

ASIAWEEK'S INTERVIEW WITH SIHANOUK ON UNITED FRONT

HK271100 Hong Kong ASIAWEEK in English 6 Mar 81 pp 16-20--FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

[Interview with Norodom Sihanouk in Pyongyang "last week" by Anthony Pauli; capitalized passages published in boldface]

[Text] ON WHY WE HAVE HESITATED TO MEET WITH KHIEU SAMPHAN: My compatriots are very, very anti-Vietnamese. Even the ones who are anti-communist, who are refugees in West Europe, the United States, Canada, are putting heavier and heavier pressure on me, to oblige me, force me, compel me to lead a united front including the Khmer Rouge. They are all quite well aware of the fact that the Khmer Rouge have the only efficient, well-organized army to fight the Vietnamese.

It would be very moral to form a government without the Khmer Rouge, but it would also be meaningless as far as fighting the Vietnamese is concerned. Why? Because we have small and weak nationalist units. There are 3,000 men belonging to the front of former Prime Minister Son Sann--not so well-equipped, not so well-led and not so courageous. They do not dare to fight the Vietnamese. They make a lot of propaganda for themselves, for Son Sann, but they have no great ability in the military field. And you have also the Moulinaka, of the late Kong Sileah. They are courageous, but they are very small.

ON THE LACK OF SUPPORT FROM WESTERN POWERS: In 1979 and the beginning of 1980 I went to West Europe, the United States and Canada. I tried to get not only moral support but material aid and, if possible, military aid from anti-communist countries like the United States. But they disgraced me completely.

France and the United States said to me, "Prince Sihanouk, we support you morally but we cannot help you in the military field. And we do not advise you to lead a military movement against the Heng Samrin regime, against the Vietnamese occupying Cambodia. You should concentrate only on social affairs, not on military affairs, and you should not form any coalition government. You should serve your people only in the humanitarian field, the social field." So I had to withdraw myself from politics, since I got no approval from the West, and especially from the United States.

ON CHINA'S CONDITIONS FOR SUPPORTING HIM: China let me know very clearly that she could not support me unless I cooperated with the Khmer Rouge. The condition--sine qua non--put by the Chinese vis-a-vis Sihanouk was this:

"You, Sihanouk--you can be head of state. You can be president or chairman of the united front, you can fight the Vietnamese, you can form a government if you agree to include Democratic Kampuchea, which is the protege of China. You, Sihanouk--you must cooperate very closely with the Khmer Rouge in the framework of the communist state of Democratic Kampuchea." I had discussions with the Chinese in 1979 until 1980 and the result was an unfortunate cooling of our relations. (laughter) After that I took refuge in Korea, because my best friend is, you know, President Kim Il-song.

Before, in China, I had two very good friends and plenty of comprehension vis-a-vis myself. They were Chairman Mao Zedong and, mainly, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. But the new leadership and I are not so closely linked. We are not close friends. Friends, yes, but not so intimate.

And now there is heavier and heavier pressure from my compatriots in West Europe, North America, even Thailand. Every week I get many letters from compatriots in refugee camps in Thailand and from compatriots who are fighting the Vietnamese on Cambodian soil, but close to Thailand's frontiers. The Moulinaka and other small groups have sent many, many letters to me, requesting me to re-emerge as a political figure and to lead a movement of anti-Vietnamese resistance for the liberation of our homeland.

ON HIS REPUTATION FOR BEING ERRATIC: It seems that I have always reversed my stand. It seems that I like to change my mind. But (sigh), my mind and myself don't depend completely on Sihanouk but on the other Cambodians. Sihanouk does not belong to Sihanouk. Sihanouk belongs to the Cambodian people, to the Cambodian nation, to the public opinion of Cambodia.

So, on the one hand, I sincerely think the Pol Potians do not deserve to be with us. I think we cannot solve the problem with the Vietnamese by force; The Vietnamese may be unpopular in Cambodia but the population prefers to be with the Vietnamese than to have the Khmer Rouge again as the government. On the other hand, the Vietnamese army is strong. They defeated the French Army in 1954 and in 1975 they completely wiped out the U.S. Army in Indochina. And how can we win, how can we win in a violent military confrontation with the Vietnamese? We may survive as guerrillas for many years. We may survive. But we cannot win; we cannot win. Sincerely, I continue to think like that.

