

## DOCUMENTATION

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### **Meeting the Challenge of the Pacific Century**

*The following is the text of a speech delivered by Prime Minister Gen Prem Tinsulanonda at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand on 15 July 1988.*

Almost nine years have elapsed since I first took office. Thailand has since seen a great deal of changes. With the general election coming up, marking the end of one Administration and the handing over to another, it is perhaps appropriate at this juncture to take stock of what has been done by this Government and what remains on the agenda of the next. There are three major areas I wish to focus on — the economy, the political process, and foreign policy.

#### **The Economy**

When I first came to this office in 1980, Thailand was saddled with economic crises caused by the oil shocks and a rising current account deficit. In those stormy days we knew it in our hearts that sacrifices had to be made and hard decisions carried out in order to restore the financial stability and credit-worthiness of the country. Even more urgent at the time was the need to provide a cushion for our rural people against the adverse impact of the economic recession. It has indeed been my personal commitment from the very first days of office to combat the deep-rooted problem of poverty, especially in rural areas.

As Head of Government in 1981, I set the agenda for the government

policy to make the 1980s the decade of rural development. Plans were laid down, resources mobilised and projects implemented to improve the quality of life particularly at the rural village level. True, results are still falling short of expectations. But statistics appear to bear out my own observations during my upcountry visits. Things have improved tangibly in the people's livelihood.

The severe form of malnutrition among Thai children no longer exists today. The number of villages without electricity has been reduced from 66 per cent in 1980 to 16 per cent in March this year. The number of sub-district health centres now covers 98 per cent of sub-districts. All these were done hand in hand with our painstaking efforts of strict fiscal discipline to revitalize, strengthen and diversify our economy. The devaluation of our currency, tariff reform, financial support for agricultural produce that suffered plummeting prices, and re-adjustment of oil prices were some of the government measures which, in hindsight, have paid off well.

Now that three quarters of the decade have passed, Thailand has emerged with a much strengthened economy, firmly placed on the path of high economic growth with stability. Acclams were recently given to the outstanding performance of Thailand's economy by many objective international observers. Neither those statistics nor those acclams need to be repeated here.

Naturally, this is pleasing news for the whole nation after many trying years of sacrifice and hard work. We also wish to congratulate the private sector who deserve as much of the credit for their ingenuity and dynamism. Evidently the close co-operation between the public and private sectors through the Joint Public and Private Sectors Consultative Committee has been instrumental in galvanizing our economic expansion. We doubly rejoice, moreover, because, with a strong and stable economy, we shall have a golden opportunity now to deal even more effectively with the poverty issue.

With stepped-up growth rates and increased government revenues, we are now in a much better position to spread the benefits of development to the majority of our people. We have been successful in raising the quality of life of the rural poor through the provision of essential services. Now the time has come to embark upon a more ambitious and far-reaching undertaking to raise the ability of the less fortunate in our rural sector to earn a better livelihood and stand on their own feet. We must also try to enhance the standard of living of those with fixed incomes, including labourers and salary earners in both the public and private sectors.

Although our economic successes may have now set us on the right track, we have yet to achieve our goal. If our ultimate objective is to attain

a higher level of development and prosperity, then several tasks are still lying ahead for the new Government. The rapid growth of the economy has led to bottlenecks in terms of our infrastructure.

We need to forge ahead with a comprehensive programme of infrastructure improvement, especially in transportation, communications and public utilities, to remedy the present short-term difficulties and prepare ourselves for the future. We must be alert at all times to currency and commodity price fluctuations, excessive public and foreign borrowing and the danger of high inflation. We must keep up the momentum of growth by maintaining our economic resilience and the ability to diversify the economy to grasp the opportunities that are opening up in the world economy.

