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Cambodia’s independence struggle and Asian perspectives on the crisis in South East Asia

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Madame Minister, Members of the Press, Fellow Delegates:

It is an honor to be asked to speak before so many serious and committed people, and I hope I shall prove worthy of it.

It is also moving to me personally that this conference is being held in Sweden, for I belong to the generation of Americans that had to struggle against US intervention in Vietnam, and for us Sweden was a haven for those who resisted the draft in order not to have to kill the people of South East Asia. It is very evident from the hard work necessary to mount this conference that that fine tradition of active concern for South East Asian peoples is continuing in Sweden.

I would like to speak today to you about the present crisis in South East Asia. I will speak first about what I consider relevant historical background, and secondly about the way I think the crisis is being perceived in the region by the people who actually live there.

Let me say at the outset that, on the basis of my conversations with refugees in Thailand and the United States, I believe that there were some extremely serious problems in Cambodia during the period 1975–78. I believe things happened that were, simply speaking, wrong, both morally and politically. Since the responsible authorities of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea, notably Deputy Premier Ieng Sary and State Council President Khieu Samphan, have acknowledged some very serious internal problems, and since they have invited constructive criticism, I feel it is my responsibility to indicate support for reexamination and transformation, in the interests of heightening the unity of the Cambodian people in the face of what must be the most serious crisis they have ever faced.

But let us note that it is not, after all, very easy for most of us to obtain accurate information about Cambodia, especially in America. Whom, after all, are we to believe?

The Washington Post – which in the spring of 1977 published photographs of an alleged massacre in Cambodia – photographs in which the same figures mysteriously kept appearing – photographs with soldiers whose hair was far too long for Cambodian revolutionary soldiers – photographs the Post was compelled to disavow a few days later – photographs that the Post subsidiary Newsweek then re-published in January 1978 in its overseas edition?

The New York Times? – which substantially trimmed the Toronto Globe and Mail’s March 1976 account of the visit to Cambodia of Sweden’s Ambassador Björk – all omissions favorable to Democratic Kampuchea – and which has, as I understand it, purchased and not yet published the English translation of articles written by Mr. Jan Myrdal about his recent visit to Cambodia? ”All the News That’s Fit to
Print” is the Times’ motto, but perhaps we must amend it to, "All the News That Fits".

The Readers’ Digest, also distributed overseas and our largest selling periodical in America—the think 50 million copies a month—which, in its February 1977 article purporting to describe Cambodia for American readers unaccountably forgot to mention the Nixon Administration’s February-August 1973 bombing of Cambodia—bombing, according to U.S. Congressional sources aimed at least 50 percent at the Cambodian people—bombing of which every ton of the 200,000 tons of explosives dropped claimed a Cambodian victim—200,000 casualties in seven months in a population of 6-7 millions—the equivalent of losing six million Americans in barely half a year, to say nothing of the destruction of productive facilities.

I may add that the Digest has persistently refused to share its extensive collection of refugee interviews with independent scholars offering such reasons as ‘We’re waiting for the peak salesperiod of the book to pass’; and, ‘If we share them, and the names are divulged then the families back in Cambodia might suffer, and then their relatives in Paris might sue the Readers’ Digest.” Can people who raise such considerations really seriously be searching for the truth about Cambodia?

Can we trust the Vietnamese, and their friends in Phnom Penh? The group that announced itself on 2 December 1978 at a meeting of 200 people in Viet Nam, and then announced in Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979, not even six weeks later, that it had the entire country. This handful of subservient functionaries, who as long ago as 23 March announced a "serious food shortage" in Cambodia, in the hopes of turning international aid into back-door recognition of their regime, and who, confronted with the failure of this play, then declared, through their spokesman Pen Sovan last month in Moscow, that "No one is starving in our country"? This tiny band who claims to rule Cambodia since January, and who in April announced the formation of guerrilla forces in Pursat Province—an extraordinary achievement, really: normally one founds the guerrilla army and then achieves liberation, but here we have "liberation" first, followed by organization of the guerrilla army? This fragment of a fraction, which in August convinced Far Eastern Economic Review journalist Mr Nayan Chanda that Pol Pot had destroyed all the fish-nets so that people could not eat, and then in October issued regulations threatening to take fish-nets away from people who had too many?

