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MEAN SANGKHIM

Introduction

The precipitous departure from Phnom Penh on 13 April 1975 of the U.S. Ambassador signalled the end of one of the most costly and devastating chapters, in human and material terms, in the history of the Khmers. Five days later, the victorious Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea marched triumphantly into Phnom Penh without encountering any armed resistance from the disintegrating Khmer Republic's Army. For the inhabitants of Phnom Penh the relief was obvious as the war had caused considerable hardship to almost every Kampuchean family with the exception of those who benefited from the war looting. Press reports (*Le Monde*, 9 May 1975) described the enthusiasm with which the inhabitants of Phnom Penh greeted the liberating People's Army of Kampuchea. But this excitement was to be short-lived. Within hours of its arrival, the liberating army ordered the evacuation of Phnom Penh and other major cities in Kampuchea. Orders were carried out swiftly as witnessed by those foreigners who were left behind at the French Embassy in Phnom Penh. Within forty-eight hours the capital city was practically empty. Even patients in the hospitals were forced to leave with the exception of those who could not be moved without endangering their lives. Apparently those who remained were mostly soldiers of the People's Army who were wounded during the final days of the battle for Phnom Penh.

At first there were contradictory theories for the reasons behind these dramatic measures of emptying the cities. One such theory analyzed this act as the reflection of the Kampuchean tradition in history that new leaders would build new capitals after they came to power, in order to sanctify their new reign. Another well-known theory was that the new régime wanted to erase the consumer society, the very image of a decadent people influenced by Western civilization. And, of course, there was the usual "bloodbath" theme which equated communism with revenge and brutality.

Indeed, these theories are very difficult to prove or disprove. One way to assess the situation with a minimum of subjectivity is to note the explanation given by the present régime's leaders.

In a speech in New York City on 6 September 1975, Ieng Sary the Deputy Premier of the Gouvernement Royal de l'Union Nationale du Kampuchea (GRUNK) gave three main reasons which compelled the new government to empty the cities, Phnom Penh in particular. One factor was the swollen population of Phnom Penh which had increased from 600,000 before the war to nearly 3,000,000 at the time of the defeat of the Lon Nol régime. With the majority of the population of Phnom Penh refugees from the countryside, it was physically impossible for the new régime to feed this enormously inflated population. International food relief assistance

was not considered as the new leaders considered that Kampuchea should rely on its own resources to solve these problems. Ieng Sary commented that

Before the victory, U.S. imperialism had brought from 30,000 to 40,000 tons of food per month. The problem is to find ways to feed these people by our own means; to find food in Phnom Penh would be to rely on other people. Therefore we will never ask—we have to solve the problem by ourselves on the basis of self-reliance. In the countryside we have organizations, such as worker's and peasant's organizations, to work together. To resolve this problem we decided to disperse the people to the countryside from Phnom Penh. (Indochina Resource Center, "Remarks by Mr. Ieng Sary, Deputy Premier of the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia," New York City, 6 September 1975).

The second factor which led to the evacuation of Phnom Penh was based on the threat of a counter-revolutionary movement.

There might have been another reason which can only be guessed at but nevertheless would have a very important bearing on the future economic organization and foreign relations of Democratic Kampuchea. That Phnom Penh had a sizeable Chinese and Vietnamese population was a fact. To empty the city was to solve the minority problem which could pose a sensitive and delicate issue in Kampuchea's future relationship with Vietnam and China. Apparently, most Vietnamese residents of Phnom Penh had chosen to return to Vietnam where life was relatively more tolerable than in the Kampuchean countryside. However, little was known of the Chinese minority in Kampuchea. Some refugees indicated that the Chinese community were seen isolated from the rest of the Kampuchean people. If this is true, a clear rationale does not exist for this separation. Could it be due to the language problem? Or could it be that the new Kampuchean régime wanted to avoid any adverse reactions from Peking, its main mentor and ally, by not putting the Chinese to work as hard as the Kampuchean?

As if to confirm that this decision not only was the inevitable, but also the right course of action, Ieng Sary stated that there was no longer any food shortage in Kampuchea. However, he recognized that there was no abundance either. This seemed to fit the stories told by the Kampuchean refugees who described the meagre daily ration (one milk can of rice per day per worker) which was distributed to everybody as a wage for their participation in the reconstruction of production projects.

