.

The most serious irregularity noted by a number of observers, including from the International Republican Institute (IRI) and some from the US Embassy, had to do with the status of Cambodian citizens of Vietnamese origin. While none of our observers was involved in this issue, it is important to take note of it in this report. An incident occurred in Kandal on July 27 wherein roughly 100 ethnic Vietnamese, whose names were on the voter list, were prevented from voting by a group of young activists. Riot police were reportedly called out and they were subsequently allowed to vote. When news of this kind circulates, it is likely that many ethnic Vietnamese would simply stay home on election day.

In fairness, we observed stations in northern Phnom Penh where there is a significant Vietnamese community and saw no problems. Moreover, our observers in border areas of Prey Veng province saw no evidence of Vietnamese crossing into Cambodia to vote, as *FUNCINPEC* and SRP politicians had alleged. Inflammatory racist rhetoric specifically aimed at the Vietnamese is a problem that will have to be examined in the period between elections. It will be recalled that a number of ethnic Vietnamese were beaten to death during the demonstrations that took place following the 1998 elections.

On their return to Phnom Penh, most of the IVOs attended a debriefing presided over by Gordon Longmuir, where the text of the Press Release of July 29 was discussed, some amendments suggested, and approved for publication. That was an excellent opportunity for observers to explain or augment the comments in their individual observation forms.

The personal commentaries of the observers were invaluable in the preparation of our public statement and in handling subsequent interviews. Gordon Longmuir spoke on the record to VOA (Gary Thomas), the Economist (Tom Fawthrop), Radio Free Asia (Sam Borin) and the Cambodia Daily (Michelle Vachon). He also met Seth Mydans of the New York Times, who had unfortunately already filed his story.

During the period since the election, there have been a number of press conferences and information sessions; we attended two “seminars” hosted by the Canadian Ambassador, the first to compare preliminary conclusions the day following the vote count, the second, on July 31 to look at the longer period surrounding the elections and to “lessons learned” for next time. The larger observer teams, i.e., COMFREL, ANFREL, the EU, *la Francophonie* and the International Republican Institute (IRI) held press briefings. Their documents have been widely circulated. Most took a positive view of the elections.

Oral debriefings from the Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, US, Swedish and Japanese Embassies and the National Democratic Institute indicated a uniform opinion that the 2003 election process was greatly improved over 1998. Other groups observing the elections were from the French Embassy, NICFEC (a Cambodian NGO consortium including some foreign observers), and Human Rights Watch. The Japanese Ambassador held a post-election reception for selected observer missions, and the mood, even among critical Cambodian NGOs, was upbeat.

IRI’s preliminary report, while critical, was somewhat more balanced than in 1998, but still proceeded from a preconceived premise that the elections had failed to meet international standards. Christie Todd Whitman, who led the observer mission,

was cautious in drawing overly broad conclusions, and a detailed evaluation will be published only in September. When one reporter raised the issue of IRI’s clearly perceived failure of impartiality in favoring and financing the SRP, IRI President George Folson responded that the organization had, in fact, trained all political parties in Cambodia over a ten year period — which was factual but glossed over the fact that IRI had done no training for CPP or FUNCINPEC since the 1997 factional fighting. The Asia Foundation confirmed in post-election observer meetings that IRI did offer its polling manual to all party agents.

The EU Observation Mission, by far the largest and best endowed, with some 20 LTOs in the country from June 11 to mid-August, came to the most positive conclusion, i.e., that the elections were “well conducted”, although Cambodia still had “some way to go to full democracy.” Asked by a rather belligerent European correspondent if the election was not a “charade” to please the international community, Glyn Ford, MEP, suggested the gentleman “tell that to the 6 million people who came out to vote, especially the two million who voted for parties [other than the CPP]”. Another spokesperson referred to the elections as “the freest and most democratic in [Cambodia’s] history”, a judgment that, while positive, will not please King Sihanouk, who truly believes he presided over several such elections.

What Next?

The coming days and weeks will determine whether or not a new coalition government can be formed: a two-thirds majority is required in the National Assembly, and no single party has achieved that number. The SRP and FUNCINPEC have called for a change in leadership in the CPP, but that is highly unlikely, given that the CPP under Hun Sen has added as many as nine seats to its parlia-



Loading up the ballot boxes in Bavel, Battambang. Photo by Theodore Ross.

mentary representation. There is no constitutional provision for a hung parliament, and the new National Assembly must be sworn in within 60 days. One foresees a situation similar to that in 1998, but perhaps without the prolonged demonstrations and subsequent violence. The king, although he is leaving the situation up to the parties for now, may well step in to mediate the problem after a much shorter delay than in 1998, when the new coalition was not agreed to until mid-November.

Conclusions:

The IVO presence in Cambodia was short in duration and all but six of the observers spent a very short time in Phnom Penh. IVO's mandate was to try to be rigorously impartial — a difficult task in Cambodia — and its findings were very much in line with most other observer missions. IVO's statement of July 29 was, indeed, less fulsome in its praise than the preliminary report of the EU mission, which was in country for a longer time. The conclusions in our Press Release remain valid, and the advice that all parties accept the results and work together for the welfare of the Cambodian people are even more apt, given the developments of the last three days. We have orally urged Im Sousdey, Chair of the National Election Committee, to consider all complaints and grievances and give them prompt and impartial attention.

This may be the last time significant numbers of foreign observers will be required to monitor a Cambodian election, although that is a judgment that should be suspended until we see how the run-up to the Senate elections of 2005 proceeds.

Members of the IVO team, who selflessly paid their own way for every aspect of this mission, clearly enjoyed the adventure, and made a valuable contribution to the comfort level of the Cambodian people in what was really only the second national election for most. The insights and enthusiastic critiques of this diverse and talented team will be most valuable in making constructive recommendations to the NEC and the government for subsequent elections.

Recommendations to the NEC:

The NEC will doubtless receive masses of advice from international organizations; we will keep our list brief:

1. In the short run, ensure that the official vote count is an accurate reflection of that which was carried out in the presence of party agents and observers, and produce copies of all forms 1105 signed by the various party agents; a credible certified count is essential;
2. Assiduously follow up on all complaints and grievances brought before it by the parties or disinterested observers, investigate them carefully, reject only those that have no discernible merit, and mete out appropriate sanctions to alleged offenders where these are appropriate;

3. Undertake an immediate review of the registration process, including a new procedure for the issuance of voting cards to all eligible Cambodian citizens; consider a permanent voting list with updates, rather than a short, fixed period for registration;
4. Consider a reform in the choice of election officials from the NEC down; officials should renounce any party membership, and an effort should be made to bring in persons who have not necessarily been members of the ruling party, even if their professional skills are not immediately of a high standard;
5. Consider some streamlining measures that might make the election process and, especially, the counting process, more manageable, while not sacrificing the security of the ballot.

We repeat that a very professional and transparent process seems to have been carried out almost everywhere our observer group traveled during their mission to the 2003 elections — those areas were chosen randomly, and included some very remote places. Nonetheless, it is public perceptions that must be addressed, and members of all parties should be assured that there will be no discrimination as a result of party allegiance at any level. That is a tall order in a country like Cambodia, but we are confident it can happen.