ON HIS FEELINGS TOWARDS THE KHMER ROUGE: I cannot forget what the Khmer Rouge have done, not only against my people but against my own family. They have killed, they have massacred many children and grandchildren and sons-in-law of mine. [previous word in italics] And I speak of the ones who were loyal [previous word in italics] members of the United front with the Khmer Rouge.

After the war, in April 1975, my family and I decided to serve the Khmer Rouge, but the Khmer Rouge decided to wipe out the Cambodian royal family. So many have disappeared. Except for two sons of mine--Sihamoni, whom you see here, and Narindrapong, who is a Khmer Rouge, in a Khmer Rouge stronghold in Cambodia--except for my two youngest children, I have lost the others who chose to serve Democratic Kampuchea. They were sent to cooperatives and after a few months they disappeared. They disappeared from the cooperatives. And I can conclude that the Khmer Rouge killed all those children, grandchildren, cousins of mine. All have disappeared. I cannot forget that.

ON THE NEED FOR PEACE: I remember all my compatriots, and since my compatriots do not allow me to live in tranquillity here in Korea, I have to go to lead the resistance--but against my personal belief. My belief is this: My people need peace, not war! We have to help our people regain peace and tranquillity.

But since all the politicians, all the intellectuals and many other Cambodians--when they are not in the hands of the Heng Samrin regime or of the occupying forces in Cambodia--since they want me to fight, I have to fight. But to fight is to search for some efficient army to fight the Vietnamese, and the most efficient army remains the Khmer Rouge Army.

ON THE COMING NEGOTIATIONS: I must point out that we have not yet arrived at an agreement with the Khmer Rouge. Khieu Samphan and his delegation are coming here at the end of the month (February), and they will start negotiations. They say it is a great joy to them (laughter). In his message, Khieu Samphan said, "It is a great joy for us to hear that you, Prince Sihanouk, are determined to lead a united front to fight the Vietnamese."

But I am sure they are not ready to accept the main part of my conditions. I do not want my people to criticize me, to say, "Prince Sihanouk, you accept the Khmer Rouge? So you want the Khmer Rouge to kill us again, to massacre us again?" Already, in the Vietnamese press and the Soviet mass media, they are leading a big propaganda movement against me, saying that I want my people to be killed--to that last Cambodian--by the Khmer Rouge.

ON THE NATURE OF THE KHMER ROUGE: We have to get some guarantee from the Khmer Rouge. I know the Khmer Rouge; they are very dishonest. In 1970 we have a very good, very liberal, democratic political program for liberated Cambodia. Once Cambodia was liberated, we should have given our people liberty and many, many rights--a very good democracy. But what happened after that?

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The Khmer Rouge promised to maintain the national union between them and the non-communist Cambodians. But after we got the victory in April 1975 the Khmer Rouge violated all their promises. They killed even patriots who had participated in the resistance against the Americans. They suppressed all human rights, all liberties for our people. They violated the national program.

ON HIS POLITICAL CONDITIONS FOR A COALITION: It is just a dream, but suppose (suppressed laughter) the Vietnamese agree to withdraw. It is just a dream, but suppose...I want my people to be sure that if, eventually, the Vietnamese withdraw, the Khmer Rouge will not be able to kill them, to torture them. I want my country to be completely neutralized, under international control. I want to put Cambodia for many years ahead under the trusteeship of the United Nations. I want an international commission of control like the one we had in 1955. After the first international conference at Geneva we got a CIC, a Commission Internationale de Controle, with a neutral country as the chairman and a communist country and a Western country as members. Such a commission would have tripartite membership: a neutral country, a communist country--a Red country--and a Western country--a blue country, if I may say so.

ON THE NEED FOR A "PEACE-KEEPING FORCE": You would have the neutralization of Cambodia with an international guarantee, the putting of Cambodia under trusteeship of the United Nations for at least 5 or 10 years, not for a short time. And the sending into Cambodia of two things:

--First, the International Control Commission;

--Second, an international armed force, a strong armed force called the peace-keeping force.

The peace-keeping force should disarm all Cambodian armed units--the Khmer Rouge, Son Sann units, Sihanoukist units. That is my sine qua non, to let the people of Cambodia have some assurance of safety.

You can image this: After the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces, if the Cambodian armed forces are not disarmed, there would be a civil war--another civil war!--between the Khmer Rouge and the nationalists, between the Heng Samrin units...because the Vietnamese would withdraw but the Heng Samrin units would stay. We would have the Heng Samrin units, the Son Sann units, the Khmer Rouge units, the Moulinaka units, et cetera, et cetera. And also the warlord units, the pirates, the bandits--all armed!