The horror stories about the hardship of the population during the evacuation were also conflicting. Some press reports indicated the mistreatment of old people, the shortage of food and medicine which put heavy tolls on the sick and the old. On the other hand, some eye witnesses testified to the contrary—that the evacuation was done in an orderly fashion, with medical and food supply checkpoints. The press reported, through interviews with the refugees in Thailand, other excesses, such as the mass killings of the Republican Army officers, soldiers and their families. Reports were also heard about the changing of names for all Cambodians. This gloomy news must contrast with the official statement by the representatives of the government of Democratic Kampuchea. Commenting on the counter-revolutionary scheme, Ieng Sary stated that

When we disperse the people out of Phnom Penh this plan has been completely destroyed. We found documents and leaders of these people, and we finally preempt all their activities. Today, in Phnom Penh workers begin to work, factories are open, and those who have committed crimes before, can be rehabilitated and work together. But Phnom Penh is not like before, the population is smaller Factories, hospitals, and schools are opened gradually Phnom Penh has changed its character from a wasteful, consuming city to a productive city. (Indochina Resource Center, *op. cit.*, p. 3).

In order to understand the magnitude of the problem confronting the new government, one must look at the extent of the damage which Kampuchea suffered during the five-year war period. According to an official publication the following main statistics must be kept in mind if one is to make any balanced judgement about the policies made by the new government. In percentage terms, Kampuchea had lost more than 10% of its population. The number of persons killed was over 800,000 while the number of invalids was 240,000 of which 40,000 lost all ability to work.

Destruction near and in the battlefield was also staggering. More than 80% of the factories and plantations were destroyed. More than 85% of rice-fields, forests and villages were damaged, with 55% of the livestock destroyed. Some 80–90% of bridges, roads and highways had been damaged and the destruction of harbours and railroads amounted to 60–80%.

To face the huge problem of reconstruction the new government had to mobilize all available manpower which were organized into labour groups assigned the task of repairing the much-needed infrastructural equipment and rehabilitating the production of food and other basic necessities for feeding the people, and increasing the production of exports and manufactured goods. Ieng Sary, describing the efforts of the Kampuchean people, stated, "We gave a special importance to the works of production. The whole population takes part in it. Kampuchea is entirely a large work yard." (Ieng Sary, "Speech to the Seventh Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations," New York, 30 August 1975). There is little doubt that all able Kampuchean are obligated to contribute to the reconstruction and the rehabilitation programme of the Kampuchean economy. Whether or not this system of forced labour will be maintained in the future can only be answered after a fuller evaluation of the present system.

This paper attempts to describe the political, economic, social, judicial, educational systems of Democratic Kampuchea and to examine the foreign policy of Democratic Kampuchea. Some assessment of the direction and performance of the new régime will be offered.

The New Kampuchea: Institutions

The only source of information about the organization of the new society in Kampuchea is the constitution of the new state of Democratic Kampuchea which was promulgated on 5 January 1976 after it was ratified by the Third National Congress on 14 December 1975 and approved by the Cabinet Meeting under the chairmanship of Prince Sihanouk on 3 January 1976. Sihanouk has apparently given his total support to the new constitution and has commented that

Regarding the new constitution, I would like to express my sincere satisfaction. The new constitution conforms entirely with the people's wishes and her international status. This constitution is clear, easy to understand and concise. It conforms entirely with our goal of democratic, popular revolution. This constitution is excellent, I sincerely and totally approve it. (The Government of Democratic Kampuchea, *The Constitution of Democratic Cambodia: A Press Communiqué*, 5 January 1976).

As we shall see, the constitution is neither clear nor concise. In its form a simple document, its content ranges from the definition of the present régime to the country's foreign policy. It contains sixteen chapters with one or more articles in each chapter.

It is interesting to note that nowhere is the word socialism mentioned. But it is unmistakable that the new régime is socialistic and egalitarian in its basic goal. For instance, in the preamble, the second paragraph very clearly states these goals

Whereas the aspirations of the whole people of Kampuchea and of the whole Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea who wish to have an independent, united, peaceful, neutral, non-aligned, sovereign Kampuchea in her territorial integrity, in a society with happiness, equality, justice and genuine democracy, without rich nor poor people, without oppressive nor oppressed classes, a society in which the whole people live in harmony, in the large national unity and join their efforts in productive labour, to edify and defend the country together. (Permanent Representative to the United Nations, *A Press Communiqué: Constitution of Democratic Cambodia*, New York City, no date).

Article 1 also does not mention either the word socialist or popular as is generally the case for most revolutionary régimes. This article defines the country as "an independent, united, peaceful, neutral, non-aligned, sovereign and democratic state in her territorial integrity." It goes on to state that "the state of Kampuchea is the state of the workers, peasants and other labourers of Kampuchea." It gives the official name of the country as Democratic Kampuchea.

The most astonishing aspect of this new document is its simplicity. For instance, the economic organization is defined in Article 2 of Chapter II in which it is stipulated that

All important means of production are collective property of the people state and of the community people. As for the articles of everyday use, they remain the individual property of everyone. (*Press Communiqué*, 5 January 1976, pp. 2 and 3).