Each time Cambodia goes to the polls, the situation grows better — this exercise was significantly better than in 1998, and still all parties cannot seem to accept their fate and get on with representing their people in such a way as to create a modern society. His Majesty King Sihanouk has said on several occasions that there are no good losers in Cambodia (a phenomenon not unique to Cambodia). We truly hope that that will cease to be the case, and that a new and more forward looking coalition will emerge out of the new National Assembly.

D. Gordon Longmuir

Head, International Volunteer Observer

Election results are posted and analyzed at the NEC site prepared with the assistance of the government of Canada www.cambodiaelection2003.com



*Vendors outside polling station, Kampot Province.
Photo by Duane Sackett.*

FRD's International Volunteer Observer Teams

Many thanks to the observers who graciously found their own funding for their travel and expenses in order to help make the elections as successful as they were.

Observers are listed by the province in which they observed.

Battambang: Theodore Ross & Valerie Mamara; Daniel Guttentag & Wendy McAvoy

Kampot: Duane Sacket & William Wilson, Jane Martin & Truleen Delgado

Kandal: Benny Widyono & Fransesca Widyono, Peter S. Pen & Bill Rose

Kratie: Joel Montague & Joy Chia

Kampong Cham: Samrach Sok & Phuntsok Jansar, Sally Benson & Theodore M. Lieverman

Kampong Chhnang: Tom Grunfeld & Helmut Reuschle

Kampong Speu: Sothida Tan & Richard Walden

Preah Vihear: Thomas Sean Butler & William Collins

Prey Veng: Clint Blandford & Molly Daggett, Russell Proctor & Andrew Wells-Dang

Siem Reap: Jill Ireland & Robert Schweiger

Takeo: Joan Kraynavski & Sharmali Fowler, Lance Rasbridge & Caroline Wischmann

Phnom Penh: Susan Hammond & D. Gordon Longmuir



Prey Veng Observers



Russei Keo District, Phnom Penh polling station officials with observers team leader D. Gordon Longmuir and party agents.



Battambang Province observers, Photo Daniel Guttentag



final meeting of the election team

Background: Cambodia Prepares for National Elections

by Andrew Wells-Dang

The past five years have been in many respects a successful period for Cambodia. With the military threat from the Khmer Rouge finally eliminated, the country has been at peace. The economy has shown remarkable production and export growth. Cambodia's NGO movement and civil society are thriving and vibrant. Less progress, though notable steps forward, have been made in countering corruption, protecting the environment, and bringing former Khmer Rouge leaders to trial.

The governing coalition of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) led by Prime Minister Hun Sen and the royalist FUNCINPEC Party led by the speaker of Parliament, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, has defied skeptics and remained stable. The opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), which controls 15 out of 122 seats in Parliament, has performed its role with vigor, and was rewarded at the polls for local commune leadership in February 2002 with an increase from 14% (in 1998) to 17% of the vote. The CPP's share of the vote also rose substantially in 2002, while FUNCINPEC's declined.

Divergent Views in Phnom Penh and Washington

A May 2003 survey by the Asia Foundation gives an unmatched view of the mood of the Cambodian electorate several months before the election. Four-fifths of respondents say the country is headed in the right direction and report that people feel free to express their political opinions, up from around two-thirds in a similar survey in 2000. The largest problems respondents identify are poverty (52%) and water issues. 98% plan to vote in the July elections, suggesting an impressive turnout matching or surpassing that of past elections. However, only 29% can point to differences among the three major parties. The survey concludes that "the electorate continues to have relatively limited notions of what elections can do."

This mixed, though generally upbeat picture contrasts sharply with the widespread concern and alarm about Cambodian elections in Washington. The leading critic of the election process, and of Cambodia's political system writ large, is Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY). In an extraordinary series of editorials in the *Boston Globe*, *Bangkok Nation* and other publications, Sen. McConnell and his chief aide, Paul Grove, have called for "regime change" in the country and exhibited unusually fervent personal animosity towards the Prime Minister. McConnell announced in February 2003 that only a victory by the "democratic opposition" would be an acceptable result, implying that the governing coalition parties running in the election are both undemocratic. "Hun Sen and the ruling party...are part of the problem," he wrote, while "other Cambodian politicians and political parties...are part of the solution."

Closely associated with McConnell's views, the International Republican Institute (IRI) is a major funder and supporter of the SRP, though it maintains a greater veneer of objectivity than McConnell himself. An IRI delegation that visited Cambodia in April concluded that "[a] climate of intimidation and fear pervades the pre-electoral environment" and that "time [is] running out" for radical changes in Cambodia's electoral machinery. In June 10 testimony before Congress, IRI's program director stated that "IRI is deeply troubled by the preparations for Cambodia's upcoming elections. While the electoral procedures and administration provide the makings of a technically competent election, the political environment is marred by violence, intimidation, and pervasive restrictions on political expression."

More moderate US voices are also critical of Cambodia's election preparations. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has sent several pre-election missions that, while not unremittingly negative, did find that "many of the problems that existed in previous elections...exist today." On May 20, Sens. Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Joseph Biden (D-DE) sent a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell expressing their "concerns about the situation in Cambodia." Their letter was followed by a State Department statement on May 30 expressing support for a "credible election process in Cambodia in which all political parties can compete in a safe environment on a level playing field."

In all cases, the critics' concerns revolve primarily around two issues. One has to do with political violence and intimidation; the second around equal media access for the major parties. Each of these issues deserves a closer look in comparative perspective with other countries and Cambodia's own past. The point is not to deny that these (and many other) problems exist in Cambodia; they should be condemned wherever they occur. Many Cambo-



Funcinpec procession in Takeo Province

dian voters are also concerned about election-related problems. However, according to the Asia Foundation survey, the percentage who express at least one concern about election fairness declined from 58% in 2000 to 46% in 2003.

Does Violence Intimidate Voters?

There is no question that violence, political or otherwise, is a major problem in Cambodia. In a larger sense, the ongoing level of crime, aggression and corruption in society can be viewed as an unresolved legacy of the Indochina war, the Khmer Rouge period, and the civil war extending into the 1990s. Not only Khmer Rouge leaders, but many lesser criminals, killers and abusers of human rights have gone unpunished. The 1998 national elections happened almost exactly a year after civil infighting between the two ruling parties and several months after a still-unresolved grenade attack against a SRP demonstration. In the aftermath of the 1998 election, both FUNCINPEC and SRP protested the results for several months before the new government was formed. An assassination attempt was made against Hun Sen, possibly by disgruntled former Khmer Rouge.

The past several years have been relatively more calm. There was a bizarre armed attack on Phnom Penh by a California-based group called the “Cambodian Freedom Fighters” in November 2000; its leaders were apprehended and given stiff prison sentences. Political violence did occur in the leadup to the 2002 commune elections, though at a lower level than in 1998. One former FUNCINPEC parliamentarian, Om Radsady, was murdered in December 2002 in

what looked like a mafia-style “hit.” Still, it came as a shock when demonstrators protesting alleged anti-Cambodian statements by a Thai actress went on a rampage and burned the Thai Embassy on January 29, 2003, along with other Thai-owned properties in Phnom Penh.

Rumors circulated over who might be responsible for the riots. A May State Department report on the incident labeled Cambodian authorities “irresponsible” and “incompetent” in their use of nationalistic rhetoric and failure to protect Thai property, but did not place blame for the violence on any individual or party. Cambodian officials, including Hun Sen, have commented publicly that they did not expect the demonstrations to become violent.

