DOCUMENTATION

The Causes of the Suffering of the Cambodian People: A Possible Solution

Remarks of His Excellency Mr Son Sann, Prime Minister of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, and President of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, on 29 September 1982.

At the outset, I wish to express to you, Mr Chairman and Distinguished Friends, my sincere appreciation for your invitation, and for the opportunity and the honour to once again share with the esteemed Council on Foreign Relations some of my views and my thoughts on the causes of the tragedy which has thrown the Cambodian people and their nation into one of the world's worst misfortunes, a tragedy which presently menaces the very survival of the more than two thousand-year-old Khmer civilization, and thrusts the Southeast Asian region into a state of insecurity and turmoil. In my discussion, I shall deal with a possible solution to the Cambodian drama, and the drama-produced regional insecurity and lack of tranquility.

Of the causes of the Cambodian tragedy, the principal one is Hanoi's age-old dream of a Confederation of Indochina under Vietnam's rule, a dream which has been projected by the Nguyen Ai Quoc Institute for the training of the Vietnamese Communist Party cadres to embody a "Union of the Socialist Republics of South-East Asia" by the 1990s.

Hanoi's dream of a mandate to rule the region began with the expansionism and annexationism of the leaders of a territorial entity called Dai-Co-Viet or Annam in the year 939 (later called Vietnam). Its dream has been reinforced since then through the successful Vietnamese moves southward beginning in the tenth century, during which time Vietnam encroached on neighbouring territories, annexed the ancient independent Kingdom of Champa in the fifteenth century, and completely absorbed the Cambodian territory of Kampuchea Krom or Cochinchina at the start of this century.

More recently, in the wake of the Geneva Agreements on Indochina of 1954, the Vietnamese Communists rounded up more than five thousand young Cambodians and transported them to North Vietnam for political indoctrination and military training while at the same time they worked
ceaselessly to implant new Vietnamese Communist cells and strengthen old ones in Cambodia. When the Second Indochinese War spilled into Vietnam in the late 1960s, the Vietnamese Communist troops had already founded a state within a state through their military occupation of Cambodian territory along the Khmer-Vietnamese border stretching from North to South. Having for many decades carefully conceived of, and vigilantly prepared for the "liberation" and occupation of Cambodia, the Hanoi leaders took advantage of the serious division among Cambodians, particularly following the 18 March 1970 deposal of Chief of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk from power, and dispatched the Hanoi-trained Cambodian elements to reinforce the Khmer Rouge insurgents. The Khmer Rouge also had been trained and armed by Hanoi, whose troops fought alongside the Khmer Rouge insurgents, and helped them take over power from the authorities of the Khmer Republic on 17 April 1975 with tragic consequences known the world over. And history must record that from that day until the end of 1978, when Hanoi's regular armed forces invaded and occupied Cambodia, the Vietnamese Communists had always remained allies of the Khmer Rouge.

At every stage of the Cambodian drama, the interference and intervention of the Vietnamese Communists have been premeditated. Their objective remains constant: expansion, annexation, a Confederation of Indochina.

Soon after the completion of their invasion of Cambodia in January 1979, the Vietnamese Communist troops started to empty the country of rice, gold and silver items, art treasures, autos, motorcycles, appliances, and anything they could put their hands on. They destabilized neighbouring Thailand by forcing the exodus of Cambodian inhabitants toward the Thai border. . . . They disrupted the routing of international humanitarian aid to remote Cambodian provinces from the starving Cambodian population, and diverted the majority of relief supplies to Vietnam. With some 200,000 troops occupying Cambodia, thousands of Vietnamese officials and cadres took over Cambodia's administration, indoctrinated the population and the youth, imposed the teaching of Vietnamese language in Cambodian schools, sent thousands of young Cambodians to Hanoi for "advanced education", forced senior Cambodian officials to marry Vietnamese women while Cambodian women have been obliged to have sexual relations with and bear fatherless children by Vietnamese Communist soldiers, imprisoned more than ten thousand Cambodian nationalists, suppressed religious freedom (although a handful of pagodas and a few mosques have been reopened for propaganda purposes). From the government ministries down to small villages, and from the highest level down to the lowest, only the Vietnamese Communist administrators have decision-making power.

As such, Hanoi is attempting to kill off the Cambodian identity and the
Cambodian soul, and to transform Cambodia into a veritable Vietnamese province. In its scheme, Hanoi has moved hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese nationals to resettle in Cambodia as new masters of the land, and has for the past few months strengthened its 200,000 occupation troops by moving new and fresh armed men to Cambodia.