The labour and management organizations are solely based on the collective principle (Article 4). Another related article to economic activities is to be found in Article 12 of Chapter IX which defines the rights and duties of every citizen of Kampuchea. It states that every citizen "has the full right to enjoy material, moral and cultural life, which is to be constantly improved." Every citizen of the country "has his subsistence fully secure". It also emphasizes that "the worker, labourer and peasants are the master of the factories, the hands and the means of production." It proclaims that "unemployment does not exist in Democratic Kampuchea" (*Press Communiqué*, 5 January 1976, pp. 5 and 6).

The constitution also stipulates that "men and women are equal in every field." And polygamy and polyandry are prohibited.

On the right to have a religion (Article 20), the constitution specifies that "every citizen has the right to have any belief and religion and has the right as well to have neither belief nor religion." It goes on to emphasize that "any reactionary religion interfering with Democratic Kampuchea and its People is strictly prohibited" (*Press Communiqué*, 5 January 1976, p. 8).

Nowhere is there mention of the freedom of press and information or the freedom to criticize or oppose.

On foreign policy (Article 21) the constitution appears to aim at Kampuchea's immediate neighbours when it states that

Democratic Kampuchea full of goodwill is firmly determined to maintain close and friendly relations with all countries having common borders with her, and with all countries throughout the world, near and far, on the strict basis of mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It also adheres to "a policy of independence, peace, neutrality, non-alignment." It emphatically states that "no foreign country whatever is allowed to establish any military base on her territory."

The other articles of the constitution define the role of the army, that of the

People's Assembly, the government's responsibilities and the duties of the State Presidium. These will be the subject of a detailed analysis in the following pages.

The legislative branch: The People's Assembly

This body, defined in Articles 4 to 7 of the constitution, is composed of 250 members elected every 5 years by general elections based on "direct and secret vote", of which 150 representatives are peasants, 50 representatives are workers and labourers and 50 representatives are from the Revolutionary Army. Officially named the Assembly of the People's Representatives of Kampuchea, it is empowered to carry bills and to define the internal and external political lines of Kampuchea. The People's Assembly holds only one plenary session; the resolution and mandates of the People's Assembly are looked after by a Permanent Committee and various Commissions elected by the People's Assembly during its plenary session. In other words, the Permanent Committee is an apparently powerful selected group of highly placed members of the country's communist party. It supervises and checks the activities of the government, the Presidium and the Judiciary Committee.

On 20 March 1976, the first general election was held throughout the territory of Kampuchea. According to press reports, the Kampuchean people were asked to approve a list of names which had already been agreed upon by the Party. There was apparently no opposition. The members of the People's Assembly attended the first plenary session from 11–13 April 1976 in Phnom Penh apparently in an atmosphere of "great union and particular warmth" (Democratic Kampuchea, United Nations Representative Office, *Press Communiqué*, New York, 11 April 1976).

The People's Assembly decided in this first plenary session that its representatives should continue "to live at the grass roots in close contact with the people." Therefore, they had all to return to their respective duty stations once the plenary session was over. During the plenary session, the representatives debated and voted on different resolutions to be the framework for the government's activities in every aspect of life in the country and outside.

The first plenary session's agenda contained various questions, the most important being: the validation of the general elections, the appointment of the Permanent Committee and different commissions, the examination of the request for resignation by the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea, the election of a new government, the examination of the request for retirement by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Head of State, and the appointment of the new Presidium.

The first plenary session overwhelmingly approved the results of the first general election and declared that it "had been held normally, correctly and in accordance with the principles of the constitutional law of Democratic Kampuchea" (Ibid., p. 1).

The Assembly also accepted the request for the retirement of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as the Chief of State and proceeded to appoint the Presidium which was composed of one president and two vice-presidents. Prince Norodom Sihanouk was given an annual pension for life amounting to US\$8,000, and it was decided that for his service rendered to the people of Kampuchea during the war period, a statue will be erected in his honour with the title of the Great Patriot Personality (Ibid., pp. 4–5).

The Assembly accepted the resignation of the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea which was presided over by Penn Nouth, a close and trusted advisor to Prince Sihanouk. A new government was appointed.

The Permanent Committee

Also appointed by the Assembly was the Permanent Committee which appears to be the most important organ of the present régime. By its role as a supervisor of the other branches of the régime as described earlier, and by its composition,

it is likely that this Committee holds the commanding power in Kampuchea.¹ The Committee includes one chairman, two vice-chairmen and seven members. The first chairman appointed was Nuon Chea. Although little is known of him and of the other members, his importance was later confirmed when he was also appointed to replace Pol Pot as Prime Minister. This event took place in mid-September 1976 when it was announced that the latter had resigned temporarily due to ill health. It is not known whether this replacement was due to the official reason or to the consolidation of power by Nuon Chea. In any event, it is still important to point out that Nuon Chea is now holding the two important positions in the present régime of Kampuchea.

