

7

A TIME TO HOLD FIRM ON CAMBODIA

TESTIMONY GIVEN BY

SHEPARD C. LOWMAN

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS
of the
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIR COMMITTEE

and the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY AND TRADE
of the
HOUSE BANKING, FINANCE AND URBAN AFFAIR
COMMITTEE

June 25, 1991

Một liên biến quan trọng trong công trình Việt Nam:

- Bà Khuê Minh Thảo tuyên bố nhiệm vụ của Hôi Gia Tĩnh Tư nhân chính trị Việt Nam đã Tam chu toàn. Hôi sẽ chấm dứt hoạt động kể từ Tháng Giêng 1992.

(Tư tử Hoa Thịnh Đốn) } Vào lúc 7:00PM ngày 27-07-1991,
Hôi 400 quan khách Việt-Mỹ đã quy tụ tại nhà hàng Harvest Moon (Virginia) để tham dự bữa cơm đồng tâm và Hôi Ngộ do Hôi Gia Tĩnh Tư nhân chính trị Việt Nam tổ chức. Trong bữa tiệc vẫn cảm động dài dẫu rằng, Bà Khuê Minh Thảo đã nỗ lực quá trình hoạt động rất cam go của Hôi trong 14 năm qua. Từ lúc ^{khởi đầu} năm 1977, cô tôn cho tôn khu vực sẽ chú ý, hợp tác, giúp đỡ của hầu hết các giới tầng nghành Lập pháp, Hành pháp Hoa Kỳ, các các Hôi Âm La Quốc tế và của Cộng đồng Việt Nam. Kết quả là ngày 30.7.1989 một thỏa hiệp đã được ký kết giữa chính phủ Hoa Kỳ và nhà cầm quyền (SVN) trong đó cho phép các viên tư nhân chính trị cũng gia đình được định cư tại Hoa Kỳ hay tại các quốc gia khác. Trong năm 1990 đã có 8981 viên tư nhân chính trị và gia đình định cư tại Hoa Kỳ và tính đến cuối năm 1991 sẽ có ít nhất 20.000 người sẽ tới Hoa Kỳ. Ngay ra Hôi cũng đã thành công trong việc vận động Bộ Ngoại giao Hoa Kỳ chấp thuận những đề nghị như sau:

- Cho phép quả phụ và con các các tư nhân chính trị bị chết trong tù được định cư tại Hoa Kỳ
- Cho phép ~~đầu~~ ^{của} vợ con các quân nhân VNCH bị sát tử ngày 30.4.75 được ~~được~~ định cư tại Hoa Kỳ.

Hôm nay Hôi đang cam thiệp với Bộ Ngoại giao giảm tiền chuẩn 3 năm xuống còn 2 năm rưỡi đồng thời ~~thỏa mãn~~ ^{thỏa mãn} nguyện ước ~~được~~ ^{được} cho phép các viên tư nhân chính trị ở tù trên một năm cũng được định cư tại Hoa Kỳ nếu trước đây nếu có tu nghiệp tại Hoa Kỳ.

Theo Bà Khuê Minh Thảo thì mục tiêu do Hôi đề ra nay có thể nói đã thực hiện được 80%. Tỷ lệ còn lại hy vọng Hôi sẽ hoàn tất vào cuối năm 1991. Do đó đây là dịp Hôi tuyên bố chấm dứt hoạt động. Mặc dầu đã được chuẩn bị tinh thần từ trước những hầu hết quan khách không dẫu được biết người xúc động khi nghe Bà Khuê Minh Thảo nói "Không có một cuộc chia

Mr. Chairman:

I would like to express my appreciation to you and the two Sub-committees for holding this hearing on the United States economic embargo towards Vietnam. It is a critical time in the attempt to negotiate a political settlement in tragic Cambodia. As increasing calls are heard for the lifting of the economic embargo against Vietnam, it is important that these issues, and the linkage between them, be debated publicly and fully.

I also express my appreciation for your invitation to participate as a member of this distinguished panel. Over most of the past twenty five years, I have followed refugee, human rights and political issues in Southeast Asia, as a Foreign Service Officer and later as a member of Voluntary Agencies concerned with refugee affairs. At my retirement from the Department of State, I held the position of Director of the Office of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia Affairs. Recently, I have joined the staff of the Migration and Refugee Service of the United States Catholic Conference as a Refugee Policy Analyst. However, the views expressed here today are my own.