How about the Vietnamese themselves, who on Christmas Day last year called the Democratic Kampuchea Government liars for the latter’s claim that Viet Nam was about to attack, who repeatedly denied that their forces were involved until they could get a treaty signed with the Phnom Penh group that, conveniently and retroactively, legitimated their presence? The Vietnamese, who continually cite reports from a so-called "August First" opposition radio in China that no one can find—including the Chinese security service? The Vietnamese, who unblushingly note that their 1965 recognition of China’s sovereignty over the islands of the South China Sea only "had meaning in the historical context of the time"? (Imagine the problems of the Cambodians in trying to negotiate with such people).

War implies propaganda, but here we have a record of mendacity that rivals Dr Goebbels’, so let us proceed with due caution in trying to understand Cambodia from all that is said about the Cambodians by their enemies, past and present. In this situation, everything must be weighed and sifted and tested.

Nevertheless, I think, two main patterns in Cambodia are clear: the achievements in food production and the commitment to independence.

Virtually every foreign observer who visited Cambodia last year commented on the success in food production. The string of foreign ambassadors, journalists, and Marxist-Leninist groups from various countries all saw rice-fields and healthy people. In the words of St. Louis Post-Dispatch journalist Richard Dudman, "This once-rich agricultural country is flourishing and may again become prosperous".

I do not wish to over-state this: there was some hunger, there was maldistribution, according to refugees, but, in the main, the contrast
with the present is inescapable – and in the meantime we have the invasion of 200,000 Vietnamese troops. Is there really any doubt about the true origins of the present situation, the current starvation? Not only does reason reject the charge made by AFP journalist Jean-Pierre Gallois, that the famine is "a direct result of the destructive economic policies carried out by the Pol Pot government ousted in January," but accuracy – and a sense of justice – compel us to turn this around, and to extend to the government of Democratic Kampuchea the credit for organizing what refugees state would have been the best harvest in recent history, had the people been allowed to reap it.

But the achievements in food production were closely linked with the struggle for independence, and, indeed, they are the same thing.

I remember very well a conversation with Mr. Keat Chhon, a former Minister of Industry under Prince Sihanouk, a former Rector of the Royal University of Kompong Cham, and now one of the top-ranking officers of Cambodia's Foreign Ministry.

I asked Mr. Chhon about the 1973 bombing, that terrible 1973 bombing to which I referred earlier. He replied, with that quiet intensity that characterized the genuine revolutionaries in Asia, "Of course it was terrible, but the B-52 has two aspects: first, it is very destructive, and second, it flies away – and it is the second aspect that is predominant."

We must extend our admiration to such courage under such fire – but we must also note, that it was under the terrible bombardment of the U.S. B-52’s. the Cambodians began to launch their co-operativization movement, with the aim of better organizing agriculture and producing more rice to sustain their struggle for independence.

This was 1973, and following the signing of the peace agreement between Hanoi and Washington, the Cambodians were fighting alone in Indo-China. I think we must consider this year carefully. Unsupported by Soviet-donated missiles and anti-air-craft weapons and MIG’s, the Cambodians had to go it alone. This is a measure of their commitment to independence a commitment that, unfortunately, went almost completely unrecognized in my own country until very recently.

In fact – although it is certainly not a fault – this commitment to Cambodia’s independent existence may be seen as the trip-wire that has triggered Viet Nam’s aggression.

In September 1978 there was an extremely interesting disclosure by Mr. Hoang Tung, editor of the Vietnamese Party newspaper Nhan Dan and president of the Viet Nam-Cuba Friendship Association. According to UPI, AP and AFP dispatches, Mr. Tung remarked that in 1970-72 "Numerous Vietnamese divisions were at that time in Cambodia, while the Cambodian forces were limited. If we had intervened, the situation would have evolved differently. Perhaps we are paying for that error to-day."