The Government

On 6 April 1976, the request to resign of the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea was accepted by the People's Assembly. A new government was immediately formed, headed by Pol Pot, who had apparently been a worker in one of the rubber plantations in Kampuchea and owed his position to membership in the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). He held this position until his recent temporary resignation. The government also included some well-known personalities such as Ieng Sary (the first Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs), Son Sen (the Third Vice-Premier and Minister of Defence), Hu Nim (the Minister of Propaganda and Information), Dr. Thiounn Thioeun (the Minister of Health), Ieng Thirith, the wife of Ieng Sary (the Minister of Social Affairs), Yun Yat, the wife of Son Sen (the Minister of Culture and Education). The Second Vice-Premier in charge of the important Ministry of Economic Affairs is Von Vet, who is unknown to most outside observers. The importance of this Ministry is enhanced by the inclusion of six committees under its auspices, at the head of which are Chairmen with the rank of Minister of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea. These committees are assigned the task of looking after the following areas—Agriculture, Industry, Commerce, Communications, Energy and Rubber Plantations.

Its main responsibilities are to conduct the domestic and foreign policies of Kampuchea as adopted by the People's Assembly. The Permanent Committee of the People's Assembly has the responsibility to see that the resolutions passed by the People's Assembly are faithfully implemented by the government. As already mentioned Nuon Chea, who is holding both the positions of Premier and Chairman of the Permanent Committee, may well be the most important person in the power hierarchy in the present régime. Apparently the Permanent Committee has the power to dismiss or to reshuffle the government at any moment. It can also be surmised that all the members of the government are influential members of the CPK. This fact, however, cannot be easily substantiated as little is known of the organization and structure of the CPK.

In the activities of the government, only the foreign manifestations are better known. Domestic activities could only be construed as being intense in the economic and social reorganization of the society following the huge destruction of the Kampuchean economy from the recent war. The government's responsibility to rehabilitate and transform the Kampuchean economy is heavy. What is the new orientation of the economic system of Kampuchea? What is the role of money? What is the method of production in Kampuchea? Are there any material incentives to encourage production? What are the economic and financial relations with the rest of the world? These are some of the questions which can only be guessed at

¹ For a different view, see Patrice de Beer, "Is there a political explanation for the 'temporary' withdrawal of the Prime Minister?" *Le Monde*, 29 September 1976, p. 3.

considering what little information has filtered through the borders of Kampuchea since the end of the war.

The Economic System

Three main sources of information were available to this writer: a colour film shown to a selected audience in New York by the Permanent Mission to Democratic Kampuchea to the United Nations, a review entitled "Image of Democratic Kampuchea", and reports through the press by the refugees. From these various sources one can observe that the economy of Kampuchea is going through a complete change in its organization and orientation. All the Kampuchean people are involved in the efforts of reconstruction of the economy. The work method was apparently based on total compulsory participation in the task of rebuilding the national economy by every able-bodied Kampuchean. As the constitution proclaims there is no unemployment in Kampuchea. Since money is not used and the population totally mobilized, it is not difficult to envisage that unemployment does not and cannot exist. One can also easily imagine that as no material initiative exists to encourage production, some form of political indoctrination combined with coercive means must be used in order to make the population contribute to the national reconstruction effort. How well and for how long this total mobilization can be sustained is an open question.

The general impression one has from reading through this scanty information and from listening to some official public statements is that the Kampuchean economy is one of the most organized and centrally planned economy in the whole spectrum of the socialist system. With the absence of money wage, the allocation of factors of production is solely based on rigid physical planning. The distribution system at the level of production and consumption is channelled through a total rationing of all the available resources. This system implies the absence of internal trade and other services such as restaurants and public transportation for personal convenience. All movement by any person or group of persons is forbidden. The government is the sole provider of jobs which cannot be refused by the individuals. In this case it is easy to see that unemployment does not exist in Kampuchea.

A year after the war, basic public services such as the postal and telecommunications have not yet been reopened for personal use. Internationally, these services are totally nonexistent. The only link with the outside world is by air between Phnom Penh and Peking by the official airline of the People's Republic of China.

All the major cities in Kampuchea are still emptied of their original dwellers. According to official statements, these will remain so in the foreseeable future. The city dwellers were considered by the new régime as basically nonproductive individuals. Whether these views can be maintained and for long is again an open question.

