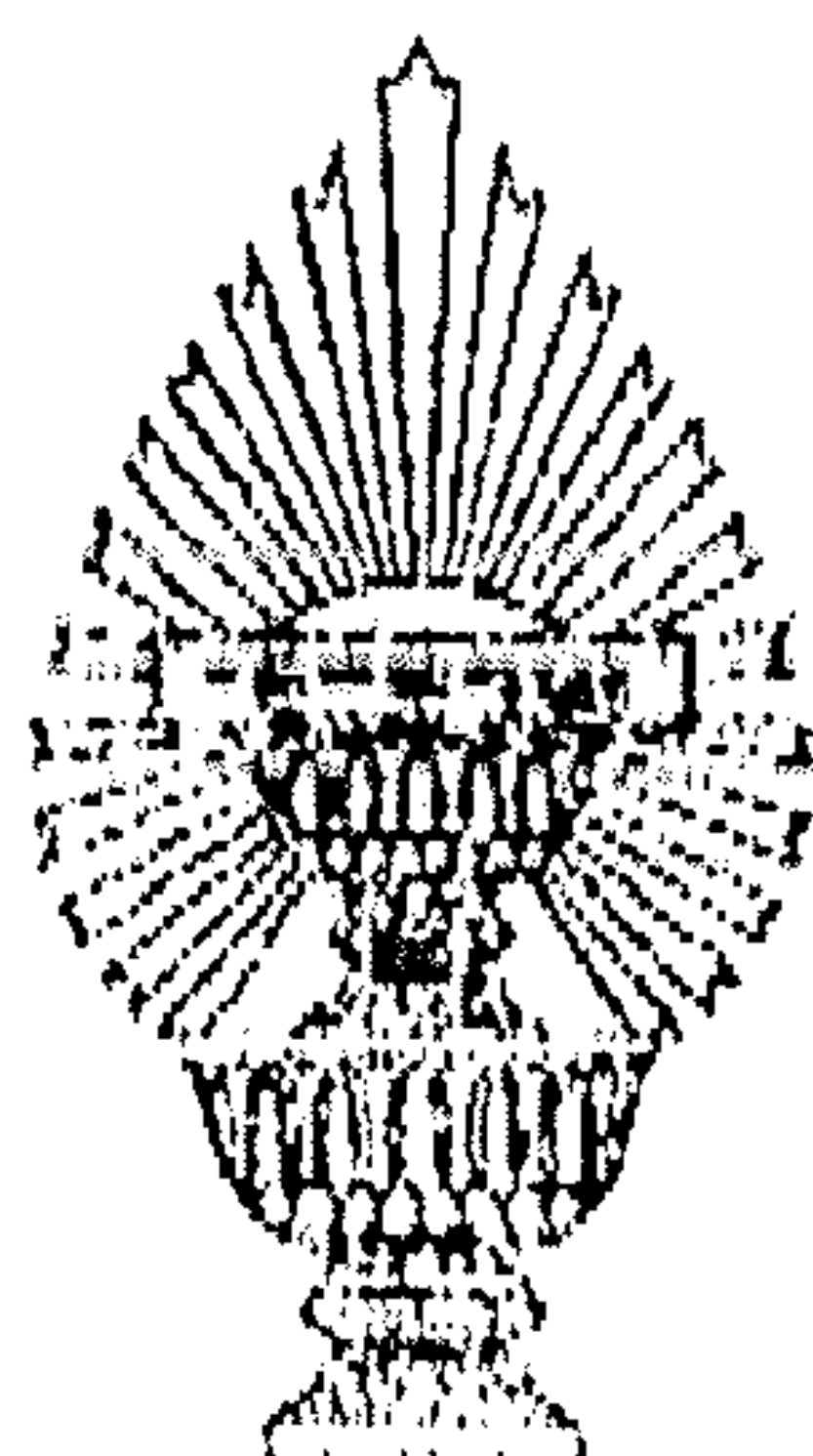


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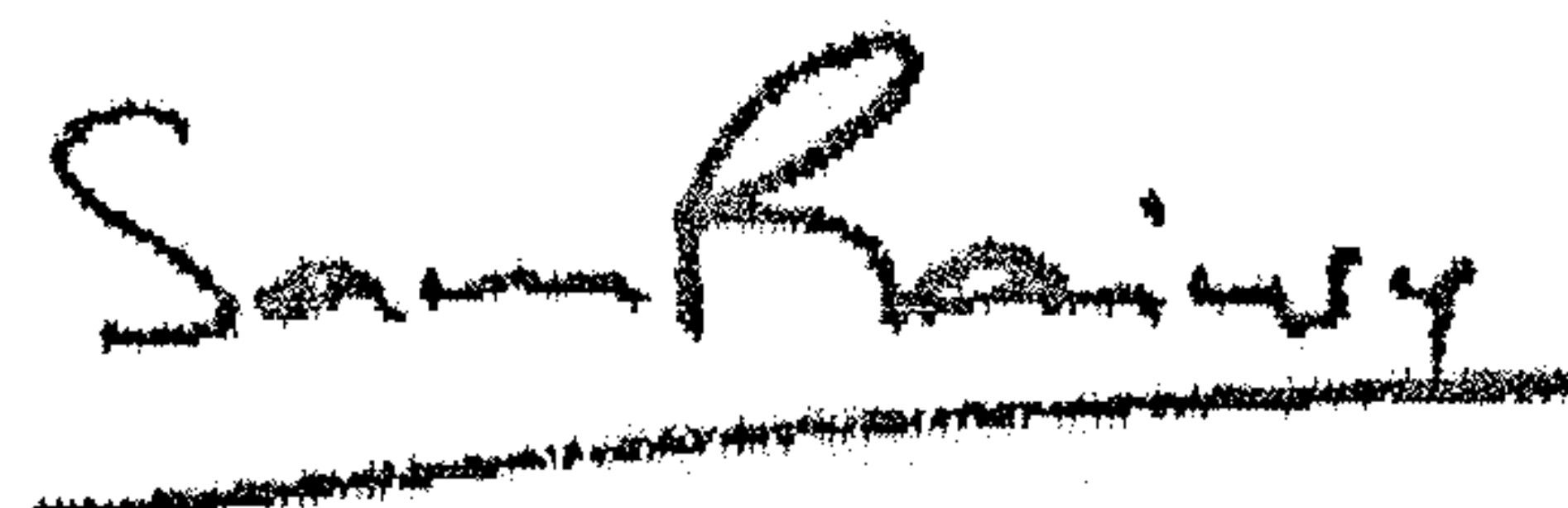
19 November 2000

LESSON FROM THE BALLOT RECOUNTING PROCESS IN THE USA

The lingering and controversial ballot recounting process in the American presidential election actually shows that democracy in America is healthy. Everybody remembers how the ballot recounting in the 1998 legislative election in Cambodia was superficially and hastily conducted by the CPP-dominated National Election Commission (NEC). While FUNCINPEC and SRP lodged complaints for irregularities for over 800 cases, the NEC accepted to recount ballots for only 3 arbitrarily selected cases, which had been pre-rearranged, leaving all the other complaints unaddressed.

For instance, the opposition Sam Rainsy Party lost one seat to the ruling CPP in Kompong Thom province with a difference of only 129 ballots out of over 240,000, representing 0.05% of the total ballots cast. In most American States such as Florida, the law requires that an automatic recounting be made for any difference less than 0.5%, without anybody having to ask for it. But in 1998 in Cambodia, the NEC refused to recount the ballots in the Kompong Thom case and in many other similar cases, in spite of requests made by FUNCINPEC and SRP.

Lessons must therefore be learnt for future elections in Cambodia. Every politician and future election official should ponder over the recounting process presently taking place in the United States. In any real democracy, the most important consideration is the respect for the will of the people.



Sam Rainsy
Member of Parliament