### **Political Process**

Sound economic management alone would not have brought us this far. There are other contributing factors. During my tenure as Deputy Minister of Interior right through to the early years of my premiership, insurgency was one of the major threats to national unity and development. The Government's attempt to put an end to insurgency by peaceful means finally yielded tangible results. For several years now, Thailand has thus become a more secure and harmonious society, enabling us to devote national resources and efforts towards needed areas of development.

Another crucial factor is the state of our domestic politics. Political commentators have been known to cite the number of constitutions we have had over the past 56 years as evidence of Thailand's unstable democracy. For the past 10 years, however, there has prevailed just the one set of rules as laid down in the 1978 Constitution. This continuity has been instrumental in strengthening our democracy and our political process. In all fairness, it cannot be denied that democracy is now firmly rooted in the Thai society. Attempts to bring about changes by force have been staunchly resisted by the people and have proven unfeasible, unwelcome and of no avail. We have indeed learned to respect and work within the constraints and framework of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy.

Given this constitutional framework, what were the priorities that we set for ourselves in the task of developing the political process? In this, we had but to be guided by the very basic tenet of democracy prescribing the widest possible popular participation in the democratic process. This does not mean merely the formal exercise of voting rights at election times. It also means the decentralization of decision-making so that the people may have their due say in the formulation of policies affecting their lives and the development of their livelihood and localities. Moreover, for this participation to be meaningful and effective, it must entail the climate of

an open society in which the freedom of expression is respected. On this score, the Government's record over the years is already well known.

In looking at the development of our political process and political institutions, it is important to recognize that such developments can by no means be an end in themselves. Any development, however attractive it might appear at a given time, should also conform to the interest of overall political stability. That stability can only be nurtured and secured by an unwavering adherence to the ground rules. Hence, it has always been my conscious effort to ensure that the conduct of Government is always in conformity with such prescribed rules.

As observers of the Thai political scene, you will have noticed the ongoing debate, often lively and uninhibited, on the direction of our political process, in particular, on whether basic changes are required. Strong views are held on the merits and shortcomings of things as they now stand. Such debates and earnest soul-searching are of course to be welcomed as befits a democracy that Thailand is. However, if changes are to be made, they are, in my view, issues of such fundamental importance that they should properly fall within the exclusive domain of Parliament and be made subject to the will of the people as expressed through their elected representatives.

An overall picture of the Thai political scene would suggest that the necessary foundations required for further development are now in place. The conviction has grown that democracy, as a way of life and government, can be made to work in Thailand. Any radical departure from it would be quite unacceptable. Such conviction is complemented by a recognition of the need for wider popular participation as well as the need for overall stability, with Parliament serving as the vehicle for changes of a fundamental nature. With the prevailing climate of an open society conducive to initiatives and innovation, Thailand is politically well equipped to deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

### **Foreign Policy**

Thailand's foreign policy, in essence, serves as an extension of her domestic policy. Its formulation is dictated by the desirability to see the country more secure and develop to her full potential. The progress of the nation cannot be separated from its foreign policy and international environment. In the world of increasing interdependence, our economic development depends more than ever on the outside world. Thai foreign policy must, therefore, be geared to support her economic growth through the promotion and maintenance of an international peaceful environment.

The recent developments in relations between the two superpowers, namely the United States and the USSR, have given rise to some fresh new hope. Their summits reassured the world of the confluence of their desire for a peaceful international environment. Several significant developments which were inconceivable in the past have taken place in different regions of the world, in an attempt to bring about peace, be it in Afghanistan, the Balkans, or Central America, to name but a few.

Thailand realized the necessity to turn this opportune environment into something positive for the solution of the Kampuchean problem. In May this year I travelled to Moscow and held talks with the Soviet leadership. I was gratified to attain the assurance of their expressed willingness to help contribute to a political solution of the Kampuchean problem, the elements of which include total withdrawal of foreign troops from Kampuchea; national reconciliation among all Kampuchean parties; exercise of right to self-determination by the Kampuchean people leading to the emergence of a neutral, independent and non-aligned Kampuchea, posing no threats to any of her neighbours.