Little is also known about the traditional international trade pattern of Kampuchea. Apparently, all the rubber plantations are operating almost normally again. Rice production is said to be sufficient and some export surplus even mentioned at one point. Secondary export crops such as black pepper and timber also reappeared in the production statistics. However, it is not known how and with which countries international trade is being conducted. The only known international economic relations are those with the People's Republic of China in the form of a bilateral aid programme and with Thailand in terms of barter trade. No banking system is in operation at this time. Kampuchea appears to be operating totally in the form of physical rationing where prices and wages do not have any meaning. Can this system continue to operate after the reconstruction phase is over? It is difficult for this writer to see that this totally mobilized system can be maintained. Some reform will have to be introduced soon if the present régime is to avoid serious disturbances in the society.

The Judiciary System

According to the constitution

Justice is exercised by the people. The people's courts of justice represent and protect the people's justice, defend the people's democratic liberties and punish any act directed against the people's state or transgressing the laws of the people's State (Article 7 of the *Constitution*, p. 4).

All the judges are selected and appointed by the People's Assembly.

Two main categories of law violations are mentioned. Although, the text of the constitution is not very clearly defined, it appears that any act which is considered hostile to the régime will receive the most severe punishment. Under this categorization one can imagine such acts as treason or sabotage or systematic and organized opposition to the present system. The other categories of violations are those acts which are not included in the former group of law violation. Those who break the law of the land falling under the second group would be sent for reeducation "within the State or the People's organizations."

Again, the simplicity of this judicial principle leaves a lot of room for interpretation, further complicated by the fact that the old law codes must have all been abandoned as they applied to a different framework of social justice. For instance, it would be interesting to know where hard criminal cases are included, although recent press reports mentioned that rapes and murders were punishable by death. It appears that the interpretation and application of justice are left to the personal understanding of the judge of each case. A possible result from this loosely defined system of laws may be arbitrariness. The application of justice must also be seen in the context of Articles 12 and 13 which define the rights and duties of every citizen of Kampuchea.

The Education System

This total mobilization of manpower and other resources for the efforts of reconstruction resulted in a complete closedown of all the educational institutions in the country. Recently, primary schools have been gradually opening. However, the secondary schools and universities remain closed. According to Patrice de Beer, the Southeast Asian correspondent of *Le Monde*, the emphasis for the movement is on the elimination of illiteracy as soon as possible. Once this task of mass education is accomplished, the secondary schools and institutions of higher learning can be allowed to reopen (*Le Monde*, 28 September 1976). This upheaval in the educational system of Kampuchea will certainly affect the future level of knowledge of its people and therefore will have a great bearing on the application of science and technology to improve the society. It must be pointed out that the Kampuchean educational system before the war was not very developed and inadequate for the needs of a modern nation. The new system must certainly be more practical and less élitist. There are still many unanswered questions as to the type of education the universities will be allowed to dispense. Will research be allowed? What is the attitude of the Party toward the intellectuals? All these questions will remain unanswered for some time to come.

The Army

The Revolutionary Army of Democratic Kampuchea has fought very valiantly and has shown that it is well-trained and well-disciplined. However, it remains faceless. Besides the familiar name of Son Sen, the Chief of Staff during the war and now the Defence Minister, little else is known of it. The main body must have been recruited from the mass of rural people who joined the Liberation Army either

because they did not have any choice or because they really felt that the country had to be defended.

What is the composition of this army in terms of its fields of specialization? What is its size? What is its future role in the political affairs of the country? To the extent that the army is allowed to have fifty representatives in the People's Assembly this appears to show that its political influence is substantial. For the moment the Revolutionary Army participates in the reconstruction efforts with the whole people of Kampuchea. The Army must also be further strengthened and better equipped as the latent problems which exist between Kampuchea and its neighbours can explode at any moment. Internal security is also another factor which makes the role of the Army so important in the political life of Kampuchea. Considering the enormous task which is expected of the army, one wonders whether any future conflict between the army and the Party could occur for the control of power in Kampuchea. The other important question concerns the ideological orientation of the Revolutionary Army of Democratic Kampuchea. Does it look to the Chinese, to the Russians or to the Vietnamese for support and guidance? Is it fundamentally nationalistic? Among the cadres of the revolutionary army, a few thousands were trained by Hanoi since 1954 after the first Geneva Conference. These trained cadres were the nucleus of the then fledgling Liberation Army during early 1970 when the war had just broken out. What is their role in the army and in the power structure of today's Kampuchea? All these questions can only be answered when Kampuchea is again open to the world. From external appearances, the army is an important factor in the power hierarchy of Democratic Kampuchea. Its real ideological alignment is unknown, but this must be ascertained if Kampuchea's foreign policy is to be properly assessed.