Le Monde, in reporting this statement, drew the following implication from it: "This last sentence of Mr. Hoang Tung, who is a member of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, appears to confirm the existence, for several years, of an important debate in Hanoi about the feasibility of intervention to overturn the Khmer communists grouped around Pol Pot."

Is this simply an implication? And how far back can we take it? The Cambodians claim that armed clashes did in fact occur between their forces and those of Viet Nam in 1973. Interestingly enough, a U.S. Government analysis written the following year also reported that these armed clashes had taken place. Furthermore, as I will indicate later on, Vietnamese political intervention was going on concurrently.

Stop and think about this development for a moment. The time is 1972-73 so we cannot say there is any question of human rights violations that would "excuse" any such intervention, because the Pol Pot government is not yet in control of the country. It is 1972-73 so we cannot say that, as has been claimed in justification of the aggression, that China is using Cambodia against Viet Nam, because China is not only giving arms to both sides but is also supporting negotiations both by Viet Nam and by Cambodia with the United States, although the Cambodians decides not to pursue that approach. And, since it is 1972-73, we certainly can-
not find any question of border disputes here, because neither Cambodia nor South Viet Nam has passed under Communist control.

So none of the reasons advanced to explain Viet Nam’s aggression obtain in 1972-73, yet we have the Vietnamese Party debating with regard to Pol Pot, and so we are left with the question, what is it that makes the Pol Pot leadership so unacceptable to the Vietnamese? And I submit, the answer lies in the independent policy pursued by the Cambodians: they refused to negotiate, they continued their military struggle, and they thus denied the Vietnamese the Indo-China-wide cease-fire sought by Nixon and Kissinger as a condition for the provision of more than $3 billion dollars in U.S. reconstruction aid for Viet Nam.

And note also this: the Cambodians are not only continuing to fight, they are fighting – not against the Soviet Union – but against the United States – in Viet Nam’s analysis, the head of the imperialist camp and the worst enemy of the people’s of the world.

So the Cambodians continue to fight – against the U.S. – and the Vietnamese Party debates whether to overthrow Pol Pot. It seems to me an inescapable conclusion, that it is Cambodia’s decision to follow its own road, to make its own revolution, in its own way – even if this crossed Vietnamese designs and policies – that makes the Cambodian leadership and the Cambodian people a target of Viet Nam’s extermination campaign.

And from 1973 on we see the Vietnamese interventionalist policy implemented. The Vietnamese continue to amass force and power, until, after 1975, after the change of government in South Viet Nam and unification, they make themselves into what is to-day the number two power in the Soviet bloc, the number three power in the world in terms of troops outside its borders – a quarter million, 200 000 in Cambodia and 50 000 in Laos – as against 300 000 U.S. forces abroad – and the number four or five power in terms of standing army size, a standing army as large as all the ASEAN countries combined plus Burma’s.

At the same time, intervention in Cambodian affairs continued. The Cambodian Government states that coup-d’Etat attempts occurred in September 1975, April 1976, September 1976, April 1977, September 1977, May 1978, and November 1978 – or every six months during its tenure of power, until the 1978 Christmas Eve invasion. I do not know whether the Vietnamese were involved in all these attempts, but certainly they were involved in some of them, particularly the latter ones.

In this regard it is interesting to note that the Phnom Penh leaders, in an effort to give themselves some legitimacy, have been releasing details about their lives and expansively answering sharp questions journalists have posed.

For example, Mr Hun Sen, their 27-year-old foreign minister, stated in July over the Phnom Penh Radio that "our struggle did not start just on 2 December 1978. A systematic review will show that this struggle started in 1973" – that is to say, in the months following Viet Nam’s recognition that the CPK was going to follow an independent line.