Of late, however, concerns have been expressed by many quarters over the role of the Khmer Rouge and the future of Kampuchea. On this point, I wish to reiterate what I have already spelt out at the opening of the 21st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, that those concerns shall be adequately taken care of if the proposal for an international peace-keeping force is given serious consideration by all parties concerned.

Thailand will spare no effort in contributing towards the resolution of the Kampuchean problem and the creation of a peaceful environment beneficial to the economic development and co-operation of all countries in the Southeast Asian region. In particular, we have striven to strengthen regional co-operation both economically and politically with the ASEAN countries. The Third ASEAN Summit, which I attended last December in Manila has intensified our economic co-operation and efficiency by taking concrete steps to increase ASEAN competitiveness and to be more open to trade and interaction with the outside world. The measures adopted at that summit emerged most timely as we are about to enter the Pacific era. Soon the economic dynamism of the Pacific countries will render the region an important economic area of the world. Thailand and ASEAN countries look forward to meeting the challenges and partaking of the opportunities in the coming Pacific Century for the betterment of their respective peoples in the interests of peace, progress and prosperity in this region.

SOURCE: *Bangkok Post*, 16 July 1988.

## **SAP Aims to Fulfil the People's Hopes**

*Excerpts from a speech delivered by Foreign Minister Air Chief Marshall Siddhi Savetsila at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand on 20 July 1988.*

And in the world beyond our borders, steady progress has been made in building a peaceful order. ASEAN has come of age, and will soon transform itself into an organization of economic co-operation as envisaged in the Bangkok Declaration.

Meanwhile, Thailand has been busy initiating the construction of a new system of international relations. We have succeeded in winning friendship and goodwill from far and wide. Closer to home the spearpoint of aggression appears to have been blunted, the Vietnamese are going home and the end of agony may well be in sight in Kampuchea. . . .

. . . All this has not come easy, especially in view of rising protectionism. Even then, the world marvels at Thailand's success in breaking it. But we are not alone and we know that solitary efforts will not suffice. The developing countries can no longer afford to pursue incompatible economic and trade policies vis-à-vis the developed countries. To this end ASEAN has been quite useful. The ASEAN Summit in Manila last year demonstrated the member countries' determination to achieve an unprecedented co-ordination of their national economic policies. This will make each and every one of the ASEAN countries an economic factor in its own right. Nothing would better foster peace and stability in the region than a strong ASEAN that is united politically and economically.

All these efforts at home and in the region have added a special meaning to Thailand's role in the world. Thailand's international outlook was fundamentally changed when it became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 1984. By then there was no mistake that Thai foreign policy was acceptable to all, including the major powers.

### **First Task**

When I assumed the office of the Foreign Minister, my first task was to turn around the relationship between Thailand and the United States. This we succeeded and we turned next to China. Before long the relations with China were on solid ground, and Peking became one of Thailand's trusted friends and allies. We were already on the high road of repeating the performance with the Soviet Union before Parliament was dissolved. We were able to do all these things because there is a resilience in Thai foreign policy. Of course not all of the major powers see everything in the

same kind of light, but Thailand has never let it be a stumbling block in developing relations with all of them.

And that is the challenge which I will take up if I am to return as Foreign Minister: improvement of Thai-Soviet relations. We have long noticed that Moscow is changing. The Soviet Union has no direct conflict of interests with Thailand. It is a major influence on Vietnam and is already contributing to peace and stability here when Moscow convinced Hanoi to withdraw from Kampuchea.

But the most important single factor in ensuring peace in this region will be none other than Thailand's relations with Vietnam itself. The issue of how to deal with Vietnam has been a central feature of Thai foreign policy for almost three decades. Our nightmare has been that Vietnam, after consolidation, might seek to spread its control to neighbouring countries, which it did in Kampuchea. So the policies of successive Thai governments have been designed to prevent Vietnamese expansion, but also of late to build a pattern of relations in which Vietnam might acquire the tendency for self-restraint and eventually co-operation. Now, as my colleague the Singaporean Foreign Minister has said, our patience is being rewarded. In my recent meeting with Mr Nguyen Co Thach, there have been encouraging developments in this regard.