Foreign Relations

Democratic Kampuchea's relations with the rest of the world are clearly stated in the constitution. This basically emphasizes its eagerness to maintain diplomatic relations with every country in the world regardless of differences in political régimes, and based on mutual respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity, noninterference in each other's internal affairs. It also states that no foreign country is allowed to establish any military base on Kampuchean territory. It proclaims that Kampuchea abides by a policy of independence, peace, neutrality, and nonalignment. Kampuchea places itself categorically in the family of nonaligned countries.

These general principles must be looked at as the basis for Kampuchea's foreign policy. However, other elements such as the geopolitics, the great powers' rivalries and Kampuchea's views on other countries' contributions to its economic well-being are crucial in the interpretation and implementation of its foreign policy based on these general principles.

Kampuchea's first official act outside the country was to send representatives to the Third World Conference in Lima, Peru, in early August 1975. This gesture was to make real the desire to belong to the group of nonaligned nations. Within the same framework of mind Kampuchean representatives also attended the Seventh Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Unlike Vietnam, Kampuchea did not face any problems concerning its seat at the United Nations. Its relations with the rest of the United Nations system agencies were maintained at a low key. Based on its principle of self-help, the Kampuchean leaders did not see fit to ask for any external assistance from bilateral or multilateral sources. This explains somewhat its low-key approach to the rest of the United Nations agencies. Its strategy in the United Nations General Assembly is basically to support the politicoeconomic principles which represent the Third World's point of view. For

instance, Ieng Sary stated during his speech at the Seventh Extraordinary Plenary Session of the United Nations that

... our country gives to the Seventh Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly a great importance. For our presence at this conference is designed to make the greatest efforts as possible to advance the causes of peace and progress. We hope that this meeting will find just and adequate solutions to the problems that worry our Third World in the field of economic development and that it will thus be one of the main steps in the advance of the world to establish a new international economic order, based on equality and equity, so as to satisfy the expectations of the countries on the road of development. The nonaligned countries, at the occasion of the Lima meeting, have been unanimous to undertake together an agreement and collaboration with a view to the promotion of the victory of this new international economic order that would fulfill the aspirations and expectations of the majority of Mankind. (Ieng Sary's *Statement at the Seventh Extraordinary Session of the United Nations*, mimeographed, New York, 30 August 1975).

Kampuchea's relations with the Great Powers at the moment are limited to diplomatic and economic links with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC has always been a staunch supporter of Kampuchea since the beginning of the last war. China had been giving all forms of assistance to the Kampuchean resistance movement including the siege of the government-in-exile in Peking. This relationship has continued up to the present. According to some unconfirmed reports, the PRC granted Kampuchea a soft loan (or grant) of one billion U.S. dollars to be used during a period of years commencing in mid-1975. The exact terms and conditions of the loan are not known. It was also reported by the refugees that Chinese technicians are seen around in the country advising the Kampuchean in the factories and repair plants. The closeness of the relationship between the PRC and Democratic Kampuchea has some important political implications for Kampuchea, especially as to its relations with the Soviet Union and Vietnam.

The Soviet Union has recognized the new régime officially only after the Lon Nol régime was defeated in April 1975. This fact was not forgotten by the new leaders when the Russians were expelled with the rest of the foreigners who were living in Phnom Penh a few weeks after its fall. In spite of the declared intentions of Kampuchean leaders to remain neutral in the Chinese-Soviet dispute, this act clearly indicated that the Kampuchean were on the Chinese side. Until today the Soviet Union does not have any Embassy staff stationed in Phnom Penh, while other countries of the communist bloc such as North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, the PRC are among the few who have been allowed to open embassies in Phnom Penh. The role of the Soviet Union in Kampuchea would probably remain insignificant in the near future.

Kampuchea's relation with the United States is nonexistent at this time. Although, according to some sources close to the State Department, the present Kampuchean Government had asked the PRC to convey to the U.S. authorities its intention to normalize diplomatic relations, this information does not seem to fit with factual observation. Considering the recent involvement of the U.S. in the war in Kampuchea, together with the tendency of the present régime to be highly suspicious of the Western nations in general, and the U.S. in particular, it seems unlikely that Democratic Kampuchea is ready to renew its diplomatic relations with any great power of the Western world. Unlike Vietnam, Kampuchea does not appear to see any benefit from relations with the industrialized nations of the West — for two basic reasons. First, the PRC aid programme is considered by the Kampuchean authorities to be politically safer and technically adequate. Secondly, the internal

situation of Kampuchea is in such an experimental stage that any intrusion from the outside world, however benign, becomes intolerable to the Kampuchean leaders.