There is no clear evidence, however, that the January riots have any connection to the July elections. The same is true of some, but not all, other violent incidents in Cambodian society. In 1998, the UN Commission on Human Rights investigated 49 killings and concluded that 16 were clearly politically motivated. Former US Ambassador Kent Wiedemann judged that out of more than 20 killings prior to the 2002 commune elections, 10-15 were political in nature. Most recently, a June 2003 report by Cambodia’s Central Office of Security investigated 16 murders of political party members (nine CPP, five FUNCINPEC, and three SRP) earlier in the year and found that none of them were politically motivated—a finding that might have been politically motivated in itself. Further confusing the issue, the Sam Rainsy Party responded that while they were sure their party’s victims were political, the CPP’s were likely personal.

During this same time period, Bangladesh, East Timor, India, In-



Sam Rainsy Party rally in Phnom Penh

onesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka all had higher election-related casualties than Cambodia, in some cases dramatically higher: in May 2001, 100 were killed and 141 injured in a total of 203 violent incidents in the Philippines, and in Bangladesh, sources estimated between 140 and 300 election-related deaths in the three months leading up to the October 2001 elections. (Both of these countries are much larger than Cambodia, so the actual casualty rates are about the same.) But nowhere in the US media or political circles does one hear complaints or hand-wringing about political violence in Bangladesh or the Philippines.

Many other attempts at non-violent intimidation may also occur in Cambodia and other countries. Even presuming that this intimidation is as widespread as critics allege, however, there is no proof that it has a direct result on election behavior. Certainly it does not dissuade people from voting, as Cambodia's turnouts are among the highest in the world. Presuming that ballots are indeed secret and counting is accurate, as even IRI agrees, it does not follow that voters will be afraid to vote for their party of choice. Indeed, attempts at intimidation could easily backfire if they produce popular anger against the authorities.

Consider an extreme example of fear and intimidation far beyond anything Cambodia has experienced since Khmer Rouge days. In East Timor in 1999, the Indonesian army and its militia surrogates terrorized the country prior to a referendum on independence which passed by a vote of more than 3 to 1. There is no reason to believe that if Cambodian citizens were in the same conditions, they would not act just as courageously. But having been an election observer in Cambodia in 1998 and East Timor in 1999, I can testify that there is no comparison between sporadic, localized violence on one hand and systematic fear, targeted killing and planned destruction on the other. This is not to minimize Cambodia's problems of violence and impunity, simply to conclude that claims of a "climate" of repression in Cambodia are distorted and exaggerated.

Survey evidence confirms this view. Only 9% of those interviews by the Asia Foundation said they thought the country was going in the wrong direction. Out of those "pessimists," 11% cited repression and a lack of political freedom as a cause (down from 20% in 2000). Even presuming that there might have been respondents who do feel afraid and were afraid to say so—although the surveyors themselves saw no signs of this—the result is still only a small fraction of the population.

Does Media Bias Affect Election Outcomes?

In the Asia Foundation survey, of the nearly half of respondents who mentioned at least one concern about the upcoming election, the most widely-mentioned worry was vote-buying (26%). This common corrupt practice in many emerging democracies (and some well-established ones) has not, however, elicited large volumes of complaints from international critics; one possible



CPP rally on the Road to Battambang Photo Theodore Ross

reason for this being that all Cambodian parties might engage in vote-buying relatively equally.

The second-highest concern of Cambodian voters, at 17% (down from 30% in 2000) is media bias. This worry is a major factor in the negative views of IRI, NDI and other critics. While Cambodia's print media is free and open, including several foreign-owned English-language papers and Khmer-language publications that are harshly critical of the government, most Cambodians outside of major cities do not read these materials. Instead, survey results show, they get their information from radio and television, which are mostly state-owned or supportive of the government.

In a "World Press Freedom Index" assembled (on unclear criteria) by Reporters Sans Frontieres in 2003, Cambodia is ranked "satisfactory," the same rating as the US, and is given an overall ranking of #71 out of 139, just behind Thailand at 65 and ahead of the Philippines at 89. RSF's annual report notes that Cambodia is seen as "the good boy of South-East Asia as regards press freedom. Violence against journalists and censorship became more and more infrequent. Nonetheless, almost all of the broadcast media were controlled by the associates of Prime Minister Hun Sen."

An April 2003 summary by the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (which is funded by USAID and IRI) noted that "all of Cambodia's major television and radio stations, state-owned or private, dedicated the vast majority of their national news programming to activities of the government, with particular emphasis on completion of public works projects and the ceremonial giving of gifts to the people by CPP politicians."

The assumptions of this argument are that this media bias is particular to Cambodia and that it has a direct, demonstrable effect on voting behavior. The first assumption is clearly false, while the second has yet to be proven.

Government control of the broadcast media is a pattern in many

authoritarian and even democratic societies; the print media is invariably more free. (Consider, for instance, the BBC, which was a government-owned monopoly for decades.) Among the reasons for this are the high capital investment needed for broadcast media, as opposed to the negligible cost of a printing press (or a website). In Southeast Asia, privatized electronic media is a relatively recent occurrence, and only appears in societies that are both industrialized and democratic.

To take several examples from one Western country with a much longer democratic tradition than Cambodia's, the Federal Communications Commission recently lifted restrictions on corporate media ownership in the US, putting the few independent voices remaining in the broadcast media under threat of takeover or lower-cost competition. During the last election in the US, the two largest parties successfully kept Presidential candidates of two smaller parties out of a series of televised debates, on the pretext that neither of the minor party candidates received over 15% in earlier opinion polls. (If this rule were applied in Cambodia, Sam Rainsy might not be allowed to debate.) When the election results were disputed by the candidate who received the most votes, but was not elected, the media overwhelmingly gave more positive coverage to his opponent, as post-election surveys demonstrated.

One of the major recommendations made by both NDI and IRI is the lifting of legal restrictions on re-broadcasting of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia's Khmer language programs. This should raise questions, as both of these radio stations are US government-owned and are perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be biased towards the SRP (allowing, in one view, a needed corrective to the contrary bias of Cambodian radio). It is ironic that many of those who criticize Cambodian government ownership of the broadcast media have no objections when a foreign government is involved.

How unequal media ownership affects people's voting behavior is an unresolved question. Human Rights Watch believes the link



Voters in Kampong Chhnang checking their names on the voter list. Photo by Helmut Reuschle

is direct: "the government's persistent unwillingness to open up the broadcast media to opposition political parties means that only information about the incumbent CPP consistently reaches voters," senior legal advisor James Ross said in a June 12 briefing. "If voters cannot get information about their choices at the ballot box, parties cannot meet freely and get their messages out to people, and fear is determining voters' choices, the purpose of holding an election at all is defeated."

Indeed so, but that is a lot of if's. Missing from Ross's statement is any recognition of voters' autonomy to vote their conscience, the existence of FUNCINPEC as a member of the governing coalition, and the role of local branches of each of the major parties. Granted, incumbency and control of the airwaves do give the ruling parties advantages in communicating with the electorate. (These advantages span the political spectrum and are used by incumbent parties in many countries across the globe.) Meanwhile, the opposition has assets of its own and demonstrated skill in using them—including the ability to mobilize international media and political support for its positions. These international media, in turn, are owned nearly as unequally as Cambodia's and are biased in their own right. To the extent that media imbalances might affect election outcomes, the question is not limited to Cambodia.