As we approach this subject, today, I think it important to underline the obvious: in the relations of the United States with the states of Indochina, psychological, humanitarian and emotional factors play a significantly larger role in shaping our perception of United States national interest than in many other parts of the world. This is really not surprising when one looks at the factors that most influence our views on Indochina; a long and costly war which sparked a deep and divisive national debate, the long standing Indochinese refugee crisis which resulted in the resettlement of over a million Indochinese in the United States, the Cambodian holocaust and, thereafter, the continuing Cambodian civil war, with the brutal Khmer Rouge surviving to be used as an instrument of policy by those opposed to Vietnamese hegemony in Indochina. Each of these factors has had a substantial emotional impact on our national psyche. When taken together, this area of the world commands a much larger share of our attention and of our view of United States national interest than would seem warranted by its limited economic and strategic importance to the United States.

This is undoubtedly due to the weight that we give to these humanitarian issues. In this respect, it seems clear that the American people believe a major United States interest in Indochina is to fulfill our national obligation to assist the Khmer people to rebuild their shattered lives and their shattered land and to regain a state of relative tranquility, peace and freedom that has eluded them now for literally decades of terrible suffering. The trauma of our debate on the Vietnam war still makes us very wary of a pro-active policy in Indochina, but clearly this is an end that carries serious weight and asks of us the use of all of our available diplomatic, political and

economic levers to help it come to pass.

In achieving this end, there is little question that most of us would put at the top of our list the prevention of the return to power of the Khmer Rouge. The United States did not oppose policies permitting Khmer Rouge survival and their use since 1978 as an instrument of the policy to prevent Vietnamese consolidation in Cambodia. Surely, we now owe the Khmer people a solemn national commitment to prevent a recurrence of the genocidal period of 1975-1978.

At the same time, we have long condemned the invasion by Vietnam of its small neighbor in 1978 and its military occupation of Cambodia. There is a deep and abiding antagonism between the Cambodian and Vietnamese people which surely is the main factor in the survival of the Khmer Rouge, allowing them to portray themselves as the defender of the nationalist cause.

Because the Cambodian situation has long defined itself in military terms, this has presented a major dilemma for those seeking an outcome which meets the deeply felt desires of the Khmer people themselves. No one can seriously argue that either the return of the Khmer Rouge or the consolidation of the control of the present Phnom Penh authorities meets that test. Yet the great preponderance of military power and administrative authority lies with these two factions. We cannot allow such an unacceptable choice to be forced upon Cambodia but, to craft a third more acceptable choice that has a chance of surviving is a difficult task, indeed.

The answer of the international community has been the Perm Five Proposals of which the Committee is aware. Without going into great detail, these proposals involve a United Nations involvement well beyond its traditional peace keeping role and, indeed, well beyond anything it has undertaken in the past. The issue of Cambodian sovereignty is addressed through the creation of a Supreme National Council (SNC), made up of representatives of the State of Cambodia (Phnom Penh) and the three resistance factions, which in turn, would delegate to the United Nations the power to exercise certain critical administrative functions to insure political neutrality during a transition period until free elections could be held and a representative government formed.

Not surprisingly, negotiations on these proposals have been long and tortuous as has all change in Cambodia. Relative forces are fairly evenly balanced and the vital interests of the parties concerned are involved. Indeed, what is surprising is the degree of progress which has been made:

- An SNC has, in fact, been formed and has met a number of times.
- A Perm Five Framework Agreement for a United Nations based settlement was agreed upon by the principal sponsors of all of the Cambodian factions.
- This Framework Agreement was given status when representatives

học bổng tương lục cho các giới chức Hoa Kỳ huấn công.

Vào lúc 3 giờ chiều ngày hôm sau Chủ Nhật 28-08-1991

of the four Cambodian factions met in September 1990 and declared themselves the SNC.

- The Framework Agreement was endorsed on September 20, 1990 by the full Security Council.

- The Framework Agreement was endorsed by the General Assembly on October 15, 1991.

- This framework was expanded into a final working document (Final Document) by the Friends of the Chairmen, the principal nations involved.

- While the language of the Final Document is still being negotiated some progress continues.

- A cease fire which has been marred by violations but which represents a real reduction in hostilities began on May 1. At the current SNC meeting in Thailand the SNC members have agreed to extend this truce as an "unlimited ceasefire"..

No one can predict whether the Perm Five Proposals will ultimately be implemented. The Vietnamese have generally been reluctant participants in talks on Cambodia, as have the Khmer Rouge. Phnom Penh is raising numerous objections to the Final Document and both Hanoi and Phnom Penh take the position that both the Framework Agreement and the Final Document are subject to change. Early this year, the Secretary General's Special Representative and the two Co-Chairmen of the Paris Conference visited Hanoi to attempt to convince the Vietnamese to take a more cooperative attitude and to bring along Phnom Penh with them. Hanoi was entirely negative at this time, claiming it had no ability to influence Phnom Penh, stating that it had withdrawn its troops and a settlement was now a question for Cambodians to decide among themselves. The Vietnamese leaders added that Phnom Penh had substantial objections to the plan and implied that it was the documents which were at fault. This strongly suggests that Hanoi intends to, reopen negotiations, with the intention of sitting tight on the status quo.