As far as the Kampuchea problem is concerned, I would say at this point that all is not lost. Prince Sihanouk's abrupt reversal might set the clock back a bit, but it will not completely torpedo the peace plan painstakingly mapped out by ASEAN. After all, it will be Vietnamese sincerity which must be shown if they are interested in the solution. Mr Nguyen Co Thach has said that he and his Laotian colleague would attend the Jakarta meeting if the terms stipulated in the Ho Chi Minh communiqué are adhered to. There is no reason to doubt as to why this should not be so.

For the most part, we can safely say that Thailand has done the best it could. We have striven for a revolution in Thai foreign policy so that this country would earn its rightful place in the international community. It is a foreign policy that envisages a new international order that would reduce lingering enmities, strengthen friendship, and give new hope to all emerging nations. There can be no more worthy goal than this. That is why Thailand has a moral obligation to engage Vietnam in the settlement of this and other problems, and to push back the shadow of confrontation.

We cannot speak for Prince Sihanouk and will not try to predict what would be the best course to follow in this regard. But I would say that few things contribute more to peace in Kampuchea than Vietnam actually withdrawing its troops. Hanoi is already doing this and we will continue to keep faith. At the very least we have shown that Thailand

has missed no opportunity to achieve concrete solutions and to construct a network of co-operative agreements in a variety of functional areas which will be of mutual benefit when peace returns to Kampuchea.

SOURCE: *Bangkok Post*, 21 July 1988.



## Reminiscences\*

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DR THANAT KHOMAN, *Foreign Minister of Thailand (1959–71), on ASEAN.*

ASEAN, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, was born out of hope — the hope for peace, prosperity and progress in the Southeast Asian region.

It was born out of a confrontation or, to use the Indonesian technical term, “*konfrontasi*”, pitching Indonesia and the Philippines on the one hand, against Malaysia, over a territorial dispute concerning the colonial legacy of North Borneo or Sabah. The region then was on the verge of a war, with Indonesian commando raids launched against Malaysia and British warships as Malaysia’s ally cruising off the Indonesian coast. Thailand, the only non-involved member of ASA (Association of Southeast Asia), grouping Malaysia and the Philippines and the forerunner of ASEAN, had to dispense its good offices to try to bring about reconciliation between its two feuding partners. After many attempts, the efforts succeeded when the leaders of Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia decided to come to Bangkok, probably in recognition of the role for peace and harmony played by Thailand. Fortunately, after a few days’ negotiations, they put the seal of approval on their reconciliation.

As Thai Foreign Minister then, I stood at the back stage but was kept informed of the discussions. When final agreement was reached, the parties offered a banquet to celebrate the event. I was seated at Adam Malik’s side. He was then Foreign Minister and Vice President. I took that occasion to broach the idea of forming a new organization for regional

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\* Editorial Note: We shall carry interesting contributions from former statesmen and other distinguished persons under this column from time to time.

co-operation to replace the defunct ASA. Malik unhesitatingly agreed but asked for time to normalize Indonesia's relations with Malaysia which were ruptured during the Confrontation. Then and there, the seed for the creation of ASEAN was born. Thus ended the critical episode and the region of Southeast Asia was turned from the verge of war to the pursuit of friendly co-operation.