The Role of International Observers

In the Asia Foundation survey, 72% of those who voted in the commune elections saw independent monitors when they voted and felt that the presence of monitors had a positive effect on voter confidence. Most of these monitors were Cambodians, not foreigners, working with groups such as COMFREL and NICFEC. Nonetheless, international observers have special roles and status as witnesses to the electoral process.

First of all, observers should be neutral. As non-Cambodians, it is not up to observers to prefer one party to another or presume to know what is best for Cambodians. Judging an election according to who wins is so obviously counter to the concept of democracy that it should not need repeating—but unfortunately Cambodia is not the only place where it does.

Second, observers should measure electoral processes according to international standards. In spite of the remark attributed to Prime Minister Hun Sen to the effect that "international standards apply only in sports," Cambodian elections follow basic international procedures, as the National Election Commission makes clear. A June 5 NEC statement that its system "compares most favorably to systems used by electoral management bodies in a large number of democracies around the world." In assessing whether this is so, there should be no special standard for Cambodia, either too light or too harsh. (For a neutral summary of what international election standards entail, and some interesting commentary on the 1998 Cambodian experience, see "Elec-

tion Integrity” at <<http://www.potlatch.net/main/english/ei/ei.htm>>.)

Organizations with long experience in election observing often stress that election day itself is just the tip of the iceberg; much of the important information and decisions for judging the success of an election occurs in the before and after phases. This is undeniable. A single election provides only a snapshot of the democratic process. Seeing an election in perspective requires a grasp of history and comparative context: not only in the few months before the election, but over a span of years, even decades.

This task becomes more manageable if election observers narrow their focus to the election itself. Observation should not become an exercise in passing judgment on a country’s entire political culture or social environment, perhaps especially if that environment is different from one’s own. Critics lambasted observers in the 1998 Cambodian election who flew in for a few days, saw high turnouts and impressive election day organization, and pronounced the result “a miracle on the Mekong.” Equally naive, however, were those who came in for a few days, heard stories of inconsistencies and a handful of beatings, and pronounced the result “unfree and unfair.” Arrogance and snap judgments can run both ways. And given the historical circumstances of US-Cambodia relations and the present climate in Washington (might one say, “climate of fear and intimidation”?), it is the snap negative conclusions that are more to be feared.

Projected Outcomes

In both the 1998 and 2002 elections, the incumbent CPP received support nationwide, particularly in rural areas. FUNCINPEC was stronger in towns and in historical strongholds such as Kompong Cham province. SRP drew support in and around Phnom Penh and other main cities. The relative fortunes of the three parties have shifted to some extent since the last national election. In 1998, the CPP won 41%, FUNCINPEC 34%, and SRP 14%. In the February 2002 local elections, these percentages were 61%, 22%, and 17%.

While there will be approximately 15 small parties also contesting the election (compared with more than 30 in 1998), the top three parties are the only ones likely to win seats in Parliament. As in most parliamentary systems, voters cast their ballots for a party, rather than an individual candidate; seats in Parliament are allocated using a proportional formula. (In 1998, this formula was one cause of post-election wrangling; in 2003, it is clearly established in advance.) The party or coalition which controls a majority of seats in the legislature forms a government with the approval of the King.

Many observers assume that the trend of both the CPP and SRP gaining votes at the expense of FUNCINPEC may continue in the 2003 vote. In one scenario, the CPP may win enough seats in Parliament (two-thirds, according to the Constitution) to rule on



Securing the ballots for the evening in Russei Keo, Phnom Penh

its own. More likely, it will continue to need the support of one of the two other major parties to form a coalition. This raises the possibility of a CPP-SRP coalition—strange bedfellows indeed, but a prospect considered by the SRP ever since its impressive 2002 showing. In a June 9 press release that may have been largely intended for foreign consumption, the SRP stated that a new coalition “cannot and will not include the current prime minister,” but leaves open the participation of the CPP as a party.

According to this press release, the SRP believes that “we will win the July elections, unless there are severe irregularities in the election process.” This is a disturbing statement, as most observers hold the party’s chances of victory to be remote, although its chances of coming in second are relatively good. It is possible to read the press release as a threat: if we do not win the elections, it is because we were cheated, and therefore we will object. Should the CPP win an outright majority, critics in Washington can be expected to raise a firestorm of protest, whether the outcome was arrived at fairly or not.

Cambodia does not need a repeat of the 1998 aftermath, in which the losing parties refused to accept the results and the country fell into several months of political limbo. The country hopes to enter the World Trade Organization in September, a step that could be threatened by post-election chaos. The US and other donors have signaled that if the election goes smoothly, Cambodia may become eligible for increased aid. And a long-awaited June agreement with the UN regarding a Khmer Rouge tribunal needs a secure atmosphere in order to proceed.

After years of struggling against the demons of the past, Cambodia finally appears ready to turn the corner to becoming a more stable democracy. The signs are good that the country has made progress since the last national election—then comes depressing news of a mob burning the Thai Embassy or police firing at protesting garment workers. Cambodians deserve better, regardless of which party they choose to vote for.



CUBA



Programs to Cuba Hurt by New OFAC Regulations

By Elana Gordon, FRD intern

Many organizations that offer U.S. citizens the opportunity to travel to Cuba have been affected by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) new regulations, including the elimination of licenses for "people-to-people educational exchanges" to Cuba. They are increasingly concerned about the future of their programs.

Programs were cancelled for this summer, and in the most extreme cases, some organizations have gone out of business. Cubanow, an organization that has provided Cuba research and education programs focusing on urban affairs for example, has had to cancel all of its programs and is no longer in business. "It's awful," commented Cubanow director John I. Gilderbloom.

While for some organizations the new OFAC regulations have meant an immediate end to their programs, other organizations will be able to continue sending people to Cuba until their licenses, which were issued to them before the new licensing rules were announced, expire. Beyond operating under those already established licenses, however, the future of such programs remains uncertain. For Global Exchange and the Center for Cuban Studies, whose licenses will expire in November, this may be the last chance to allow many Americans to take part in such programs and thus be able to travel to Cuba legally. Global Exchange, a ten year old organization, has carried out over 90 programs to Cuba each year, providing over 2000 U.S. travelers the opportunity to visit the island. Although there is a growing interest in its programs, Global Exchange anticipates a huge reduction of trips and participants next year as a result of OFAC's elimination of "people-to-people" licenses. "We hope to continue 15-48 tours of Global Exchange Reality Tours next year. We will see," explained director of Global Exchange Reality Tours, Malia Everette.

The recent OFAC regulations have not only affected the future of trips organized through groups like Global Exchange, but have also hurt other academic programs for this summer. The Council for International Educational Exchange, an organization that has carried out study abroad programs throughout the world for fifty years, runs a program that enabled 25 students each summer, fall, and spring, to take classes at the University of Havana. Although approved by many academic institutions, such as Georgetown University, the Council study abroad program to Cuba was not granted a new license and has had to cancel programs for this summer and fall; under the new OFAC regulations, academic programs can only renew their licenses if they are affiliated with an academic institution and grant credit towards participating students' degrees.

Cuba programs that are actually administered through academic institutions have continued into the summer as usual and have not reached the degree of uncertainty and concern that other travel programs and organizations, have experienced. Yet although not directly affected by OFAC changes, some institutions have continued their programs with more caution and concern. American University study abroad director Todd Waddell explained that the tightening in license requirements has caused the university to act more cautiously and conservatively. For the first time, American University limited its summer Cuba program enrollment to students who only attend American University, despite the growing interest in participation by students attending other schools.

