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THE FUTURE OF CAMBODIA

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NEITHER Lon Nol nor President Nixon has left Cambodians any alternative to armed struggle and revolution—a struggle and revolution whose object is to enable our people to regain their freedom, our nation to recover its dignity and our country to become independent again.

Before taking up the fundamental questions regarding my country which are of especial interest for Americans, I would like to cite some significant American statements about “the Cambodian tragedy.”

In an address to the U.S. Senate on “the Cambodian tragedy” on April 16, 1970, Senator Mike Mansfield said: “What was for a decade and a half the only oasis of peace in Indochina has been turned into a bloody battlefield in the space of one month. . . . The conflict already involves the potential of an ugly genocide by government-stimulated mob action against the several hundred-thousand Vietnamese civilians—for the most part farmers, fishermen and tradesmen—who come from both North and South Vietnam and who have lived for decades in reasonable peace in Cambodia. In short, the Pandora’s box which was held shut by the leadership and diplomacy of Prince Sihanouk is now wide open. For years Cambodia was in the eye of the Indo-chinese hurricane; now it is swept up in the full fury of a racial, ideological and militarist storm. . . . We do know, or ought to know on the basis of experience that even with a massive infusion of American equipment we are likely to have minimal constructive effect on that upheaval and we will open the door to another destructive impact on our own national interests.”

Like an echo to Senator Mansfield’s warning, *The New York Times*, in an editorial the next day, wrote: “Evidence of govern-

ment-inspired mass murder of Vietnamese civilians living in Cambodia should provoke second thoughts in Washington about the stability as well as the morality of the régime that recently displaced Prince Sihanouk in Phnompenh. Evidence of appeals to the ancient prejudices of the Khmers against a neighboring people is a sign of desperation on the part of a government trying to shore up a shaky political base."

Thirteen days after the publication of this editorial President Nixon ordered United States armed forces stationed in South Vietnam to invade Cambodia, and permitted the armed forces of the Saigon Generals Thieu and Ky to accompany them in order, he said, to wipe out the "Vietcong sanctuaries" there.

In appraising that invasion, Senator William Fulbright declared, on May 28, 1970: "The administration now apparently intends to sustain an indefinite full-scale military intervention by proxy in Cambodia. . . . It is equally clear that the purpose of this proxy military campaign is not merely to eliminate communist border sanctuaries . . . but to sustain the feeble Lon Nol military régime in Phnompenh."

The "communist sanctuaries" in fact occupied an infinitesimal part of Cambodia before Mr. Nixon's invasion, occupied a third of the country in the course of the invasion and occupy up to two-thirds of the country in the wake of the withdrawal of the U.S. troops (not accompanied, however, by the withdrawal of the South Vietnamese troops of Thieu and Ky).

II

Neither Lon Nol nor President Nixon, who decided to support him in order to keep his dictatorial régime in power at all costs, wants Cambodia to return to independence, neutrality, territorial integrity and democracy. I am sorry to have to say it, but I must: the United States does not think of "independence" and "democracy" for its satellite countries in the same way it thinks of independence and democracy for itself.

At Phnompenh, the Lon Nol group illegally deposed me for "betrayal of democracy." Without the sanction of any constitutional provision whatever, the Phnompenh parliament, in complicity with Lon Nol, set itself up as a "people's tribunal" to judge me, while preventing me, at the same time, from returning to Cambodia and answering the various accusations that the parliament made. According to our constitutional laws, the

humblest citizen has the right to defend himself in court, and the Cambodian state has no right to exile Khmer citizens. As far as the Chief of State is concerned, the Constitution even specifies that "his person is sacred and inviolable."

Immediately following my deposition there were peaceful demonstrations in my favor almost everywhere in the country. Lon Nol savagely put down the demonstrators by force of arms; his soldiers and even his tanks massacred them pitilessly by the hundreds.

In this connection I can cite the following testimony of American and British correspondents:

T. Jeff Williams (Associated Press [AP], March 30): "First-hand evidence gathered in Cambodia's provinces by the Associated Press shows that it is organized Sihanouk supporters who are ready to march on the capital, not Vietcong troops. . . . This has brought the army into confrontation with the Cambodian people in several instances and many Cambodians have been killed."

Anton Wills-Eve (Reuters, April 1): "Witnesses said that government troops met the rebels with a hail of machine gun fire, cutting down everyone in sight and leaving many dead on the road as an example to others not to rise up in support of Prince Sihanouk. An eye witness described the rebels as peasants. . . ."