A few months later, everybody was ready. Singapore, having heard of the news, sent Rajaratnam to see me and requested to be admitted to the new organization. Then the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore came to join me in Bangkok. After a brief official welcome, we moved to Bangsaen, a small seaside resort on the Gulf of Thailand, to work out the Charter for the new regional body. After a few days of discussions over the draft prepared by the Thai Foreign Office, interspersed by tasty repasts and a few games of golf which unfailingly produced beneficial effects, agreement was reached. The ASEAN Charter was finalized and owed its name to Adam Malik who received a commemorative trophy for coining it. Finally, the text was publicly proclaimed on 8 August 1967, as the Bangkok Declaration.

Thus, after being conceived at Bangsaen, a brand new child came into the world under the sign of regional co-operation. It was, indeed, a historic and unique event for Southeast Asia, a "Balkanized" region where Western nations had carved out their colonies and protectorates during the epic period of imperialistic expansionism. For the first time an indigenous Asian regional organization was initiated within the community for the nations of the area to help themselves.

However, the event was not looked upon with favour by everybody. The European communists, as is their wont, branded it as a front for American imperialism, drawing probably from their experience of the Warsaw Pact. Even locally, it was berated by the local press as insignificant because the organization comprised only small and weak nations, which showed how enlightened and knowledgeable the press can be.

In spite of this hostile or simply tepid welcome, ASEAN took firm roots in the Southeast Asian ground. Its objective is to institutionalize co-operation in all fields, except the military, because of the unhappy experience with SEATO or Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, which dismally failed on account of divergent interests between the European members and the rest. This time, the emphasis would be on economic and other non-military activities as the members lacked military potential. They also realized that a collective political defence system would be more suitable to existing conditions than the military one, and more likely to yield concrete results than the other.

Effectively, economic co-operation among members produced some

results, though not particularly impressive. Negotiations were conducted on trade, tariffs, quotas and also economic and technical co-operation with the European Community, the United States, Japan, Australia, etc., obtaining here and there some limited satisfaction but nothing earth-shaking. However, within the organization, intra-regional trade and economic as well as industrial joint projects made little headway, because of exacerbated nationalism shown by technocrats laying the groundwork for their political superiors. Moreover, certain members on several occasions have displayed a bazaar rather than co-operative spirit by insisting on taking more than giving, as evidenced in the case of industrial joint ventures and a few others. In this connection, some members of *Asiaweek* magazine's Economic Board have expressed the opinion that, on the economic side, ASEAN "isn't working at all" while others have conceded that there has been some "moderate achievement". Also, there is no common market in the making. The panelists attributed this to "political and cultural differences between member states and different states of economic development they have so far attained", a prognosis which is somewhat different from mine.

Surprisingly, achievements have been more noteworthy on the political side. After the Vietnam debacle, the United States washed its hands off Southeast Asia by the enunciation of the so-called Guam Doctrine. The region, and particularly Thailand which allowed its soil to be used by U.S. armed forces during the Vietnam War, were left high and dry at the mercy of the Vietnamese communists who, with their Soviet allies, celebrated their victory by promptly filling the vacuum created by the U.S. withdrawal. Western pundits then, in a chorus, began launching the so-called "domino" theory whereby Thailand and other non-communist countries in the region would go down to their doom and would be swamped over by the Vietnamese communist tidal wave. These birds of evil augury did not reckon with the young and innocuous organization, ASEAN, which, incidentally, profited enormously from Vietnam's raucous threats and militancy. They helped consolidate it. Barehanded and alone, ASEAN stood firm against the vociferous menace from the Indochinese communists. With its calm fortitude, it reduced Vietnam's provocations to impotency.