Last American Museum of Natural History Cuba Tours

by Angelica Salazar, FRD Cuba Program

For the last fifty years Discovery Tours of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) has expanded its commitment to education, exploration, and first hand experience of the world through travel programs for its members. These programs have allowed AMNH scientists and travelers to interact with ecosystems and cultures far different from their own, including exploring the rich and unparalleled musical and artistic traditions of Cuba.

AMNH joined forces with the Center for Cuban Studies, a non-governmental organization, to present its program, *Living Arts of Cuba*. This week-long trip allowed travelers an in-depth exploration of museums, galleries, and interviews with Cuba's most well known artists and critics, along with a dance performance by the world-famous Cutumba troupe in Santiago de Cuba.

AMNH also offered the program, *A World in Transition*. This program provided travelers with a greater understanding of Cuba's past and present by meeting and talking with members of Cuban communities, while visiting locations of great historical context such as the Bay of Pigs invasion site in Pinar del Rio and the "cradle of the Revolution," Santiago de Cuba. These programs have provided travelers with the opportunity to understand Cuba at a serious level.

Unfortunately, because of the new OFAC regulations, this coming November will be the last opportunity for travelers to visit Cuba with the American Museum of Natural History's Discovery Tours. After sending groups to Cuba since 2001, the American Museum of Natural History has announced that their educational license expires at the end of November 2003.

For further information call Discovery Tours at 800-462-8687

The Promise of Cuba for US Travel Agents

1.) Cuba is a well-established destination for Europeans and Canadians selecting a safe and enjoyable Caribbean holiday.

- Between 1990 and 2001 the annual number of visitors to Cuba increased from 340,000 to 1.8 million. This year two million are expected. Over 50% are from Europe.
- Canada is the largest source of tourists. The number grew almost 15 percent a year for five years with Cuba becoming in 2001 Canadians' most popular Caribbean destination.
- Cuba is served by 21 international airlines. Eleven European cruise ship operators visit its harbors, including the cruise ship *Mistral* of the Festival Company (capacity of 1600 berths).
- Today, there are over 40,000 hotel rooms available in Cuba, 37,000 ranked four or five-star and managed by internationally recognized companies like Sol Meliá, Iberostar, Gran Caribe and Cubanacán. Cuba's master plan calls for 150,000 rooms. Accommodations range from all-inclusive luxury resorts to home stays in licensed Casas Particulares (bed-and-breakfast in private homes).

2.) Cuba offers visitors unique opportunities to explore sophisticated historical, cultural, educational, sporting and medical interests:

- Havana, the largest city in the Caribbean, is Cuba's political, cultural, and economic hub. Millions of dollars have been invested in scientific restoration since La Habana Vieja was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982.
- Every city and major town offers special and intriguing attractions, including historical monuments, centers for the arts, museums, and some of the oldest colonial churches and residences.
- Cuba is world renowned for its Latin dance and music: son, salsa, rumba, jazz; as well as for classical ballet, modern dance, and symphony.
- Cuba's advanced health care system is available to visitors at a reasonable cost. Medical statistics are similar to those of other industrialized nations.



3.) Cuba has tremendous potential for the US travel industry as a nearby, multi-dimensional destination:

- "US travel sanctions on Cuba have not stopped readers of the upscale US magazine *Travel and Leisure* from picking Cuba as their favorite island in the Caribbean, Bermuda and Bahamas, in the July 29 World's Best Awards Readers' Survey issue." (AFP 7/28/03)
- The US is already the second largest source of visitors to Cuba. Last year despite complex procedures, 200,000 Americans traveled to Cuba legally; 110,000 of them Cuban-Americans. As many as 60,000 more were so motivated that they risked traveling without a license from the US government.
- Cuba can become the number-one destination for Americans in the Caribbean. The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) estimates that Cuba could attract 1 million U.S. visits within the first year. A study by The Brattle Group estimates a potential market of 2.8 million Americans annually. Other experts predict growth to 5 million visits per year.
- Niche travel opportunities for individuals and groups abound such as education, culture, architecture, bicycling, ecotourism, religion, business, marine sports, and leisure.

4.) At least two-thirds of American citizens, 60% of Congress, and a majority of Cuban-Americans are in favor of ending travel restrictions. The only obstacle that stands in the way is the minority of Cuban-Americans who are pro-restriction and their allies in the Congressional leadership.

5.) As independent owners of small businesses, travel agents are well-respected within their communities. The local economic benefit of being able to book travel to Cuba deserves serious consideration by their elected Representatives and Senators in Washington.

Compiled by Angelica Salazar and Pamela Martin for the Ad Hoc Coalition of Travel Professionals and Clients for Freedom to Travel to Cuba.

The full version of these points can be found at <http://www.ffrd.org/cuba/ahc/travelagents.html>

To join travel professionals and their clients on a petition calling for freedom to travel to Cuba, visit <http://www.petitiononline.com/cubanow1/petition.html>

OFAC Urged to Give General License to Non-Profits

[OFAC invited comments on its new regulations. Following are excerpts from those submitted by John McAuliff for FRD.]

With regard to the proposed new regulations, it is deeply distressing that they have eliminated an essential category of people-to-people exchange that will contribute to peaceful democratic change in both Cuba and the United States. I say both because all of history suggests that the only way to bring about peaceful internal transformation is to develop mutual reconciliation between hostile neighbors and greater personal knowledge and understanding of each other's society. Ignorance and suspicion lead to and are used to justify control and repression in any country that feels itself threatened by outside forces.

Ending people-to-people educational exchanges that are not part of a formal degree granting academic programs will have two direct impacts:

First, many students now travel to Cuba through other educational institutions during a holiday break to study Spanish or to participate in a program that is not recognized as part of their own academic coursework. They will lose this opportunity for a less formal educational experience that is not offered by their own school and that is at least as enlightening as the normal curriculum.

Second, older persons who travel through non-academic educational programs will be denied this possibility both to learn about Cuba and to communicate to Cubans from the perspective of greater personal and professional experience and positions of influence in their home communities.

One concern of critics has been that trips by alumni groups or museums or people-to-people exchange organizations can be used as cover for holiday travel. However, I have never encountered this personally and would suspect that the complication of making arrangements, the costs and the inherent inconveniences of group travel would not tempt the average tourist.

Another concern is that participants seldom see "real" Cubans and spend the bulk of their time in structured encounters with the Cuba that the host government wants them to see. There is some legitimacy to this criticism of any formal exchange program. However, it discounts how much Americans will stray outside of official programs and will make use of their free time for personal exploration.

Ironically, OFAC's pressure to have full and detailed itineraries contributes substantially to this problem. In my experience, while the Cubans want a chance to present their society's strengths and values, they are quite content to incorporate substantial free time that visitors spend on their own, walking around neighborhoods, making friends, visiting in homes, etc.

Paradoxically, the greatest amount of people-to-people contact takes place by the estimated 30,000 Americans who completely disregard travel restrictions and travel illegally to Cuba each year.

They obtain a Cuban tourist card at the airport in a third country. Many rent a car and go virtually anywhere they want on the island, picking up the omnipresent hitch hikers, chatting with small business entrepreneurs, staying at the privately run *casas particulares*, eating at private *paladares*, etc.