Mr Ros Samay, the rather un-Kampuchean-looking vice-president of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation – during a trip to Finland this spring revealed that "liberated areas" in Cambodia were not set up in 1977, as previously stated, but in 1975. By whom? This tiny handful now gathered in Phnom Penh? It seems clear to me that in 1975 this can only have been done by Viet Nam.

And Mr Pen Sovan, the Defence Minister, who sees no famine in Cambodia, stated early in March of this year: "I used to work for Pol Pot and Ieng Sary ... I left them in 1973 to create conditions for their ouster."

So the evidence of very early Vietnamese intervention is there, and it does not rest on the assertions of Democratic Kampuchea alone.

What about Cambodias internal policy? There I have only suggestions of evidence – but it is, indeed, suggestive. Refugees I spoke with in California recently recounted things in their experience that they could not explain – being told for instance to grow wet rice where dry rice should have been planted and vice versa, with the result that people in their area starved. Or, in another case, being assigned to a work project, getting it near completion, then being
taken away to a another work-site, only to be returned later to the former project and finding it in collapse.

In other words, the suggestion of sabotage is there. Personally, I also wonder a great deal about reports of the physical elimination of Lon Nol officers and soldiers – one of the most anti-Vietnamese elements in the country.

Finally, a word about xenophobia – we’ve all heard the analysis of how Cambodia firmly slammed its doors to the world in order to march back to the Middle Ages.

But perhaps it’s not so simple. This summer I spoke with a South East Asian diplomat who said that the government the diplomat represented had been anxious to compose relations with Democratic Kampuchea, but that they had been warned by the Vietnamese that this was quite displeasing to Hanoi and that some form of retaliation might follow if the country in question continued in this course.

And, in checking the record, we do indeed find some very strange things. We find, for example, that early in 1978 Thailand’s Foreign Minister Uppadit visited Phnom Penh. He returned and held a press conference in Bangkok on February 3, in which he pointedly refrained from criticizing the Cambodians in any way, underscoring, I believe, the Thai Government’s desire to work out a positive relationship between the two countries.

 Barely six days later 300 Thai villagers in Ubol province were kidnapped across the Cambodian frontier – the first in a whole series of incidents along the border that occurred over the next several months. Their effect was obvious: they prevented Cambodia from establishing non-hostile relations with its western neighbor during a crucial period in the evolution of the present crisis.

I think we must not shrink from the conclusions suggested by all of this: when such activities are carried out by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Chile, we do not hesitate to use the word "de-stabilization" – and we cannot in honesty do anything less when the second superpower is involved.

And it is involved. Let us remember that the first full-scale Vietnamese attempt to conquer Cambodia occurred, not in December 1978, but in December 1977 – and the Vietnamese were defeated, driven back across the frontier in January 1978.

Following that defeat, according to an article by Mr Nayan Chanda in the Far Eastern Economin Review earlier this year – Mr Chanda enjoying close access to Vietnamese sources – the Vietnamese Party held a complete reassessment of the situation. They then took a number of important decisions.

They decided to strengthen the Army and to found a Cambodian front for their contemplated invasion of Cambodia. They resolved to conduct intensive diplomacy in South East Asia, to use a polite word for it, and to break the power of the Chinese businessmen in Ho Chi Minh City. Personally, I think this aspect of the plan must have been far more extensive, looking forward to a clash with China – which in mid-summer 1977 had directly indicated its refusal to permit Cambodia to be overrun – and hence involved a decision to break the cohesion of the Chinese communities north and south, rich or poor, as a necessary adjunct to the Cambodian campaign.

Finally, and most importantly, the Viet Nam Party’s re-assessment involved a decision to draw closer to the Soviet Union. This included joining the Soviet-sponsored CMEA organization in June – against, it is said, the wishes of a majority of the CMEA members, who no doubt heard that familiar begging bowl rattling in the distance; massive military re-supplying from the Soviets in late summer, supplies delivered not to the north, as would have been the case had Viet Nam really expected an assault from China, but to the south, implying an imminent Vietnamese attack on Cambodia: and finally, in November, the conclusion of a Peace and Friendship Treaty between Hanoi and Moscow clearly putting the Soviet bloc behind Viet Nam’s decisions.