France is another case in which one can observe the same guarded pattern of Kampuchean behaviour with respect to the great powers of the Western world. In spite of a long-standing relationship and substantial financial interest in Kampuchea, France was not treated any differently from other big powers of the West. All French property such as rubber plantations and business enterprises were confiscated by the new régime. The French decision to allow important political personalities known to be opposed to the present régime to live in France poses another obstacle. Also, the fact that France did not recognize the Kampuchean Government in exile did not smoothen the present relation between the two countries. Considering all these problems it is unlikely that the relationship between France and Democratic Kampuchea will be normalized in the near future.

Kampuchea regards with suspicion Japan's role in Southeast Asia, as do many others in the region, according to Paul S. Manglapus, in *Japan in Southeast Asia: Collision Course* (Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Washington, D.C., 1976). Undoubtedly, Japan can play an important role in the economic development of Southeast Asian countries. However, the future participation of Japan in the reconstruction efforts of Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam can become a reality, only if a totally new framework of relationships can be worked out. At the moment, there is no immediate reason for either party to come to that conclusion. Kampuchea's self-imposed isolation is one of the major obstacles, while Japan's past and present activities in the region are also an impediment to its participation in the development efforts of reconstruction in Kampuchea and other countries of the former French Indochina.

Relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam are puzzling with little being known since the end of the war in April 1975. It is interesting to note that very shortly after the capitulation of the Lon Nol régime, Le Duan came to talk with Kampuchean leaders in Phnom Penh. Immediately after his departure, a reshuffling of the Kampuchean Government took place which resulted in the elevation of Ieng Sary and Son Sen to the important positions of First Vice-Premier in charge of Foreign Affairs, and Second Vice-Premier in charge of Defence respectively. Of course, it is difficult to ascertain whether these changes took place as a result of Le Duan's visit to Phnom Penh or independently of it. However, Ieng Sary was known to be sympathetic to Hanoi, while Son Sen's position is less clear. These facts must be kept in mind for a future analysis of the Kampuchean situation.

Kampuchea's border problems with Vietnam are still very touchy. Rumours about clashes along the border of the former South Vietnam and along the coastal islands are persistent. During an informal meeting in New York, Chan Youran, one of the Kampuchean representatives at the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, said that the border problems between Vietnam and Kampuchea exist but they are being taken care of. He added that Kampuchea will defend to the end its national integrity. According to recent information, the problems concerning the coastal islands have been settled satisfactorily for both sides. In the long run, problems between Kampuchea and Vietnam could be settled through negotiations. The danger that Vietnam might try to control the destiny of Kampuchea is difficult to ascertain. Only if Kampuchea is involved in some internal struggle for power will Vietnam try to intervene indirectly through those Kampucheans who have been leaning toward Hanoi since the early 1950s. But as stated earlier, the role of the pro-Hanoi group is not evident and it is therefore too early yet to make any worthwhile judgement on this delicate situation. At the moment Kampuchean-Vietnamese relations are shrouded in mystery.

If little is known of the Kampuchean-Vietnamese relationship, the Thai-

Kampuchean relationship has been more obvious. There were many high-level meetings between the Thais and the Kampucheans. Diplomatic relations have been established between the two countries and some border trade was officially permitted to take place. There were a number of clashes between the Thai troops and the Kampuchean army but all these skirmishes were played down by both parties. Unlike Vietnam which has been attacking Thailand politically, the new Kampuchean leaders have refrained from doing so. But with the recent development in the political situation in Thailand, this relatively normal relationship might change drastically. The Thais might want to be more aggressive towards their communist neighbours by encouraging an armed resistance movement based on the Kampuchean refugees in Thailand and other countries. This is tempting for Thailand as this country had already done so many times in the past. Any such change would create some problems for Kampuchea along the Thai borders. However, hope for a change in the present régime in Kampuchea would have to be from within and not from without.

The Party and its Leaders: Who are they?

As with most things in the present situation of Kampuchea, little is known of the leaders and the organization of the CPK.

It was often heard during the war period 1970–75, according to *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 1975, the Party basically comprised two factions. On the one hand, there was the so-called “intellectual” group which includes Khieu Samphan (the present chairman of the Presidium), Hu Nim (the propaganda minister), Hou Youn (reported to have been killed during the final phase of the battle for Phnom Penh), Thiounn Mom (an engineer graduated from the prestigious French Polytechnical Institute), Son Sen and Saloth Sar. The other faction includes those who were little known to most outside observers and were reported to have been trained by Hanoi since the early fifties. The latter group of men could very well be those who are now in the most important positions in the country. With this leadership can be associated such names as Nuon Chea² (the chairman of the Permanent Committee and also the acting Prime Minister), Pol Pot (the ailing Prime Minister), Von Vet (the Third Vice-Premier in charge of the important Ministry of National Economy). One name not very often heard of recently is that of Saloth Sar who had often been mentioned as the Secretary General of the Party.