ON KHMER ROUGE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES: Without a peace-keeping force and without disarmament of those Cambodian units, we cannot have peace. We cannot, naturally, have general elections. How can we have general elections now that the Khmer Rouge say, "We accept general elections under international supervision" (derisive laughter).

Once the Vietnamese withdraw, you can be sure the Khmer Rouge will be the only masters of Cambodia. They will wipe out within a few minutes all the other armed units.

The Khmer Rouge are the strongest. Compared to the Vietnamese they are weak, but compared to Son Sann's army, to the Moulinaka, to Heng Samrin's army, the Khmer Rouge are the strongest. And in a few minutes, a few days, they will wipe out all the other units and they will be the masters of the country with the same behavior vis-a-vis the people, the same brutal behavior vis-a-vis our people, that they showed from 1975 to the beginning of 1979.

[Text] ON THE OUTLOOK FOR THE PYONGYANG TALKS: I think we should not be optimistic about the result of the first round of negotiations between the Khieu Samphan delegation and Sihanouk in Pyongyang. They, I think, are not ready to accept my conditions. They fight in order to regain power, and they want to deceive us and deceive the world. They say (sarcastic tone): "Yes, united front, coalition government, and after the struggle with the Vietnamese we will have general elections for the people under international supervision." But you can be sure they will violate their own promises.

ON CHINA'S DEALINGS WITH THE KHMER ROUGE: Unless the Chinese have decided to compel the Khmer Rouge to accept my conditions, they may say, "For the time being we need Sihanouk. You may accept his conditions. But once the Vietnamese withdraw, you, the Khmer Rouge, can liquidate your partners like in 1975."

So we have to wait and see. We don't know what the behavior of the Khmer Rouge and China will be.

ON THE TIMING OF THE PYONGYANG TALKS: As far as I'm concerned, the right time for me to negotiate is not now. Now, I have [previous word in italics] to negotiate with the Khmer Rouge because--I have to repeat it--I am under such heavy pressure from my compatriots. It is very ironic: I am getting pressure not from the Khmer Rouge but from anti-communist Cambodians. But now is not the right time. The best time to deal with the Khmer Rouge will be after the dropping of the Khmer Rouge regime by the United Nations.

Time is working against the Khmer Rouge. Now, they are recognized by the UN, supported by more than 70 sovereign states. Formidable! So they can be very proud, and they will present themselves to me as the legitimate state and government of the Cambodian people. They will tell me, "Prince Sihanouk, we are recognized by the United Nations. We are supported by 74 UN members." But once the UN drops the Khmer Rouge regime, they will be just one party among other parties. Then they will be very weak, and China also will be weak as far as its Cambodia stand is concerned. China and the Khmer Rouge will accept my conditions. Then! Not now! I will be very surprised if China and the Khmer Rouge accept my conditions now.

ON CHINA'S PRESENT THINKING: China remains behind the scene, behind the Khmer Rouge. China is keeping very quiet, very silent, letting the Khmer Rouge go ahead to (see) Sihanouk.

So, we shall have a meeting here, and perhaps Khieu Samphan may stay a few days, or many days, to try to get me to surrender. (mirthless chuckle) But as far as surrender is concerned, I am also very tough. I am a tough negotiator--no less than Kissinger! I will not surrender. I will not surrender!

I will say to Khieu Samphan, "If you do not accept my conditions, we can adjourn our meetings and negotiations. We can wait for November." Why do I mention November? Because in September and October there will be discussions and votes at the United Nations. After that we can see a clearer situation. And I hope the Khmer Rouge will then be weaker, much weaker, so I may have more success in my dealings with them.

I guess the Khmer Rouge will have a meeting with the Chinese--their gurus, their sponsors--(to) fix up tactics and strategy to fight Sihanouk, before fighting the Vietnamese together with Sihanouk. The first fighting will be against Sihanouk.

It is very funny for me. I am alone, and China is so big. The Khmer Rouge are so numerous. I am alone! You will see a negotiating table here; on one side you will have 10 Khmer Rouge and on the other side only 1 man. Only Sihanouk! I like such sport!

Our political system must be multiparty. We recognize the existence of a communist party, the party of Pol Pot, but as one party among many.

ON A NEW CONSTITUTION: We should remain a republic and not revert to the status of a kingdom. Why? Because I can't reunite the whole nation (as a kingdom). The Cambodian national royalists accept a republican Cambodia, and the republicans would not accept a kingdom.