The advocates of the "domino" theory could hardly believe their eyes and yet ASEAN had done it, not with the lethal weapons of the West but with diplomacy and political measures. Of course, it must be admitted that the People's Republic of China's indirect support by teaching now and then some object lessons to Vietnam and occasional stern warnings from the United States were helpful in calming the latter's ardours and bellicosity. Nevertheless, and even with such useful support, ASEAN has performed a small miracle in maintaining stability in the region without

outside intervention and without giving the opportunity for a major conflict to erupt. This goes to show that Southeast Asian nations have reached maturity and the organization they have set up has fulfilled its purpose and objective, that of looking after and taking care of their own affairs, thus preventing outside interference. The world at large must have been impressed by ASEAN's unexpected success, for they began to seek contacts with the Organization thereby recognizing its viability and effectiveness in dealing with delicate and dangerous situations. This should not come as a surprise as the sources of important raw materials, from oil to minerals and foodstuff are located in ASEAN members' territories. These countries also occupy strategic locations controlling vital passageways through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok which link the two great oceans, the Indian and Pacific oceans. These factors and some others compel the nations of this area to become willy nilly involved in global considerations and entanglements.

This situation has been further complicated by Vietnam's decision to allow the USSR to make use of military and naval "facilities" at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay thus introducing a new dimension of danger into the Southeast Asian picture. Not content with the military foothold in Vietnam, the USSR is also enlarging its presence in Kampuchea by equipping the port of Kampong Som with modern facilities for use both in times of peace and conflict. The objectives pursued by the Soviet Union are not too difficult to define. First, the Soviet presence serves to exert pressure on China's southern flank. Next, it helps it to control and worse, in times of crisis, to interdict the traffic through the Straits of Malacca, a vital sea lane for Japan and other East Asian countries and a crucial link between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Then, it can cast an ominous shadow, particularly from Kampong Som, over the free countries of Southeast Asia. This new facility must be considered a god-sent opportunity for a country like the USSR which believes and outspokenly affirms that military means and intimidation should and would be resorted to when diplomacy fails to achieve the desired result. As this presence increases, so does the threat to peace and stability in the region. For the introduction of this new danger, Vietnam bears a full and heavy responsibility. The ASEAN countries, for their part, have to face the prospect of becoming involved very much against their will and wishes, a prospect that has become a distinct reality.

From then on, after the Soviets were installed in Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay with the permission of the Vietnamese who bargained away their sovereignty for arms and money to launch the Kampuchean campaign of conquest and annexation, the whole of Southeast Asia, the ASEAN area included, has been turned into a potential arena for rivalry, contest

and possible conflict, first between the proxies of the PRC and the USSR and then, God forbid, between the principals themselves. However, that is not the final act of the game; the real ultimate goal is the final contest which may, or hopefully may not, materialize between the two superpowers on the global basis. That is the danger lurking beyond the horizon which is too frightful to envisage and which pessimistic but realistic minds cannot easily exclude. Can ASEAN avoid being trapped in this deadly merry-go-round?

This is what ASEAN governments had at the back of their minds when they, and particularly the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, the late Tun Abdul Razak, tried to rally support for declaring this region a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. The idea was endorsed by all ASEAN members including Thailand on whose behalf I signed the Proclamation. Then missions were sent to all the capitals of the major powers to enlist their support and approval. The result was mixed and by no means conclusive, as there appeared to be a nuance of reticence or reservation on the part of certain parties to whom the approach was made. In this instance, and drawing from the international experience in other parts of the world, neutrality will be effective only if other nations, not merely those concerned, are willing to respect it; otherwise it is absolutely meaningless. Belgium, in particular, whose proclaimed neutrality was violated twice in two World Wars, stands out as a striking example.

On the other hand, ASEAN's energetic efforts to find a political solution to Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Kampuchea have gone beyond the regional scope although, basically, it is a local and regional problem. But since ASEAN, including Thailand, has been doing everything possible to avoid being involved in military operations and prefers to bring the issues to the United Nations forum, the problem has been shifted out of its regional framework and has assumed an international or global coverage. This was not meant to please Vietnam and its supporters, notably the Soviet Union, who would rather put a regional lid on this question, knowing full well that world public opinion would throw its massive votes in support of the ASEAN Resolution on Kampuchea.

