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Unsettling questions: an introduction



*Communist Vietnamese-Lao-Khmer meeting (Photo: **KR Trial Web Portal**)*



Vietnamese troops in the wake of their invasion of Cambodia in 1979 to remove their former allies and instruments - the Khmer Communists led by Pol Pot - from power - *School of Vice*



Mr. Pham Van Dong and Mr. Heng Samrin sign Vietnam-Cambodia joint statement on August 25th, 1979 [under the late Ho's watchful eyes].

Smiling with you or smiling at you?

President Obama, leader of the free world seemingly unperturbed being flanked in this photo op by two of the world's most enduring faces of state repression today. To the president's left is Vietnam's Nguyen Tan Dung who brazenly puts on his favoured red tie to forewarn potential critics off his government's domestic prerogatives from well-publicised civil rights restrictions to entrenched Vietnamese influence in Cambodia. To his right is Hun Sen of Cambodia, a ruthless and brutal Machiavellian of the 'lower' variety; an unabashed opportunist who thrives on his own nation's engineered paralysis and upon the collective myopia of the international community or its unwillingness to place the concerns and aspirations of national citizens above geopolitics. The hot-headed "thin-skinned Hun Sen" [so dubbed by one former US Ambassador to the Kingdom in a leaked diplomatic cable] habitually reacts badly to being chided on his own conduct and record, and frequently gives vent to his injured ego and self-worth by launching verbal tirades against his better educated and mild-mannered critics -be they head of state or head of ASEAN [just ask Mr Vejjajiva and Mr Pitsuwan]- but even he appears to accept that his insolence and sense of immunity from criticisms have their limits when being rebuked on human rights issues on his own home front by the American president. I dare you? One suspects he dares not ... - *School of Vice* [image reproduced]

by **Anonymous Author**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the causes and sources of the continued suffering of the majority of the Cambodian people and the continued hold of power in Cambodia by the criminal regime of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). At the same time, the international community appears to also capitulate to Hun Sen's threats and manipulations. Cambodians are now in these death traps that are built by both the Vietnamese and our own people, and it will not be easy to get out of them.

It is hoped that by looking squarely into the causes and sources of this tragedy, future generations of Cambodians inside and outside Cambodia might be able to come up with new ideas in order to allow the Cambodian people to get out safely from these death traps.

Most Cambodians still blame the Vietnamese for all the disaster that befell on Cambodia since the 18th century. It is true that Vietnam has been trying to colonize Cambodia for almost three centuries. It is true that this colonialist policy of Vietnam continues until today. The invasion of Cambodia in 1978 was the most obvious and recent manifestation of that imperialist policy.

Despite the fact that the invasion of Cambodia was acknowledged by the international community as an act of aggression and Vietnam was overwhelmingly condemned for that action at the United Nations, Vietnam succeeded in installing a subservient government, the CPP before withdrawing.

More importantly, it has succeeded to turn the table around in its favor by judiciously playing the Khmer Rouge card, and by using and enhancing its own image as victim of foreign aggressions. Although, Cambodia has also been a victim of one of the worst holocausts in modern history, the Cambodian people are not viewed as victims of a foreign aggression but rather of their own making.

For instance, Vietnam fought against France, China and the United States and very successfully. While in Cambodia, Sihanouk gave permission to the US to carpet bombing the Eastern part of Cambodia without informing those who lived in that area, and while the CPP allowed the Vietnamese army to invade Cambodia in order to save their own skin. These events showed that Cambodians are insensitive to the well-being of their own people, and therefore, from the international community's point of view, they are not victims of any foreign aggressions. On the contrary, Vietnam has become not the invader of Cambodia, but its liberator.

At this point, it is interesting to ask the following questions

1. Why did the international community remain almost indifferent to this Vietnamese imperialist policy?
2. Why did the international community continue to bend backward to support the criminal regime of Hun Sen and the CPP, despite its continued gross violation of human rights and naked abuses of democratic principles and civil society?
3. Why are Cambodians not able to behave more like victims rather than victimizers? Are cultural isolation and intellectual disconnection the main causes of this bad image of Cambodians?
4. And if Cambodians have such a bad image, how are they going to do to changing it?