Since then, we have seen increasing Soviet supplies – more than 75 000 tons in the past year, including tanks, trucks, ships, and jumbo Antonov-12 transports, as well as the construction of spy bases in western Cambodia and Soviet use of Cam Ranh Bay in Viet Nam and
Cambodia's Kompong Som.

Soviet political and diplomatic support for Viet Nam's aggression has been no less dramatic, most obviously exposed in its March veto of the ASEAN countries resolution on mutual withdrawal – China out of Viet Nam, Viet Nam out of Cambodia – and in the recent United Nations General Assembly vote, wherein only a handful of nations joined the Soviet bloc states against a resolution to withdraw all foreign troops from Cambodia.

So the meaning, to me, seems clear: a longstanding conspiracy to destroy the independence of a very small, undeveloped country – and, even so, the necessity for the Vietnamese Government, Party, and Army to align themselves ever more closely with the Soviet Union in order to carry out this design in the face of bitter and protracted Cambodian resistance.

And what is it all for? The Vietnamese deny any attempt to build an Indo-China federation, ascribing instead to Peking an alleged ambition of swallowing the three countries of Indo-China. Yet, whenever the Cambodia issue surfaces, it is Viet Nam that rushes forward – trying to push the Phnom Penh group into the Mekong Development Project, or, as happened here in Sweden a few years ago, attempting to dissuade the Swedish people from setting up a separate organization that would deal with Cambodia in its own right after 1975.

It is impossible to conceive of Viet Nam acting altruistically even if it wished to, with more than 200 000 soldiers in Cambodia and 50 000 in Laos. As recently as last month, through the voluble Hoang Tung, Viet Nam reiterated its "responsibility" for the defense of the Indo-China Peninsula – a term sufficiently vague as to imply everything between India and China, but which in any event clearly underscores Hanoi's intentions for intervention in the area outside its own national boundaries.

American observers (sympathetic to the young Democratic Republic of Viet Nam proclaimed in 1945) reported considerable vagueness about the exact boundaries the Vietnamese leaders intended to draw, and it must be noted that this rather serviceable confusion continues. Viet Nam pairs Laotian and Vietnamese provinces, as well as the so-called "sister cities" of Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City, as though no international frontiers existed, and its advisors function at every administrative level in the two countries. Vietnamese geological teams have been reported carrying out mineral surveys in Laos, and refugees have described Vietnamese forces looting virtually everything movable from Cambodia. There are, according to Prince Sihanouk, some 300 000 Vietnamese colonists now settled in Cambodia, while Lao refugees speak of a deliberate program of intermarriage between Vietnamese men and Lao women. With only three million Lao and six-seven million or fewer Cambodians, it is not so difficult to foretell the future under 53 million Vietnamese.

In fact, we can note that the three-towered Angkor Wat flag of Democratic Kampuchea has been replaced with a five-towered emblem. Why? Because in 1951 the Khmer Viet Minh, working under Vietnamese leadership in the First Indo-China war, flew a five-towered flag – and so they even tell the Cambodians how many towers to put on their flag! The legitimate Cambodians are those who work with Vietnam so the legitimate Cambodian flag has to be the five-towered one.

Thus it seems evident that the Indo-China Federation exists in fact if not in name, a new Vietnamese empire built on the ruins of neighboring countries.

This is the root of the conflict in Asia today. It is the source of the contradiction between China and Viet Nam, which brought about China's invasion last February, and, as a direct result of the draft imposed on Vietnamese youth, of the ruination of Viet Nam's economy, needed to sustain military adventures, and of deliberate discriminatory policies also connected with Hanoi's war aims, it is the real cause for the exodus of some three-quarters of a million people from Viet Nam in the last 18 months, as well as the flow of several additional hundreds of thousands of refugees from Laos and from Cambodia.