Modest by nature and inclination, ASEAN would be content with remaining a strictly regional organization. But with economic resources at world level, energy products, minerals and other primary commodities; with its strategic location serving as an air and maritime nexus linking two great oceans through which pass important industrial products, especially petroleum; and sitting in the middle of an area where regional and global rivalries are brewing, ASEAN cannot be contained within its narrow regional frame. World leaders, impressed by its measured, effective and cool-headed manner of dealing successfully with explosive problems,

began to cultivate relationships with ASEAN and gave it valuable support in its endeavours to maintain and preserve peace and stability with only its own indigenous resources, in a region racked by territorial, ideological and hegemonistic ambitions.

ASEAN's role for regional peace and stability has by no means ended. In fact, it has only begun. Nevertheless, past success warrants confidence in the future. With its abundance in material and human resources, with the valuable sympathy and support from hosts of peace and freedom-loving nations, all over the world, ASEAN will continue to succeed in its future missions. Even the ominous powerful Soviet presence in Vietnam and now in Kampuchea and Laos is not as terrifying as it looks. A quick glance at the long logistic supply line from Vladivostok will suffice to indicate that the Soviet position at Vietnamese bases is not quite invulnerable, especially in times of crisis or conflict. In fact, it could be rather precarious. In peace time, it may be useful for reconnaissance and surveillance of U.S. fleet movements in the Pacific and Indian oceans and, politically, it may serve the purpose of intimidation which is a current weapon frequently used by Soviet politics. But that may be about all that that power can hope for.

All these complexities point to the difficulties ASEAN will have to face in the time to come. More than ever, the nations of this region still have to play a tight and very cautious game. The crux of the problem lies in Kampuchea which should be prevented from erupting into a widespread conflict. While no political solution is in sight and the war which has lasted for more than six years will not bring victory to Vietnam, a political balance of non-communist powers should be fashioned to prevent the Soviets from throwing everything in and playing for broke, an eventuality which is not likely to happen. Neither are they ready to halt supplies to Vietnam, especially oil, arms and even poison gas without which the latter country cannot keep the war going. Vietnam, on its part, claims that without the support of China and Thailand, the Kampuchean resistance would have already been annihilated.

From the foregoing, it is hardly necessary to point out that the present situation in Southeast Asia, with ASEAN as one of the principal actors, is a sort of game of patience and perhaps also of wisdom. May its leaders then be endowed with both and foil the attempts at extending the shadows of war and of conquest and hegemony over this region. Militarily, Kampuchea is not the core of the problem but, rather, the resistance there against the Vietnamese colonial venture is deeply significant for the freedom and independence of the entire Southeast Asian region and, perhaps, of the rest of the world. That is why ASEAN had burst out of its narrow regional frame to immerse itself in the wider context. This is well understood by

the outside world, communist and non-communist alike. That explains why an overwhelming majority of UN members has sided with those who uphold peace and freedom and unmistakably condemned Vietnam in its neo-colonial venture in the former French Empire in Indochina. ASEAN cannot and will not abandon this vital struggle for its own sake and that of the entire region.

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# **SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS 1988**

## **CONTENTS**

### **THE REGION**

Southeast Asia in 1987: Hope Amidst Problems

*Bilveer Singh*

The Market Economies of Southeast Asia in 1987: Let Down by  
Agriculture

*Toh Kin Woon*

The ASEAN Summit of 1987: Searching for New Dynamism

*Donald Crone*

The Question of Privatization in the Market Economies of Southeast Asia

*Antal Deutsch*

### **BRUNEI**

Brunei Darussalam in 1987: Coming to Grips with Economic and  
Political Realities

*D.S. Ranjit Singh*

### **BURMA**

Burma in 1987: Twenty-Five Years after the Revolution

*Tin Maung Maung Than*

### **INDONESIA**

The 1987 Election in Indonesia

*Harry Tjan Silalahi*

The Indonesian Economy: Structural Adjustment after the Oil Boom

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*Gareth Porter*

(Continued on next page)