T. Jeff Williams (AP, April 3): ". . . Another violent demonstration . . . erupted. . . . The population staged a demonstration in favor of Sihanouk. Army troops . . . opened fire on the marchers, killing thirty by the official count. . . . In addition, the government is rounding up thousands of persons suspected of being . . . pro-Sihanouk. . . . Navy gunboats are anchored in mid-stream to guard against mass crossings by demonstrators attempting to reach Phnompenh. . . . A question often raised by observers here is why the government is permitting its troops to shoot its own people. . . ."

This testimony requires no comment, but my readers will also want to know the fate of the citizens arrested by the hundreds by the Lon Nol régime after the demonstrations described above. I therefore present the testimony of Jacques Doyon, of the French conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* (April 20, 1970):

"It will be recalled that the 'pro-Sihanouk' demonstrators who came from Kompong Cham on the 26th and 27th of March arrived in the thousands at the gates of Phnompenh and were

dispersed by rifle fire. . . . A number of people fled from the rain of bullets, in particular along the Mekong. They took refuge in Vietnamese villages, and the manhunt was on.

"It will be remembered that, as we have written, a good many of them, probably several hundred. . . . were imprisoned until April 10. Commencing on that day, according to the inhabitants of the area, river transport boats came to take on the prisoners. . . . To lighten the transports, the demonstrators were thrown into the water after being executed; some of them had their hands tied behind their backs."

It is facts like these which account for the creation of the National United Front of the Kampuchea, which brings together all the anti-fascist Cambodians—the non-communists whom the press calls "Sihanoukists" and the communists known as "Red Khmers."

III

Without waiting for the end of hostilities, Washington diplomacy has been very active in creating a "Phnompenh-Saigon-Bangkok-Vientiane Axis." Indeed, the Western press has been speaking of it quite openly of late.

It is an "axis," or, if you will, a "de facto federation"—the obvious objective of which is to keep the countries of the region in the "American camp" and to prevent their peoples from embracing communism or socialism. But the real question is whether such a "federation" can implant itself in the hearts and minds of the peoples concerned or whether it will not always remain an artificial creation of the United States, maintained by it, "at arm's length," by dint of dollars, artillery and bombs, as is the case of Cambodia at the moment.

The American people's ideals of freedom, democracy and independence are certainly worthy of respect. But is the Nixon government sure of defending these ideals in defending the régimes of Lon Nol and his kind in Indochina and in Southeast Asia in general?

The United States has valid reasons, certainly, for defending itself against the propagation of communism in Asia and most particularly in Southeast Asia, if one looks at it from the standpoint of the highest interest of the American nation alone, of its influence and its strategic position in the world. But it would be pure hypocrisy to assert that the United States is

defending the highest interests of the Indochinese peoples in preventing at all costs régimes like those of Lon Nol and of Nguyen Cao Ky from falling to communism, using for that purpose bombs and napalm, and an apocalyptic destruction of the countries and peoples concerned.

I am not and will not become a communist, for I disavow nothing of my religious beliefs or of my nationalism. But I know the Khmer people, the Vietnamese people and the other peoples of our region too well to believe that they can accept having the interests of reactionary, fascist, militarist and corrupt leaders imposed on them or accept having a great white power insist that for their own sakes they should take dictatorship in place of democracy and the satellization of their country in place of national independence.

In the eyes of rich bourgeois and feudalists, communism must seem terrifying. But in the eyes of peoples who are continually exploited by these bourgeois, these feudalists and these dictatorships which owe their strength solely to American protection, communism can only be, now and in the future, a deliverance. A deliverance, yes—because the problems of social injustice, of corruption, of militarist or bourgeois dictatorship, and of national independence, too (see the examples of China, North Vietnam and North Korea, which are incontestably independent), are being or will be solved thereby.

This is why the longer the United States insists on maintaining unpopular and pro-imperialist régimes in our countries, the more it will draw upon itself the hatred of our peoples and will, in consequence, build up both their revolutionary movements and their fighting solidarity.

In the face of the pro-United States "Phnompenh-Saigon-Bangkok-Vientiane Axis" there was formed, in April 1970, the "Axis" of the revolutionary peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, China and North Korea. The pro-United States axis will vanish the moment the Washington government stops supporting it with dollars, guns and bombs. But the common anti-imperialist front of the Khmer, Vietnamese, Laotian, Chinese and Korean peoples will survive it whatever happens, for even atom bombs will not be able to halt the revolution of the Asian peoples.