The only visitors who really isolate themselves from two way contact with Cubans, and serve only to provide dollars to the state economy, are those who go to self-contained resorts. I doubt that many Americans do this when it is so much easier to enjoy an equally isolated equally beautiful resort on a cheaper package deal elsewhere in the Caribbean without violating the law.

Our recommendation is not that you simply restore the previous system of specific licenses for people-to-people exchange. Even with the best of intentions, the past procedure was cumbersome, bureaucratic and demeaning to OFAC, to the organizers, and to the participants, requiring advance itineraries and lists of travelers. By trying to assure the non-touristic seriousness of the programs vetted, OFAC diminished their spontaneity and opportunity for unfettered people to people contact. Instead of showing commitment to and faith in democracy and freedom and the capacity and integrity of the American people, OFAC acted in an authoritarian controlling fashion not dissimilar to the behavior for which the Cubans are criticized.

Instead the Fund for Reconciliation and Development recommends you adopt a radically different approach far more consistent with the values and goals of the United States. OFAC should establish a general license category in which the sole criteria is that the organization that sponsors the trip and takes responsibility for the program be an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) not for profit institution.

For purposes of record keeping, OFAC may require organizations wishing to make use of this general license to file a declaration of intent, provide appropriate letters of sponsorship to all persons traveling to Cuba under its auspices, and send an annual report to OFAC, consisting only of the date of each trip and the number of participants. Each organization could use its IRS provided EIN number for identification purposes on the declaration of intent, letters of sponsorship and annual report. No follow-up would be necessary by OFAC except acknowledgement of receipt of the letter of intent and a reminder of the need to produce an annual report within one month of the anniversary of submission.

A small group of Americans will feel passionately that the above recommendation is a betrayal of their interests and political goals, but two-thirds of our citizens and a bipartisan majority in both houses of Congress oppose all travel restrictions. In that context, this proposed general license reform is a modest step. The policy of the US government and of OFAC must reflect a broad and deep understanding of American national interests and of appropriate and effective ways to influence developments within a proud sovereign country that will always be a close neighbor.

Annual Cuba Consultation Sets Agenda

by Angelica Salazar

On June 26-27th the annual NGO Cuba Consultation was held in Washington D.C., coordinated by the Latin America Working Group (LAWG) and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Participants and panelist varied in objectives and affiliation. Heard were the concerns, strategies, and updates from grassroots activists, staff members from Congress, and the Cuban American community. Although participants came from a variety of political perspectives, all agreed that most important is to work together on some common lines of action.

The first panel discussion reported political developments in Congress, the Bush Administration, and the Cuban-American community. Participants were updated on upcoming legislation, the status of travel, OFAC regulations and licenses, and likely moves from the Administration.

Pam Berry, the executive director of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation illustrated the severity of the new OFAC regulations by recounting how a US doctors' trip to perform rare surgeries at one of Cuba's children's hospital was canceled because they were unable to receive a license.

Pam addressed the apparent decrease of visas issued to Cubans by the U.S. Interests Section. She noted that wives of the "Cuban Five" were unable to obtain visas to visit their husbands, who are imprisoned in the United States. She stated that this is a major issue that needs to be dealt with in order to open up dialog for US/Cuba relations. Investigation also is needed on whether the required minimum of 20,000 immigrant visas are actually being granted by the Untied States to Cubans annually, as well as the reasons for "prolific denial or unreasonable delay of visitor visas for Cubans."

Mavis Anderson from the Latin American Working Group (LAWG) reported that US institutions of education that have been denied renewal of licenses by the new OFAC regulations are also unable to obtain visas for Cuban scholars to visit their institutions.

Lance Walker reported that Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ) remains firm in support of lifting the travel and trade restrictions despite the recent controversy over the imprisonment of US supported dissidents in Cuba. The free standing travel bill 'Export Freedom to Cuba Act 2003' (HR2071), as of June 19, 2003, had 65 co-sponsors.

An identical bill 'Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act of 2003' (S950) was introduced in the Senate by Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY). Katherine McGuire of his office stated that there are already 24 co-sponsors of the bill. She believes that a total of 30 co-sponsors might trigger a flood of support.

Essentially the Congressional staffers emphasized the importance of increasing support for these free-standing bills and to increase

membership in both the Senate and House Cuba Working Groups.

Delvis Fernandez of the Cuban American Alliance stated that the Cuban American community is misunderstood; in reality only a minority within the community actually still support travel restrictions. Congress should be aware of this myth when they seek to accommodate the Cuban American vote; Cuban Americans represent 4% of the US Latino population, and are only .5% of the total US population.

Marlene Arzola, a member of the Cuban Committee for Democracy in Miami believes that the majority of Cuban Americans want unrestricted travel for the convenience of visiting family back in Cuba. There are approximately 120,000 Cuban Americans that legally traveled to Cuba last year. She states that these regulations directly affect her community; this is why there is such a strong need to do outreach and to cooperate closely with them.

Rachel Farley of WOLA provided us an innovative example of media outreach. She found great interest from Farm Radio Iowa regarding Cuba and agricultural trade. The agricultural trade show "Food and Export Exposition," was the first by Americans in Cuba in over 40 years. A delegation of Iowans attended. Philip Schmidt of LAWG discussed the great impact of radio commentary, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and local feature stories that promote travel to Cuba. They are essential to educating and motivating the general public.

Cindy Thomas of TriDimension Strategies, LLC offered insight into grassroots work of passing resolutions by the local and state government. She organized the not-for-profit Texas/Cuba Trade Alliance (TCTA). It was formed by a group of Democrats and Republicans who set out to educate people in Texas about Cuba and to work on political action to lift trade and travel restrictions. As a result in 2001, Texas became the first state to adopt a resolution in favor of ending the embargo with virtually no opposition.

Bob Guild of Marazul Charters, Inc., a Travel Service Provider (TSP) to Cuba, commented that people from the US are the second largest source of visitors to Cuba. Last year 200,000 American traveled to Cuba, three-fourth of whom had gone legally. He believes that more engagement with the larger travel industry, for example with such groups as the Association of Travel Industry Professionals (ATRIP) would positively promote US/Cuba travel.

FRD's John McAuliff remarked that action by the US travel industry, large and small, will bring benefit financially to a sector that has been hit hard after September 11. He believes that there needs to be a grassroots effort to educate and mobilize travel agents by making them aware of the gains for their own business by ending restrictions.

continued next page

The Consultation ended with consideration of strategies for the next eighteen months. The priorities include:

- Work to end the travel ban by developing support for the free standing travel bills (HR2017 and S950).
- Protest new OFAC regulations by documenting license denials and harassment of licensees.
- Challenge Department of State's non-compliance with the migration accords and visitor visas for Cubans.
- Work to increase membership in both Senate and House Cuba Working Groups.
- Cooperate closely with and outreach to the pro-engagement Cuban- American community.
- Raise the issue of Cuba policy in the presidential primaries and election.
- Strengthen networking and coordination among pro-engagement groups.

Freedom To Travel Trip Oct 5-12

A newly formed "Freedom to Travel" committee has plans for a massive trip to Cuba in protest of recent changes in OFAC policy eliminating people-to-people contact. In a press release, Ben Treuhft, veteran cross-embargo piano tuner encouraged all to attend, including "Republicans, neo-liberals, red-diaper babies, kids and even lawyers." Human rights advocate Medea Benjamin argued that more contact will help Cuban dissidents, and quoted Cuban human rights activist Elizardo Sanchez: "The more American citizens in the streets of Cuban cities, the better for the cause of a more open society."