If Vietnam's aim is a Confederation of Indochina, and ultimately a "Union of the Socialist Republics of South-East Asia", it converges well with the hegemonist aim of the Soviet Union which backs Vietnam with three to six million dollars per day.

In fact, the Soviet Union benefits much from Vietnam's expansionism and annexationism, which it encourages. Through Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia, which the Soviet Union approved in 1978, Hanoi became a revolutionary agent for Soviet hegemonism. While Hanoi's armed forces are spread thin, facing monumental difficulties in occupied Cambodia, Laos, and in Vietnam itself, facing a growing economic crisis in the country, Moscow has succeeded in transposing the Sino-Soviet conflict to China's southern flank by accentuating the Hanoi-Beijing antagonism. Moreover, Moscow, which has made Hanoi more and more dependent on Soviet policies in Asia, has consolidated and extended Soviet strategic position in the Southeast Asian region through its successful completion of the missing link in its naval strategy with access to Cam Ranh and Danang naval bases.

In the future, the Soviet Union can count on a continuation of Vietnam's expansionist and annexationist military adventures, and will stand to benefit from them. The Laotian, Cambodian, Thai, Malay Communists who are presently being trained and indoctrinated by the Vietnamese Communists at the Central School of Nationalities in Hoa Binh, Vietnam, are all vanguards of Soviet hegemonism interposed by Hanoi.

In order for peace, security, and stability to be maintained in the Southeast Asian region, it is necessary that Soviet hegemonism, advanced by Vietnamese proxy, be checked; that the Sino-Soviet conflict, aggravated by Vietnamese actions, be eliminated from the region; that the Cambodian problem be resolved through the implementation of the Declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea held in New York in 1981, and all relevant Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly of 1979, 1980, and 1981. These call for the total withdrawal of the Vietnamese occupation troops from Cambodia, an international conference on Cambodia, United Nations supervised general and free elections in Cambodia to enable the Cambodian people to exercise freely their inalienable right to self-determination, and all this with the view to permitting the two peoples of Cambodia and Vietnam to begin to reduce little by little the *Karma* of hatred which has existed between them for centuries, and to prepare for good
relations necessary for economic development of the two peoples and for peace and stability in the region.

This solution is possible. It is possible because from all accounts the revolution led by Hanoi is heading toward decay. On the one hand, morale of the Vietnamese revolutionaries has lowered, and corruption has been on the increase among the Vietnamese bureaucrats. Mr Le Duan has spoken of "the corrupted and degenerate elements who have dishonored the Party". On the other hand, the economic and food problems in Vietnam have reached a critical stage. The annual rice deficit is of more than two million tons average, and surpassed four million tons in 1981. Riots broke out in 1980 due to food scarcity. In the South, the socialization of agriculture is catastrophic. Once a granary of rice, the Mekong delta no longer produces enough to feed its inhabitants: the cooperatives function badly. At Cu Chi, once a Vietcong stronghold, the peasants prefer to kill off their buffaloes rather than turn them in to the cooperatives, and to keep the surplus of paddy for their pigs rather than sell it to the State. On top of this, for more than a year now, the Vietnamese Communist newspaper Nhan Dan has signalled the presence of "subversive foyers" in Viet Bac (North Vietnam), Binh Tri Thien (Central Vietnam), and Kien Giang (South Vietnam), and Hanoi Radio has warned the Party and the Army against "riots and uprisings combined with attacks from the exterior".

Hanoi's leaders may wish to cling to their expansionist and annexationist militarist adventures, even at the risk of being drawn into a suicidal quagmire. In this case they must be forced to come to their senses.

Since 1979, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led the community of nations to exert continuous political pressure on Vietnam through the Declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea in 1981, and through Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly of 1979, 1980, 1981, and soon another one in 1982, while the United States, Canada, West Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Australia, New Zealand . . . have undertaken economic and financial pressures on Vietnam with the view to compelling Vietnam to withdraw its occupation armed forces from Cambodia.

We of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), a nationalist and non-communist resistance movement, have never deceived ourselves or others into believing that we can use force to evict the heavily armed and well-seasoned Soviet-financed Vietnamese Communist armed forces from Cambodia. However, we are convinced that the intensification of guerilla activities against them in Cambodia, leaving them no time to rest, to eat, to sleep in security, can add new and costly pressures on Vietnam to review its policies. We need the means to do this.

Considering the present most favourable circumstances for Cambodia's
liberation and national salvation, and the resulting restoration of peace, security and stability in the region, we of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front believe that with necessary aid and assistance from friendly governments we can attain these objectives. Compared with the importance and beneficial consequences to the region and the world of Cambodia's liberation, the volume of aid and degree of assistance required would be minute indeed.