IV

How, one might ask, would I expect the traditional enmity

between Khmers, Vietnamese and Thais might be overcome in order to make such a federation possible?

Has not the Lon Nol régime, that new American ally, made a "brilliant demonstration" of the possibility—necessity being the first law—of reconciling, bringing together and "federating" his Cambodians with the Vietnamese of Thieu and Ky and the Thais of Kittikachorn and Charusathien? In spite of the exceedingly painful memory of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, were not the Japanese, too, able to reconcile themselves and ally themselves to the Americans, their "mortal enemies" of yesterday? And was it not the same with the French and the Germans? Then why should not the Cambodians, the Vietnamese and the Thais be capable of surmounting their long-standing mutual "repulsion"?

Notwithstanding the very recent genocide of Vietnamese in Cambodia, has not the pro-U.S. Phnompenh régime "carried off" brilliantly a "marriage of convenience" with the pro-U.S. Saigon régime? As the magazine *Newsweek* concluded in its July 13, 1970, issue. "Like most marriages of convenience . . . the alliance offered undeniable benefits to both sides."

To the "Sihanoukist" Khmers, the coup d'état perpetrated against me and against the policy of mine which Senator Mike Mansfield was kind enough to praise, as well as the intervention by the United States and its allies in favor of the fascist Phnompenh régime and its policy of abdicating national independence, left no alternative, on the national level, but to reconcile themselves to and make common cause with the "Red Khmers," and, on the international level, to ally themselves in a "common front" with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the revolutionary government and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the Lao Patriotic Front.

It is understood that after victory (which may be some time in coming, but which will inevitably be ours in the long run) each of our three peoples will be free to map out its own political and ideological line of conduct. On this subject, the "Joint Declaration from the Summit Conference of Indochinese Peoples" of April 25 is unequivocal:

The parties affirm their determination to safeguard and develop the fraternal friendship and good-neighborly relations among the three countries so as to give mutual support in the struggle against the common enemy and to cooperate in the future and on a long-term basis in the building of each

country following the road which it finds appropriate. In the relations among the three countries, the parties are determined to apply the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; nonaggression; mutual respect for each other's political régime and noninterference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; peaceful coexistence.

Certain Western circles seem to be banking on racial antagonism between the Khmers and their neighbors to make it impossible for them to get together, so that they will thus always remain weak and will consequently feel the need to have themselves protected by a Western imperialist power.

Now, President Nixon's policy of armed intervention in Cambodia, his "Vietnamization" and "Asianization," has had the effect of throwing, on the one hand, the fascist, pro-imperialist Khmers into the arms of the anti-communist Vietnamese, and, on the other hand, Khmer progressives and peasants into the arms of the Vietnamese socialists. It is with good reason that *Newsweek* calls this new phenomenon a "marriage of convenience."

But one should not exaggerate the extent and intensity of racial antagonism in the past between the Khmers and their neighbors. Senator Mansfield quite justly observed that before the "genocide by government-stimulated mob action against several hundred-thousand Vietnamese civilians," the two peoples of supposedly antagonistic races "lived for decades in reasonable peace in Cambodia." Now and in the future, the one problem that weighs and will weigh most heavily in the balance will be that of the behavior of each of the two Vietnamese "camps" with regard to the Khmer people. Our people will be "with" or "against" the Vietnamese in so far as the latter are or are not "correct" toward them.

On this subject, I think my readers will be interested in the following reports from American correspondents.

Robert C. Miller (UPI, Phnompenh, July 5): "The confused Cambodian civilians are being raped, robbed and hit over the head by their South Vietnamese allies. . . . The misbehavior of some of the 25,000 South Vietnamese marines, soldiers and sailors in Cambodia poses a new—and, many Cambodians believe, the most dangerous—threat to the Lon Nol government. . . . On the contrary, every Vietcong and North Vietnamese trooper is a walking ambassador of goodwill to the Cambodian noncom-

batants. They are following to the letter the same rigid policy laid down in China by Mao, namely, 'be nice to the peasants, for they are your strongest allies.' "

As for the Cambodians in communist-controlled areas, the French magazine *L'Express* writes, in its issue of July 5, 1970, the following: "An exceptional witness . . . saw them: Richard Dudman [of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*] taken prisoner by the Vietcong in May, with two other American journalists, and released last week: 'In the hamlets, fists raised against the Americans. Everywhere, a spontaneous coöperation between the peasants and the Cambodian guerrillas, as well as the North Vietnamese or the Vietcong. . . . The common fear of the bombings and the irruption of war following the American and South Vietnamese intervention have cemented the tacit alliance between the people of the rice-paddies and the guerrillas.' "

v

Might some or all of the states of Indochina be neutralized after the war? This question was answered for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the international agreements signed at Geneva in 1954 and 1962.

As far as Vietnam is concerned, it was specified in the agreements of 1954 that in 1956 the country would be reunified under a single government by means of general elections. President Ho Chi Minh, whom the whole Vietnamese people, communist and non-communist, considered their national hero (for he was the true liberator of his homeland from French colonialism), would have won these general elections handily if they had taken place. But the United States, citing as a pretext an (imaginary) "invasion by North Vietnam," intervened in force in South Vietnam to prevent the aforementioned elections from taking place, to perpetuate the division of Vietnam and to keep South Vietnam in the camp of the "free" world—that is to say, the American world.

According to the Geneva Agreements of 1954, South Vietnam was to be neutralized only between July 1954 and July 1956. After July 1956, it was to be reunited with North Vietnam and form a single state under a single government—communist if Ho Chi Minh won (and his triumph was beyond doubt), non-communist if the neutralists and anti-communists won. Knowing that if the Geneva Agreements were applied in both their letter and

their spirit South Vietnam would be lost to the "free" world, the United States decided, in 1955, to violate them. This led to the "Vietnam War" yesterday and is leading to the "Indochina War" today.

As for Laos and Cambodia, I can attest that the more the United States steps up its armed interventions or those of its allies in these two countries, the less chance there will be of their being "neutral" or "neutralized" in the future. And the more the United States and its allies support the régime of Lon Nol and prevent the National United Front of Cambodia from unseating it, the more they will push this Front and, in consequence, the Khmer people and the Cambodia of tomorrow into the Asian socialist camp (which now includes the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the People's Republic of China and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea).

Sihanouk's fall in Cambodia will not have had the same consequences for the United States and its "camp" as Sukarno's fall had in Indonesia, for it must not be forgotten that Cambodia is not an island far removed from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China: my country is their next-door neighbor.

VI

Even if the states of Indochina accepted communist ideology, would this necessarily involve accepting Chinese predominance?

China is certainly a very great power, in relation to which our three Indochinese countries seem miniscule. But having twice visited the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, I can say that that Vietnamese country is very independent with regard to China as well as to the Soviet Union. The political or physical presence of China there is almost imperceptible and in no way comparable to the American presence in Cambodia since March 18, 1970.

In Laos, China does not exert a perceptible influence, and its material and financial assistance to the Lao Patriotic Front does not call for any quid pro quo, political or other.

My country is separated from China by Laos and Vietnam. And the Chinese leaders have often explained to me that their country would have nothing to gain from making a satellite of Cambodia—quite the contrary.

By respecting Cambodia's sovereignty and making it a "show-

case" or "demonstration" of its respect for the principles of peaceful coexistence, China undoubtedly has more to gain in relation to the world and, in particular, the third world.

This said, it would be difficult indeed to prevent the Indochinese peoples from becoming "Maoists," that is to say, fighting to gain power for the people and sweep their countries clean of the gross capitalist feudalism and foreign imperialism which, coming from the West, opposes this power of the people by buying consciences and by arms.

In writing this, I am not, for all that, *communisant*, a fellow traveler.

If I am fighting in the camp of the Indochinese and Asian revolutionaries, it is because, on a personal level, I want to see justice done me some day after having been odiously calumniated and dishonored by the Lon Nol group; and because, on the national level, I must fulfill my duty as a patriot, a Khmer—and an Asian.

With Lon Nol and the armed intervention of the foreign powers that support him, my homeland and my people have lost everything—peace, dignity, independence, territorial integrity—and are immersed in the worst sufferings, the worst misfortunes and the worst catastrophe of their history.

In these circumstances I can only hope for the total victory of the revolution, in which I shall certainly not have my place but which cannot but save my homeland and serve the deepest interests of the mass of the "little" Khmer people.

As for the future relations of that people with the United States, they will once again become good as soon as Washington stops confusing the Lon Nol group with the Khmer nation and consequently stops helping it—directly or indirectly—to crush popular resistance.

This resistance cannot be crushed. If they are clearly understood, the long-term interests of the United States ought to impel its government to respect this resistance instead of treating it as hostile.