Travel arrangements for the trip, with various housing options, can be made through Cubalinda.com. A variety of cultural and educational programs related to international peace will be available. Contact peaceworkshop@cubalinda.com, or Tom Miller, viasco@aol.com, 510-891-0616.

Higher Education Conference in Havana

The Ministry of Higher Education and the Universities of the Republic of Cuba have announced the Fourth International Congress on Higher Education "UNIVERSIDAD 2004", to be held at the International Conventions Center of Havana, from February 2 to 6, 2004. A wide variety of related topics will be discussed, **including the training of professionals in the tourism sector.**

Registration fees are US\$250 for delegates, \$125 for students and \$100 for companions. To register or for more information email to ofieven@reduniv.edu.cu, univ2004@reduniv.edu.cu, or agarcia@cepes.cu, fax: (53)(7) 8311613, or 8351083, or write to Office of University Events, Ministry of Superior Education, Calle 23 No. 565, esq. a F, El Vedado, La Habana, Cuba, CP 10400 La Habana, Cuba.

The conference website is at www.universidad2004.cu/ingles.

Cuban Think Tank Advocates Economic Reform

A June Reuters article described how a Cuban economic think tank is urging Communist authorities to use more private initiative and less regulation of state-run businesses to spur the Cuban local economy.

Presentations from a conference by Havana University's Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy showed a growing sentiment within President Fidel Castro's government in favor of opening up the economy, and a growing feeling of acceptance of such discussion. The think tank said the government should make the economy "more attractive to foreign investment ... encourage development of (private) production and service cooperatives as a compliment to state industry ... eliminate regulations that block better use of productive potential," among other reforms.

Cuba's economy declined strongly after the breakup of the Soviet Union into what is called the Special Period of Cuban history. After years of economic decline and dangerously low average caloric intake for Cubans, the government began a limited opening to foreign investment, legalized some family businesses, turned to tourism and began a gradual decentralization of the command economy, among other measures. These policies allowed for a great deal of economic growth, and an influx of needed food, medical supplies and technologies, although there is some concern within the Cuban government that the changes were at the sacrifice of a more pure socialism.

Power outages, transportation and consumer goods shortages, which have plagued island residents since the collapse of Soviet Communism, increased this year. While Cuba forecast growth this year at 1.5 percent, increasing numbers of experts within the government think a more open economy could raise this number significantly.

The Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy for a number of years has suggested reformist changes. However, one recent annual study by the institute contained a number of articles suggesting that within reformist changes Cuba not abandon its socialist character.

National Summit on Cuba in Florida

Saturday, October 4th Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables, Florida Keynote Speaker Mikhail Gorbachev

Registration is \$100 per person, \$250 with private reception with Gorbachev. Download response form as word document at www.ahtc.org/2003ResponseCARD%20WORD.doc, or call Michelle Wojcik 212-229-5953 or 212-229-5808 x123, email cubaed@worldpolicy.org,

For more details see www.nationalsummitoncuba.org.

Resources

Host a Vietnamese Exchange Student

US Families are needed to host a Vietnamese high school boy or girl for the upcoming 10-month school year. These highly qualified and motivated students, ages 15-18, represent a variety of interests in sports, music, art, computers and more. Families provide room and board, some local transportation, and a supportive environment. Students speak English, bring spending money, are fully insured, and are supported by a local coordinator.

For more information on hosting visit www.globalhostfamily.com and fill out the no-obligation inquiry form.

Alabama-Cuba Initiative

The Cuba Committee at the University of Alabama has undertaken to form a cultural, academic, scientific and artistic link between Alabama and nearby Cuba. To this end, a week of Cuba-related activity has been planned for November 17-22, 2003. Trips of representatives traveling both ways are planned, and many state-wide programs are planned to bring Alabama closer to Cuba. More information is available at their website: www.cuba.ua.edu.

Paperback Edition: Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns

By David Lamb, 274 pages

Thirty years after he reported on the war as a young combat correspondent, David Lamb returned to Vietnam on a four-year assignment for the Los Angeles Times to cover the peace. From his base in Hanoi, he crisscrossed the country to interview famous wartime figures as well as scores of ordinary Vietnamese. He reveals a remarkable country and a resolute people. His book is a personal journey that will change the way we think about Vietnam, and perhaps the war as well.

Now available in paperback for \$14 at bookstores or visit Public Affairs at www.publicaffairsbooks.com

¡Revolucion! Cuban Poster Art

A book by Lincoln Cushing

Chronicle Books, 2003; 8 x 10 in; 132 pp; 150 color images, \$19.95
Paperback ISBN 0811835820

Publishers description: Produced with unprecedented access to Cuban national archives, this book assembles nearly 150 powerful but little-seen works of popular art. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the posters rallied the Cuban people to the huge task of building a new society, promoted massive sugar harvests and national literacy campaigns; opposed the U.S. war in Vietnam; and celebrated films, music, dance, and baseball with a unique graphic wit and exuberant colorful style. Includes an introduction illuminating the rich social and artistic history of the posters and biographical information on the artists themselves.

Call for Cuba Papers

On February 6-7, 2004, the University of Iowa Center for International Finance and Development (UICIFD, www.uiowa.edu/lfdebook) and the College of Law will be holding a symposium on Cuba: Whither Goes Cuba? Prospects for Economic & Social Development. Panels to be included are:

- Cuba Today: Legal, Social, Economic & Political Dimensions
- Cuba & Democratization: Should Sanctions Be Lifted?
- Economic & Social Development: Cuba's Future in a Globalized World
- Good Governance: Assessing Cuba's Approach.
- Cuba's Future and Its Impact on U.S. Trade and Investment.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is August 1, 2003. All submissions should be e-mailed to Professor Enrique Carrasco at enrique-carrasco@uiowa.edu. Professor Carrasco may be contacted by phone at 319-335-9059.

Film: Precious Cargo

Precious Cargo follows the bittersweet journey of a group of Vietnamese young people, adopted by American families at the end of the Vietnam War, who travel back to their homeland in search of their personal history. The film tells the story of Operation Babylift, which brought 2,700 children to the United States. It also introduces audiences to many of the pioneering adoptive parents who began a movement that has grown to redefine the American family by embracing these biracial, sometimes disabled children as their own.

56 Minutes. Co-producers: Pham Quoc Thai & Janet Gardner. Director: Janet Gardner. Produced in association with ITVS with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

For distribution, contact Filmmakers Library at phone: 212-808-4980, fax: 212-808-4983, e-mail: info@filmmakers.com or write 124 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016. Mention that the film is for personal use only to receive a copy of the film at a consumer rate.

Film by the Gardner Group, www.gardnerdocgroup.com

TourMagination Vietnam trip February 4 to 21, 2004.

This Vietnam tour, on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of Mennonite Central Committee work in Vietnam, will move from north to south, visiting many of the standard tourist stops, though with flexibility for personal interests, including opportunities to talk to people working with Mennonite Central Committee and Eastern Mennonite Missions. The leaders of this trip, Mary and Luke Martin, are former Mennonite Mission workers in Vietnam and have led previous TourMagination tours in Vietnam in 2001 and 2002.

A rough outline of the tour at: <http://www.tourmagination.com/2004/vietnam2004.htm> For more information, call TourMagination at 800-565-0451.