This last is a phenomenon on an enormous scale, and I do not like merely mentioning it in passing, as it is extremely important and affects
the lives of millions in the South East Asian countries and around the world, but it is generally understood so I devote less time to it than it merits.

Finally, this new empire-building enterprise clearly explains recent policies and actions by the other countries in the region.

First of all there are the ASEAN countries, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines.

These countries are not uniform. Some, like Thailand, have recently developed friendly relations with China, where as Malaysia is less close to Peking. Indonesia and Singapore have not established diplomatic relations with China, and the Philippines has been open to both China and Viet Nam. Singapore, in the United Nations, has opposed China's invasion of Viet Nam; Malaysia last month indicated that, as a result of China's relationship, party-to-party, with the Communist Party of Malaya, it would restrict people-to-people exchanges with Peking. Indonesia has not hurried to restore relations with China, broken in 1965. Quite recently also the Philippines incorporated the Kalayaan Islands in the South China Sea, claimed by China.

So all of these countries have important areas of disagreement with China.

Nevertheless, these ASEAN countries have taken the lead, both in the United Nations and the non-aligned movement to which some of them belong, in supporting Democratic Kampuchea's right to be represented, and in opposing Soviet, Cuban, and Vietnamese efforts to the contrary.

And they have done more. For example, Thailand in October banned additional Soviet and East European over-flights to re-supply Viet Nam and Phnom Penh, and has also resisted strong Soviet pressures to recognise the Heng Samrin regime.

Malaysia shortly after the invasion cancelled an agreement to aid the development of Viet Nam's rubber industry, and Foreign Minister Rithauudddeenn has denounced Phnom Penh as a regime "shored up with the help of the bayonets, guns, bombs, and tanks of foreign troops". A month ago the Deputy Foreign Mi-

nister demanded Viet Nam's withdrawal from Cambodia and upheld Cambodia's sovereignty, declaring, "we will in no circumstances allow this principle to be trampled upon." In Havana Malaysia's representative was denied the right to respond to charges lodged against the country by Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong.

Singapore has rejected forcefully the spurious arguments of alleged genocide and lack of effective control as reasons for removing Democratic Kampuchea from the non-aligned movement or the United Nations. As a result, at the Havana meeting, Cuba forced Singapore's delegate to wait until dawn before allowing him to speak. It's Premier Lee Kuan Yu, was recently denounced by Hanoi for presiding over a purported "movement of all Singaporeans to learn Chinese" - a racist charge against a man of Chinese ancestry and that is patently ridiculous in light of the Singapore government's efforts to promote the use of the English language.

The Marcos government in the Philippines has consistently supported the government of Democratic Kampuchea in the international arena and on 26 October called for an alert to the "possibility of immediate action by ASEAN in any event on the Thai-Kampuchean border" - an eventuality that, thanks to the prompt political response by the countries of the region, now appears less likely to occur.

Indonesia, troubled like the other countries by the influx of refugees, has also opposed Vietnamese ambitions, despite a fairly long relationship with Hanoi. In late October Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja observed of the Vietnamese forces that, "after almost a year in Cambodia, they have not been able to translate their military domination into political advantage."

Of course these states are largely martial law or military dictatorships, guilty of many violations of human rights, and lacking the democratic practice customary in free societies. They are armed by the United States and are open to U.S., Japanese, and European investments.

Nevertheless, we can distinguish the question of their internal policies from the very staunch foreign policy positions they have
adopted. They are not organized by China – indeed, some of them have pronounced contradictions with China and do not even recognize the PRC. They clearly do not approve of Cambodia’s revolution so radically different from their own societies, but because of the real, direct, and immediate threat posed by Vietnamese expansionism, and their very obvious interest in maintaining the principle of national sovereignty, the ASEAN countries, strongly oppose Hanoi’s aggression. We will do well to think of them, too, as front-line states, daily confronting, the spill-overs of Viet Nam’s military actions and population expulsions. Consequently the attempt to extinguish Cambodia’s independent existence – an attempt underwritten and overseen by the Soviet Union – they see, as Malaysia’s Foreign Minister recently put it, developments ’threatening to the peace, stability, and security of South East Asia as a whole’.