But we have to abandon the constitution (drawn up by) the Khmer Rouge, which is very bad. The Khmer Rouge themselves have said they consider the constitution is no longer valid. Once the government is formed, I will certainly ask (for) a new constitution to be presented to the nation--a constitution for the state of Cambodia, liberal and democratic.

I want my country to be like not the Fifth French Republic but the Third. Troisieme Republique Francaise! With many parties, and a parliament with two chambers: a senate and an assembly of deputies, a house of representatives.

ON THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HEAD OF STATE: I have had a very bitter experience. When I was a very powerful head of state I was criticized by the outside world, and by the intelligentsia inside Cambodia. Now I am getting old; each day I'm getting older and older. Before dying, I would like to (become known as) the father of the new Cambodian democracy, and I want the head of state not to have power. I want to be just like Albert Lebrun, not like Giscard d'Estaing, who is very powerful.

CORRECTION TO SIHANOUK INTERVIEW ON UNITED FRONT

The following correction should be made to the item entitled "ASIaweek's Interview With Sihanouk on United Front" published in the Annex section of the 27 Feb Asia & Pacific DAILY REPORT, page 3:

First paragraph, line one should read: [Text] ON WHY HE HAS ELECTED TO MEET WITH KHIEU SAMPHAN: My compatriots are

ON THE COMPOSITION OF A UNITED-FRONT CABINET: The French Government let me know--not officially, very privately, through my private representative in Paris: "We, France, would be able to recognize the future government of the prince if he could establish his government not in exile but on Cambodian soil." And I answered this: "I assure you, France, that all my ministers will be on Cambodian soil."

That means we have to choose the prime minister and all the ministers from amongst the Cambodian people, leaders and cadres who are already on Cambodian soil. That is, from amongst the Khmer Rouge, Son Sann, and Moulinaka leaders and cadres. We may have five or six Khmer Rouge in the government and three or four Son Sannians, and two or three Moulinaka. And perhaps one from much smaller groups.

But all must be fighters--not just politicians--so that our government will have much credibility vis-a-vis not only our nation but the outside world.

ON HIS OWN RETURN TO CAMBODIA: My problem is this: Will Thailand allow me to go to Bangkok? This is the question. If Thailand allows me to be transported by the Chinese from Beijing to Bangkok by air, there is no problem, because from Bangkok to the Cambodian frontier there is no problem. I (would) stay close to the Khmer-Thai frontiers, and everybody would be on Cambodian soil. And I thought [as published] that then the United Nations, the whole world, will be able to recognize us.

ON THE SELECTION OF A PRIME MINISTER: I propose three candidates. First, the prime minister of the Royal Government of National Union from 1970 to 1975, Penn Nouth; second, Khieu Samphan; and third, Son Sann. Why do I say, "1. Penn Nouth; 2. Khieu Samphan; 3. Son Sann"? Because Penn Nouth led the government of Khieu Samphan during the years 1970 to 1975. Khieu Samphan now is so-called head of state, head of the government of "Democratic Kampuchea." But Khieu Samphan (was) vice-premier under Penn Nouth. So Pen Nouth must be presented first, and after that, Khieu Samphan.

Since Pen Nouth has been in France, his health has improved. But I have not yet got an answer from him about my proposal. He sent a telegram saying my plan (for Cambodia's political future) is good, but as far as he himself is concerned, he has not yet said anything. He supports me fully, but that does not mean he's ready to be prime minister. He is not sure.

ON SELECTION OF THE INTERIOR MINISTER: Very sensitive. I will propose In Tam--former prime minister and former home affairs minister of the Khmer Republic--because he is not corrupt. He is one of the rare Khmer officers who is not corrupt, and secondly he is very popular. Unfortunately he is not on Cambodian soil for the time being, but he's ready to join me to go into Cambodia. He's well-known among the Cambodian people and very esteemed, very appreciated. I think he could be accepted by the Khmer Rouge and by everybody.

ON CHOOSING A DEFENSE MINISTER: That will be a hot item. But I think we could have a Khmer Rouge and a vice-minister from the Son Sann "government." Why not (laughter), since they are the main forces? So the minister would be a Khmer Rouge, and the vice-minister for defense would be a representative of Son Sann.