P.S...From the Editor

Regardless of personal preferences in the Presidential primaries and the next election, one has to be excited by the atmosphere of mass insurgency that surrounds Howard Dean's campaign. The conceits of an imperial Administration have created a dramatic reaction at the grass roots. It is not a bad thing that the longstanding progressive position of John Kerry finds its Washington-centric world view shaken by widespread dissent embodied by Dean; just as Dean's consistency is challenged by the more radical critique of Dennis Kucinich.

FRD does not support candidates, but we will put on our web site a page that reports what all of them say about US policy towards the four countries that are the center of our work, Cambodia, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam (www.ffrd.org/election04). Because Iraq has become the focal point issue defining America's role in the world, candidates' views on that subject will be widely available elsewhere.

I am not sure whether any of the candidates are on record about Indochina, beyond Kerry's widely respected role of leadership for normalization. Cuba has already prompted new statements by three candidates. Dean is backsliding, Kerry is positive on ending travel restrictions but not on much else. Only Kucinich is identifying himself with serious reform of US policy. (Lieberman is closely aligned with the conservative Cuban American National Foundation-CANF.) Supporters of the first two minimize the significance of their favorite's position by arguing that Cuba is not a central issue and every vote counts in the key electoral state of Florida. They also are confident that once their man is in office, he will make decisions that create new openings (as did Bill Clinton).

While I am sympathetic with this tactical argument, and agree that the election stakes are profound on much broader grounds, I do find attitudes toward Cuba symptomatic of a deeper problem that is beginning to subvert US relations with Indochina and hinders our principled escape from the mounting disaster that is Iraq.

That problem is the unexamined assumption that the US has the God given (and I use that term intentionally) right, or even responsibility, to judge and guide the rest of the world. Let me be clear: I am a convinced internationalist. I believe Americans have an inescapable obligation both morally and practically to be engaged with the world. We must use our wealth and privilege to try to reduce injustice and inequity and our power to address threats to world peace, not to create them. Our national aspirations for freedom and democracy are certainly worth communicating, even if our own practice is less than perfect.

However, I believe the means we use are as important as our motive. We are not the only "developed" nation that assumes our culture and political system should be the model for the rest of the world. However, it is a bit hypocritical that we rank so poorly in the percentage of our national wealth we are willing to devote to humanitarian expressions of that high self-esteem. And we may be unique in our readiness to publicly grade all other nations by our particular standards of human rights and religious freedom, and then to make those evaluations the basis for unilateral economic and political sanction.

I am amazed that city councils and state legislatures go along with Vietnamese American generated resolutions that give recognition to the flag of a government in South Vietnam that disappeared twenty-eight years ago, and even then was largely the creation of an earlier generation of historically naive American interventionists. And I am surprised that only 42 House members stood up against legislation that wrapped itself in the flag of Vietnamese human rights but embodied an agenda of non-reconciliation with former adversaries.

As distressing is the view by important sectors in Washington that Cambodia's elections were *a priori* illegitimate if the party won that they didn't like. They justify their position in the noblest language of free and fair elections, but at least some of their hostility seems to be rooted in the unsuccessful US backed civil war of the 1980s —where the US was in implicit alliance with the Khmer Rouge against the predecessor of the governing Cambodian Peoples Party. (Leave aside for the moment official America's tendency to discount electoral problems much closer to home, such as the scandal of campaign financing and the conduct in Florida and Washington around the last US Presidential election.)

Laos is the only country in the world with which the US has diplomatic relations but not Normal Trade Relations. Such elementary justice has been held hostage for years by unreconstructed cold warriors harboring fantasies of guerilla resistance and the exile politics of dispossessed clans of the Hmong minority who were war time clients of the CIA. Hopefully the dead hand of the past is finally loosening its grip, in part because pro NTR Lao Americans and NGOs have made their voices heard.

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Part of the Iraq dispute in the UN between the US and other countries over interpretations of democracy. Dominant voices in the Administration, with support from leading Democrats, assert their goal is to prepare Iraq for true self-determination. However, they are not talking about a rapid neutral process but instead envision a multi year project to shape a specific outcome. They say frankly that they want to prevent a premature expression of popular will that brings to power an Islamic state like Iran.

They also will do everything possible to bar the Ba'ath party from reorganizing itself and contesting electorally for political power. While denouncing justifiably the sins of the Baathists, and rationalizing why party members do not deserve to participate politically, the Administration is in contradiction with the policy of the previous Bush Administration which insisted the Khmer Rouge participate in Cambodia's transitional authority and first elections.

The US view is that the persons it hand picked to exercise power in the Iraq Governing Council and the cabinet they named are the embodiment of Iraq's national authority and should decide the structure and timing of elections, but other countries see them as the precursors of a carefully engineered client regime. The struggle will be over how much the United Nations assumes responsibility for creating a truly neutral process of political transition and restoration of sovereignty.

The UN presumably will define free and fair elections to mean that all political parties can run candidates. It might even insist that the US has no right to secretly detain and interrogate members of the regime that it overthrew by unauthorized military force. Many countries will see electoral exclusion of Baathists individually or collectively as allowing the US to profit politically from an illegitimate war. In addition they will argue that Baathists should be given an opportunity to nonviolently struggle for power and position, rather than feel their only resort is armed resistance or alliance with the international terrorists that US occupation is attracting to Iraq.

With public attention appropriately focused on the debate over US intervention in Iraq and the run up to the Presidential election, only organizations, businesses and individuals with strong concern for protecting and strengthening American ties with the people of Indochina and Cuba can challenge the agendas of equally passionate proponents of a backward looking perspective.

—John McAuliff

A compilation of articles about terrorism and Iraq can be found at <http://www.ffrd.org/terrorism-war>.

To receive occasional postings on these issues, send a request to director@ffrd.org.

House Cuba Vote Update

On September 9th by a margin of 227 to 188 the House of Representatives for the third time voted to end US restrictions on travel to Cuba. Of members voting, 55% favored an amendment to the Treasury Appropriations Bill submitted by Representative Jeff Flake (R, AZ) to deny funding to enforce travel restrictions.

The favorable vote was less than last year's high of 60% (262 to 167). Some of that loss can be ascribed to chance. Twelve of nineteen not voting were almost certain Flake supporters while six absentees would have been expected to vote against. It is possible that erosion was also due to dissatisfaction with Cuba's imprisonment last spring of US government supported domestic opponents and the peremptory trial and execution of three men who attempted to hijack a ferry.

An amendment seeking to restore the category of people to people exchange to OFAC licensing received greater support, 246 to 173.

An amendment identical to Flake's is expected to pass the Senate for the first time. However, House Majority leader Tom DeLay (R,

TX) will use his power to try to remove the Cuba amendments from the final conference report which reconciles the two versions of the bill. Should he fail, President Bush has threatened to veto the Appropriations bill.

A list of supporters and opponents of the Flake amendment, and information about future legislative battles can be found at www.lawg.org.

Cuba Music Trip

Experience Music Project is sponsoring their third educational tour to Cuba December 12 - 19, 2003. Leaving from Los Angeles or Miami, the trip will connect with local musicians, participate in daily workshops, demonstrations and lectures on all types of Cuban music, attend clubs & the music museum, and more.

Contact Norman Arnett, Experience Music Project, 2901 Third Ave, Ste 400, Seattle, WA 98121, 1-877-EMPLIVE, 206.262.3248, www.emplive.com

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See Page 3**