It is to manifest to the world in general, and to the Hanoi leaders in particular, the unshakeable determination of the Cambodian nationalists to liberate Cambodia from Vietnam's rule, and to restore to the Motherland independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, that we of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front broke all deadlocks to form a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea with Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Mr Khieu Samphan. With the Coalition Government, we want to show Hanoi's leaders that Cambodians of all political tendencies are united in their opposition to the occupation of their land by the Vietnamese Communists, and that this unity is stronger than their political/ideological differences.

As Prime Minister of the Coalition Government, I wish to declare once again that the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, officially proclaimed on 9 July 1982, is here to stay until the time the Cambodian people will be able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in choosing their own form of government. The purpose of the Coalition Government is to mobilize all efforts to liberate Cambodia from the Vietnamese Communists, and to bring about the implementation of the Declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea and all relevant Resolutions on Cambodia of the United Nations General Assembly.

As a participating party to the Coalition Government, we maintain our own organization, our own political identity, our own freedom of action, and our right to receive and dispose of international aid specifically granted us. This means that we of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front remain a nationalist and non-communist national liberation front with our own political guidelines, our own political principles — "To Assist, To Serve, To Defend the Cambodian People from all Their Enemies" — our own motto — "Nationalism, Religion, People" — our own institutions, our own national armed forces. And we shall continue to work tirelessly and resolutely to defend and to serve our guiding political principles and ideals.

Having started on 5 March 1979 with five nationalist resistance movements joining together to form the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front was officially proclaimed in our liberated village of Sokh Sann on 9 October 1979, with barely two thousand armed men and approximately four thousand villagers. Almost three years later, today the Front possesses a force of 14,000 +
combatants with 9,000 + armed, and 4,000 + unarmed, and has a population of 120,000 + in the liberated zones. The KPNLF Military School has trained cadets, company commanders, section chiefs, and group chiefs numerous enough to lead an additional 20,000 combatants should arms be made available by friendly governments. While former Cambodian officers, including two Generals, have returned from abroad to join the Front, civilian returnees too are growing in number. In the field, more than four thousand political warfare cadres have been trained, and such training centres as the National Cadres' Training Centre, the Teachers' Training Centre, the Nurses/Male Nurses' Training Centre, the Agricultural Training Centre, among others, have been producing steadily growing numbers of cadres. While the KPNLF guerillas have been operating deep in Cambodia's interior, KPNLF networks have also been established throughout the land, including in Phnom Penh. And most important of all, the Front has the support of the Cambodian people inside and outside the country.

The Khmer People's National Liberation Front, with its leadership and organization, represents the sole alternative to what are undesirable or less desirable options. With aid and assistance from friendly governments, the Cambodia of tomorrow which it will rebuild will be a truly independent country, strictly neutral, and genuinely non-aligned, a democratic country in which the Cambodian people will find peace, human rights, basic liberties, social justice, decent lives, a hospitable country, peaceful and smiling.

To conclude, I wish merely to say to you, Mr Chairman and Distinguished Friends, that in spite of the military might of Vietnam, backed by the Soviet Union, the circumstances are presently favourable to the liberation of Cambodia from Vietnam's yoke, thereby removing the threat to peace, security, and stability in the region as well.

As Prime Minister of the Coalition Government, I have the duty and the obligation to address myself to the Hanoi leaders whose forces of aggression are presently occupying our land in contempt of all international laws and principles that with the Coalition Government, Hanoi's leaders can be certain that they will face growing difficulties everywhere until the day when they will be compelled to remove their occupation troops from our homeland. The three parties to the Coalition Government are of one view in their uncompromising rejection of Vietnam's rule in Cambodia.

As President of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, I wish to assure all friends and warn all adversaries and foes that as a participating party to the Coalition Government, we intend to fulfill our role and our responsibility with honour and dignity while at the same time forging ahead to defend and to serve our guiding political principles in conformity with the aspirations of the Cambodian people.

While we thank all donating countries most deeply for humanitarian
relief aid for our people, I wish to stress that our people are also in need of peace, liberty, human rights, and independence for their country, and I and all my companions in the KPNLF are devoting ourselves fully to fulfilling their need. While we express our profound gratitude to friendly governments for their aid and assistance, we call on all other governments loving peace, justice, and freedom, to follow suit to enable us to wage our struggle for the liberation of our country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Friends, for your attention.

SOURCE: Information Office of the KPNLF, Bangkok.