With respect to Hanoi's ability to influence Phnom Penh, while, doubtless, the Vietnamese cannot simply order Phnom Penh to follow whatever course Vietnam wishes, there is little question that Hanoi can exercise very heavy pressures on their Cambodian colleagues. The two regimes have deep and extensive military, political and economic ties. There are thousands of Vietnamese advisors scattered throughout Phnom Penh's civil and military structure. And Phnom Penh is dependent on Vietnamese support in many ways; not the least as their potential rescuer in the event of a surge in Khmer Rouge power.

The other parties have made several efforts to meet Phnom Penh's concerns. The Secretary General's Special Representative wrote and presented an Explanatory Note, as an attempt to meet some of Phnom Penh's concerns; while not an amendment to the Final Document, this was an explanation of how the UN might be expected to go about implementing such a plan and was circulated together with the Final

Document as an UN document.

While the June 2-4 SNC Meeting left the structure of the SNC still undecided, Sihanouk announced immediately after the close of that meeting that he would replace one of the FUNCINPEC delegates on the SNC and become, for the first time, an active member of the SNC. Thus, he sidestepped, for the time being, the thorny question of the Chairmanship of the SNC. He then exercised the prerogatives of Chairmanship by calling a meeting of the SNC for June 24, 1991. All other members accepted and that meeting is presently underway.

Numerous problems remain, including prominently the continuing resistance of Hanoi and Phnom Penh to cooperating fully in the negotiating process. But the process is moving and, surely, it is our best hope at this time for an acceptable political solution in Cambodia. In light of our past involvement in Indochina and our involvement in the Perm Five process itself, the United States has an obligation to use every measure it has available to press all of the parties in the negotiation to cooperate and to support a fair and reasonable outcome. One of the strongest levers the United States possesses is the economic embargo against Vietnam. We should maintain that embargo with patience and persistence until an acceptable political settlement is reached in Cambodia.

Despite what some have come to believe, this does not amount to changing the rules in the middle of the game. When I was the Director of the Office of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the Department of State in 1986-1988, the formulation was, and has remained since, that the process of normalization with Vietnam would begin when the Vietnamese had withdrawn from Vietnam - "in the context of an acceptable political settlement in Vietnam". We did not define an acceptable political settlement at that time but, clearly, it would not have been deemed acceptable if the Khmer Rouge had returned to power or the Phnom Penh authorities had been confirmed in their control of the country. Acceptable was understood to mean acceptable to the Khmer people.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Chairman, that believe that the economic embargo against Vietnam should be maintained. However, I would also point out that I believe that the cost to American business of waiting is considerably less than is sometimes stated. For example, the figure of \$1.4 billion in new investment in Vietnam in 1990, which is often heard around town these days, is grossly misleading unless it is understood to refer to planned investment, most of which will be implemented years from now, if ever. Actual new investment going into Vietnam in 1990 probably amounted to about one tenth of that figure, if that. And, of that some \$140 million, numerous projects were in labor intensive light industry; areas in which American business is not very interested. Further, Mr. Chairman, this situation is not likely to change much over the next few years since the Vietnamese economy is simply not able to generate much in the way of investment or trade opportunities and is not likely to do so until further economic reform is implemented.

Many American businesses will concede that they do not expect to do

much business in Vietnam in the near future but argue that they need to get in on the ground and make contacts for the future. There is, of course, nothing to prevent any American business from visiting Vietnam now and holding extensive planning sessions for the future. But until the economy is able to make more rational economic decisions there will be relatively little lost by American business in waiting. And when that time comes, as surely it will, they are likely to find that the contacts they have made are, very often, not the contacts that they will need to operate in the new environment.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the argument is made that Vietnam is a terribly poor country and that its people are suffering terribly. This is true. And it is terribly sad. But American business can't turn that situation around. Once the economy reorganizes itself, American business and international trade can be a powerful assistance to development but that comes later. And as for the international financial institutions, even when the economic embargo is eventually lifted, great care must be taken not to simply load up future generations with crippling debt obligations through structural adjustment loans that only postpone necessary adjustments and infrastructure loans, made within a system that still has limited ability to make rational economic calculations, which produce little of value.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, for what I perceive to be exceedingly strong political and humanitarian reasons, I strongly urge that the economic embargo against Vietnam be maintained until a political solution, acceptable to the people of Cambodia, can be reached. I believe that this can be done within long standing policy with respect to United States/Vietnamese relations and at relatively little cost to American business.

Thank you.