

A political struggle in the guise of a sex scandal--Malaysia and the US

Shannon Jones
9 October 1998

If one wants to get a clearer understanding of the nature of the impeachment proceedings against Clinton, one need only to look at Malaysia, where Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has sacked his Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and had him jailed.

The charges, splashed across the Malaysian media in lurid detail, are corruption and sexual misconduct. Mahathir has obtained witnesses to back up allegations that his former heir apparent, now his political enemy, engaged in homosexual acts, a violation of Malaysian law.

It is well known, however, that Mahathir acted for political reasons. Conflicts had developed between himself and Anwar over economic policy in the wake of the financial crisis that overtook Malaysia and the rest of East Asia last year. The two leaders adopted opposite positions on the intervention of the International Monetary Fund, with Anwar supporting IMF policies and Mahathir denouncing them.

Thus, a political offensive is being waged in the form of a sex scandal.

The attempt of the Mahathir regime to witch-hunt and frame a prominent political opponent on sex charges has drawn international condemnation. Among those denouncing Mahathir have been Republican and Democratic politicians in the United States, including Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin.

An op-ed piece in the October 8 *New York Times*, co-signed by former Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and two officials in the Reagan and Bush administrations, terms the treatment of Anwar 'alarming and dismaying.' The writers make it clear they do not accept the claim that the basis of the arrest and prosecution of Anwar is sexual misconduct. They state, 'Mr. Anwar was never shy about differing with his mentor's policies; as financial matters got increasingly

desperate, Dr. Mahathir had him arrested on various disputed charges, including homosexuality--a crime in the country.'

The writers suggest the sex charges against Anwar are merely a pretext. The real reason for his arrest is political differences with Mahathir.

The parallel between the events in Malaysia and the use of a sex scandal to launch impeachment proceedings against Clinton is obvious. Yet the American media, Nunn and his fellow op-ed commentators, and even Clinton administration officials like Rubin fail to make the same point in relation to the political struggle raging at home that they make in regard to events thousands of miles away. Indeed, Nunn was among the first of prominent Democrats to publicly denounce Clinton after the release last month of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's compilation of salacious details about Clinton's sex life.

Since the parallel between the basic modus operandi of Mahathir and that of Kenneth Starr and the Republican Congress is so obvious, it follows that more than dull-wittedness is involved in the failure of politicians and media pundits to take public note of it. Rather, it suggests a determination, among Democrats as well as Republicans, to squelch any public discussion about the forces behind the Starr investigation and their political agenda.

See Also:

Anwar's arrest intensifies Malaysia's political instability

[22 September 1998]

The Starr investigation--full coverage



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact