

CAMBODIA

SIHANOUK INTERVIEWED ON FUTURE PLANS FOR CAMBODIA

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[Undated interview with Prince Norodom Sihanouk given in Peking: "In a Few Weeks!"]

[Text] Now, 5 years after the CIA coup, could you outline the political and military situation?

Norodom Sihanouk: After 5 years of their war of aggression and colonization, the United States, which has already spent more than \$7 billion on this war, is forced to admit today, through its top leaders, Messrs Ford, Kissinger and Schlesinger, that the national resistance of the Cambodian people, that is, the NUFC (National United Front of Cambodia), the RGNUC (Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia), and the CPNLF (Cambodian People's National Liberation Armed Forces), is now in a conquering position.

On the military level, the Cambodian resistance controls absolutely all land and river communications.

Our most important victory is that won in the so-called battle of the Mekong.

Elsewhere, many of the enemy's strategic towns and positions in the regions of Phnom Penh and Battambang, Cambodia's second city, have been conquered and liberated by the CPNLF. Three-fourths of Lon Nol's elite soldiers have been eliminated since 1 January. Several thousand of his other soldiers, U.S. mercenaries, have been killed during the same period. Tens of thousands of other soldiers have been wounded or captured or have fled the so-called "Khmer Republic" to rally to the NUFC and settle in the liberated zone.

The enemy now faces an impasse: the impossibility of finding new "cannonfodder." In an attempt to replace the men of his decimated units, Lon Nol recently resorted to emptying his prisons, releasing civil law offenders and sending them to the front. After that he sees only a vacuum. Consequently, the frenetic Berlin-type airlift established by the United States, on the one hand between U Taphao (Thailand) and Phnom Penh and on the other between Saigon and Phnom Penh, and the new American financial, food, material and military aid granted to the Phnom Penh quislings have no chance at all of saving the hide of American neocolonialism in Cambodia.

The ineluctable and imminent victory of the Cambodian resistance is even being predicted, forecast and announced by President Gerald Ford himself and his secretary of defense, Mr Schlesinger. On the political plane, the Lon Nol clique is more isolated, hated and scorned than ever by the population and youth of his charlatan, corrupt "republic." Several student demonstrations hostile to Lon Nol's government have taken place in Phnom Penh and Battambang, the only cities where there is still a remnant of "life." The 10 or so other secondary towns still under the "control" of our enemies have been deserted by their inhabitants and have no activities other than military ones.

The CIA looks after the defense of these towns, having under its command Cambodian mercenaries, most of whom are of Cochinese origin (South Vietnam.) The few American congressmen who recently visited Phnom Penh have just admitted that the situation of the satellite "republic" is desperate and that any new American aid granted by Congress to Lon Nol's clique could do no more than maintain its survival for another 2 or 3 months.

What forecasts can be made for 1975?

Norodom Sihanouk: Without considerable new American aid, Phnom Penh, the enemy's last bastion, will fall in a few weeks. With considerable new American aid, Phnom Penh could survive for a few months. Our national resistance will, in any case, do everything possible to cut short our nation's suffering and put an end to American colonialism and its quislings in Phnom Penh before 1976.

What is the situation in the liberated zone?

Norodom Sihanouk: In the liberated zone the situation is excellent in every respect. The people's administration in the villages, communes, districts, provinces and towns is working with the enthusiastic support of all, including the monks. The "breaking-in" period of the RGNUC, all of whose ministers are inside the country, is completed. A national congress was held at the end of February and passed resolutions fixing once and for all, very clearly and judiciously, the present and future position of the NUFC and RGNUC with regard to national and international problems.

On the social, cultural and economic planes the NUFC has achieved great successes. In wartime, the liberated zones of our country have a rice surplus, while in the "Khmer Republic" several people of all ages die of starvation each day, despite Uncle Sam's daily gift of 600 tons of American rice. The NUFC and the RGNUC have totally repudiated the riel of the Phnom Penh regime and are offering the state and the nation of Cambodia a new riel as the national currency.

After the UN General Assembly, what are the conclusions of the RGNUC on the diplomatic situation?

Norodom Sihanouk: The UN votes on the Cambodia problem enabled us to see clearly which countries and governments are our real friends and which "do not like us." This is valuable for the policy and diplomacy which we will have to draw up on the international plane after the liberation of Phnom Penh so as to defend the higher interests of our homeland and our people in the international community.

Concerning the attitude of UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim we are satisfied with it, because despite the UN resolution urging us to negotiate a "pax Americana" with the Phnom Penh quislings, Mr Waldheim considers--rightly--that because of our refusal, there is no reason for him to go to Phnom Penh to try to set impossible negotiations in motion.

At the end of this year the United Nations will probably see the RGNUC regain its Cambodian seat without any debates or votes. The armed struggle and immense sacrifices of blood and lives by our heroic people will, I am convinced, succeed in enabling us to return to the United Nations by the front door and by our own efforts.

We will nevertheless remain eternally grateful to the 60 or so nonaligned and socialist countries, governments and peoples who are our friends and our staunch support in the darkest hours of our history.

Our victory on the battlefield and at the United Nations will also be their victory.

As for the other countries and governments which claim to believe in justice and freedom, and which have not thought it necessary to support us, I hope that they will soon recognize the fact that the war in Cambodia is not a civil war, that it is essentially a war of aggression, colonization and genocide by the United States and that the so-called "Khmer Republic" is nothing but a vile creation of American imperialism, incapable of living for a single instant without a massive injection of American aid of all kinds. I hope that they will begin to pay attention to the highly significant admissions made recently by President Ford and Messrs Kissinger and Schlesinger, according to which the Lon Nol regime is absolutely not viable without the long-distance support of the United States. And a victory by the Cambodian resistance will shake not only the foundations of the American empire in Southeast Asia but also throughout the world.

What is at stake in our struggle in Cambodia is therefore of capital importance for our Third World and for the rest of mankind. It is for those countries and governments who claim to believe in freedom, justice and peace to draw inferences from this concerning their inconsiderate attitude toward us while we give our life-blood for their future too.

After the ineluctable victory of the revolutionary Cambodian people, what will be Cambodia's relations with its neighbours and the other countries of the world, particularly with the great powers?

Norodom Sihanouk: Our policy and attitude vis-a-vis other neighbouring or distant countries will be thought out by taking into account, above all, their policies and attitudes toward us, particularly during the most difficult years of our national existence between 1970 and 1975. [paragraph continues]

After the liberation of Phnom Penh, we will make efforts to develop to the maximum our friendship, solidarity and cooperation with the 90 or so countries which showed themselves to be our reliable friends and firm supporters between 1970 and 1975.

The majority of these fervent friends are Arabs and Africans. Our Palestinian brothers are, of course, included.

But we will also make efforts to widen to the maximum our circle of friendships, regardless of differences of ideology or social system.

We will willingly maintain friendly and cooperative relations on certain planes, the economic plane for instance, with countries which truly respect our national independence, our territorial integrity, our ideological option and our foreign policy of nonalignment.

We will, of course, owe them reciprocity and total respect.

Concerning the great powers, their aid will be accepted only if it is absolutely unconditional and if it respects our dignity, like the aid from the PRC, and we will ask them to observe fully, in their relations with us, the rule of absolute equality between large, medium and small states and between rich and poor countries.

We point out, however, that we will always refuse to have any relations with Zionist Israel.

As for the so-called "governments" of Taipei, Seoul and Saigon, we will always consider them as mere creations of American imperialism and consequently we will have no relations with them.

On the other hand, the PLO is and always will be the state of Palestine to us. Its Phnom Penh representative will have the rank and privileges of an ambassador where our government is concerned.

Concerning the United States, we will have no official relations with it if it continues to grant aid and protection to the Phnom Penh quisling clique. Concerning Thailand, we will open relations with it only when, first, there are no more foreign military bases there, as these bases threaten our independence and peace; and second, it declares that it respects our territorial integrity, our common borders and Cambodia's ownership of the Preah Vihear temple, which was confirmed long ago by the International Court in The Hague.

Finally, concerning our Indochinese neighbors, we will totally implement both the spirit and the letter of the joint provisions of the resolution made jointly with us in April 1970 at the historic Conference of Indochinese Peoples.

What will be the needs of the liberated Cambodia, both immediately and after the restoration of peace?

Norodom Sihanouk: Immediately, we need: First, aid in American dollars or other strong currencies to buy from the officers and civil servants of Lon Nol certain articles which are necessary for the continuation of our national liberation struggle. Second, modern arms, including antiaircraft defense, and especially ammunition. Third, various medicines and surgical equipment. [paragraph continues]

Fourth, the recognition of the RGNUC by a greater number of countries claiming to believe in freedom, justice and peace, and stricter implementation of the resolutions concerning us of the Fourth Nonaligned Countries Summit Conference in Algiers. Fifth, approaches by all countries which believe in justice, peace and freedom to the United States to stop them from fanning the flames of war in Cambodia, that is to make them end their aid to the Lon Nol clique and all their interference in Cambodian affairs.

To tell the truth, we need the fourth and fifth more than the others. After the liberation, our ravaged and ruined country will need all kinds of aid for its national rehabilitation and reconstruction, particularly in the following fields: infrastructure, roads, bridges, economy, industry, agriculture, irrigation, electrification, posts and telecommunications, education, public health and social action.

Aid from all countries will be welcome, if it is absolutely unconditional.

Five years after the coup, what thoughts have you had from this experience?

Norodom Sihanouk: My experience will have been both very sad and very exciting. As far as my race is concerned, I could not have imagined before the 19 March 1970 coup that it could spawn individuals as abject, low, malicious, antipatriotic and incompetent as the Lon Nol people, and on the other hand heroes as fantastic as those among us who are about to totally conquer U.S. imperialism.

In addition, I have discovered with stupefaction how many foreign individuals and governments which I believed to be friends through thick and thin in reality were only enemies disguised as ardent friends.

On the other hand, my amazement has also been great on discovering so many sincere friends among the men, women and governments whose nobility of heart and soul, high and incomparable moral virtues, or even existence I had not conceived of before 18 March 1970. For me that is one reason not to despair of humanity.

Finally, what gives me the deepest satisfaction and a legitimate pride is the rebirth of the Cambodian people as a great people capable of incredible military exploits while enduring the most terrible trials and sufferings inflicted by a reputedly invincible colossal enemy.

In addition, the Cambodian people, whom U.S. imperialism has done and is still doing everything to completely eliminate, are not only still on their feet but are realizing what I believed could not be realized among us: a revolution forever eliminating those taints which dramatically handicap so many of the noncommunist countries of our Asia which know corruption, smuggling, prostitution, alcoholism, gambling and games of chance and other unhealthy pursuits.

Certainly in the tiny U.S.-Lon Nol enclaves among us, these taints and vices are at their height. But as the people of Washington have just rightly predicted, these Sodoms and Gomorrahns will be swept away in the weeks or months to come, thanks to the Khmer Rouge. I do not doubt it. The future of my country is brilliant. Out of this terrible trial by fire the Cambodian race, people and country will emerge regenerated and mature.

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