ON POL POT'S ROLE: Pol Pot will not come into the government. He will be the chief of the communist party of Cambodia and the chief of the communist army. I have asked, you know, for my army, the Moulinaka, and the Son Sann army to be independent vis-a-vis Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge army. We can cooperate in the fighting against the Vietnamese. We can help each other. But we, the non-communist armies, must not be put under the command of Pol Pot.

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YOMIURI SHIMBUN ON REAGAN'S LATIN AMERICAN POLICY

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[YOMIURI SHIMBUN 22 February editorial: "Reagan's Latin Policy"]

[Text] The Reagan administration's policy toward Central America is attracting the world's attention lately [as] the U.S. has been stepping up its intervention in El Salvador. Taking into consideration the fact that indecisive policies of the previous administration added to frustrations of the American people, President Reagan has struck out on a policy of differentiating enemies from allies" in the Third World.

In El Salvador, leftist guerrillas have been staging indiscriminate terrorist attacks. This kind of terrorism must be condemned.

Reagan's hawkish policy has started to bear fruit. Apparently for fear of the U.S. freezing its economic aid, the leftist regime led by the Sandinista Revolutionary Front in Nicaragua is now refraining from extending support to leftist rebels in neighboring El Salvador.

In this sense, the Reagan administration is urged to practice self-restraint in dealing with the internal affairs of Latin American countries. The U.S. does not necessarily have to resort to military power to contain leftist terrorism. There are many other ways available. In the past, the U.S. supported notorious dictatorial regimes in the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Nicaragua only because they were anticommunist. But this led to the birth of leftist movements in Latin America and subsequent weakening of the U.S. position in the region. The Reagan administration should reflect on this bitter experience. The human rights diplomacy of Jimmy Carter invited criticism but gained strong support at the same time. Many observers believe that a strong human rights policy is the only way for the U.S. to have truly friendly nations in Latin America.

The Reagan administration should be well aware that further U.S. assistance to military regimes in Latin America would aggravate adverse reactions from West European democracies. Hostilities between leftists and rightists in Central America may not pose any direct threat to world peace. But their internal conflicts cannot be ignored if they are likely to have an effect on Mexico, an oil giant bordering the U.S. If the U.S. intervenes in a Central American country, Mexico may step up its anti-U.S. stance and approach Cuba. This will create a serious problem for the West.

Japan is also concerned about the possibility of the U.S. applying hardline policies to Asia to bolster military or autocratic regimes. It is difficult to differentiate between friends and foes in today's world. Some of the Third World countries are allies one day and foes the next. In view of this, Reagan's policy of dividing the Third World in two groups will cause confusion.

The best way, although somewhat slow, to solve the problems of Latin America, Asia and Africa is through economic cooperation and fostering of democratic forces, at the same time eliminating both rightist and leftist elements. This is where Japan and Western Europe can cooperate with the U.S. in dealing with the problems of the Third World.

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In this sense, the Reagan administration is urged to practice self-restraint in dealing with the internal affairs of Latin American countries. The U.S. does not necessarily have to resort to military power to contain leftist terrorism. There are many other ways available. In the past, the U.S. supported notorious dictatorial regimes in the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Nicaragua only because they were anticommunist. But this led to the birth of leftist movements in Latin America and subsequent weakening of the U.S. position in the region. The Reagan administration should reflect on this bitter experience. The human rights diplomacy of Jimmy Carter invited criticism but gained strong support at the same time. Many observers believe that a strong human rights policy is the only way for the U.S. to have truly friendly nations in Latin America.

The Reagan administration should be well aware that further U.S. assistance to military regimes in Latin America would aggravate adverse reactions from West European democracies. Hostilities between leftists and rightists in Central America may not pose any direct threat to world peace. But their internal conflicts cannot be ignored if they are likely to have an effect on Mexico, an oil giant bordering the U.S. If the U.S. intervenes in a Central American country, Mexico may step up its anti-U.S. stance and approach Cuba. This will create a serious problem for the West.

Japan is also concerned about the possibility of the U.S. applying hardline policies to Asia to bolster military or autocratic regimes. It is difficult to differentiate between friends and foes in today's world. Some of the Third World countries are allies one day and foes the next. In view of this, Reagan's policy of dividing the Third World in two groups will cause confusion.

The best way, although somewhat slow, to solve the problems of Latin America, Asia and Africa is through economic cooperation and fostering of democratic forces, at the same time eliminating both rightist and leftist elements. This is where Japan and Western Europe can cooperate with the U.S. in dealing with the problems of the Third World.