Given the background of these leaders of Democratic Kampuchea, it is not easy to sort out the real leaders of the country and pinpoint the ideological orientation of the Party. From superficial analysis, it appears that the nonintellectual group is in control of the present power structure in Kampuchea. However, from recent developments in the internal and external political activities of the new régime it seems that the régime is very nationalistic and does not appear to show any sign of being influenced by Hanoi or any other country of the socialist bloc.

Although press reports continue to indicate that there are still some resistance movements inside Kampuchea, it now seems that this highly nationalistic régime is in firm control of the entire country.

Most outside observers agree that the present régime has chosen to be introspective and to keep its relations with the rest of the world to a minimum. This attitude was apparently dictated by domestic political considerations and by the suspicion of the new leaders vis-à-vis all foreigners. From the domestic side, this isolation policy will probably last for a while until such time as a definite politico-

² Nuon Chea could very well be the same person known as Nuon Soun who, jailed by Sihanouk for subversive activities, was released by Lon Nol in March 1970 and joined the resistance movement shortly after. He was already then a prominent communist leader.

economic orientation has been agreed upon among the apparently diverse groups of men who are now leading Kampuchea.

Despite the mystery which still clouds the situation in Democratic Kampuchea and despite the apparently hard times and difficult situation which the people are now experiencing, it seems that a new but still sketchy course has been embarked upon in the long but difficult road to transforming its society.

However, many problems still remain to be solved before the people are able to benefit from the painful sacrifices which were forced upon them by the present leaders in order to transform, perhaps too quickly and too drastically, the old society into a new one. By being so anxious for an early transformation of the society, the present leadership may have made the people pay a very high price in human terms. Of course, the evaluation of these costs is subjective and could vary according to each person's perception of and sensitivity to the magnitude of the problems involved, the time required, and the means used to solve them. Even if one is to discount substantially the horror stories which were reported by Kampuchean refugees in Thailand and Vietnam, it is difficult to deny the fact that the Kampuchians have suffered and are suffering a great deal because of these drastic changes in their society. This fact was even acknowledged by Prime Minister Pol Pot during a recent interview given to the Vietnam News Agency when he declared that the majority of the people are still suffering from malaria and that there is a shortage of medicine (*FEER*, 29 October 1976). He also implied that there was no starvation but food was still limited. If this is true, then one can ask why the present régime has so steadfastly been refusing to receive all humanitarian assistance, including that offered by international agencies which could substantially alleviate health and food problems.

To some extent, one can understand the reluctance of the leaders to ask for international relief assistance. Indeed, the recent interference of foreigners in Kampuchean internal affairs was responsible to a great extent for the enormous loss in lives and resources of this country. This painful experience can partly explain the suspicion of the present leaders of any foreign involvement in domestic affairs.

However, one can also argue that this attitude may have been exaggerated considering the magnitude of the problems which confronted the country. But it seems that a combination of the need and the determination to change the society without delay were the overriding factors in the present leaders' rejection of all outside relief assistance, and of their carrying out of these changes at a very high cost in human terms.

Past experiences have shown that revolutions always imply a great deal of human suffering. The Kampuchean revolution is no exception. One might argue that these costs could have been minimized, but this line of reasoning is very difficult to prove or disprove. Only when all the facts are known can one formulate a better judgement on this issue. Most observers of Kampuchean affairs agree that under Sihanouk, society was a peaceful but stagnant one. Change in the society was badly needed and Sihanouk could have initiated it, as he had the opportunity and the means to carry it out. Instead, Sihanouk chose to rule Kampuchea not as a modern ruler, but as an absolute monarch who could not tolerate any challenge to his power. His perception of Kampuchea was parochial, feudalistic and nonprogressive. It became evident during the late 1960s that this unfortunate situation could no longer be tolerated by the small, but increasing, number of thinking Kampuchians. Sihanouk's erratic and personal style of politics led to the increase in the underground resistance movement. The enlargement of the Vietnam War into Kampuchea in early 1970 culminated by the overthrow of Sihanouk by Lon Nol brought the final blow to the decaying society. The ensuing misery of people brought about by a savage war created a power vacuum which was rapidly filled by a very small but determined

group of revolutionaries who succeeded in controlling only after five years of warfare. Thus, the present régime came to power as a result of both foreign intervention and weaknesses in the society.

Eighteen months have passed since the new régime came to power. Available information seems to indicate that the new leaders are now in full control of Kampuchea's destiny. These leaders have shown their determination to transform the society into an efficient and more egalitarian one in the shortest time possible. In order to achieve these goals, they are imposing enormous sacrifices on the present generation. Considering that Kampuchea is relatively well-endowed with natural resources, and assuming that the new society is better organized and more efficient, one can hope that a relatively quieter and more normal nation will soon emerge from these turbulent and costly years.

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