Nor are they alone in Asia. With the exception of Mongolia, where 20 percent of the population is reported to be Soviet troops, and Laos, where there are 100,000 Vietnamese settlers, 50,000 Vietnamese troops, 6,000 Vietnamese advisors, and 800 Vietnamese secret security police and where the government prints stamps with the Soviet astronauts Guvarev and Grechko – and India, which has equivocated considerably, almost every other government in South, South East, and East Asia opposes Viet Nam.

Japan has reduced its aid and held back on some 14 billion in loans. Pakistan and Bangladesh have both denied the Soviet Union overflight rights to supply Viet Nam. On 25 October Foreign Minister K.B. Shahi stated that ”Nepal shall support any move that will respect the territorial integrity and independence of a member state of the United Nations, in addition to the principles of the United Nations Charter, including non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Sri Lanka declared in September that it would not recognize Heng Samrin and its president, Dr Junious Jayawardene, called for a Vietnamese withdrawal and free, internationally-supervised elections.

Most interesting is the case of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – a country divided by the U.S., just like Viet Nam, and bombed flat by the U.S. just like Viet Nam: perhaps this experience enables it to understand the aggression against Cambodia.

In any event, Korea has provide very strong support for Cambodia. It had a large aid team in Cambodia before the Vietnamese invasion, and strongly condemned that action when it occurred. It strongly supported the efforts to maintain the non-aligned character of the non-aligned movement, supporting Cambodia’s right to its seat. It has furnished Prince Sihanouk with facilities in Pyongyang necessary for him to organize patriotic support among the Cambodian forces closest to him. And on 12 October, Premier Kim II Sung sent a message stating his confidence that ”the ties of friendship and solidarity that bind the peoples of our two countries in their common struggle against imperialism and dominationism and in defense of sovereignty will further develop and strengthen. I take this opportunity sincerely to wish you more success in fulfilling the just cause of defending the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of your country.”

Finally, the government of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma – military, but also socialist and neutral – has strongly condemned Viet Nam and supported Cambodia. In September Foreign Minister Myint Maung, speaking in the United Nations General Assembly, stated flatly:

”No state has the right to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the international affairs of other states. Consequently, armed or other interference or threats, open or concealed, against the integrity of the state or against its political, economic, and cultural system, are inadmissible.

Every nation has the right freely to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system without any form of interference by another state.”

At the UN, incidentally, Burma supported universal disarmament and the SALT II Agreement, while observing that the projected ceilings of the later document were far too high.

We can note also the strong reaction among the peoples of the region – particularly in Thai-
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land, where the students of 18 universities—that same sector that has consistently fought for independence, democracy, and social justice—condemned the Vietnamese invasion and in June passed out 130,000 pieces of literature explaining their stand to the populace at large. With some exceptions, the newspaper of the region have been taking generally anti-invasion, pro-sovereignty stands as well.

So, too, have all of the communist parties leading guerilla struggles in the area—in Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, and the Philippines, as well as the Indonesia Communist Party.

They too condemn the invasion, and the entrance of the Soviet Union into the conflict, for they see not only the threat to independence, but also the threat to independent revolution represented by Viet Nam's actions.

Viet Nam, in turn, has repudiated and denounced these communist parties—all of which gave strong support to Viet Nam during its long struggle against U.S. intervention.

Viet Nam has used its domination in Laos to bring about an agreement between the Thai government and the Lao government to suppress the Thai communists wherever possible, and it has also tried hard to split off a pro-Vietnamese section from the United front organization set up two years ago, in the wake of the bloody 6 October 1976 coup in this country. The Hanoi Radio in August denounced the Thai communists as 'thousands of Peking-armed terrorists now operating in the north-eastern province... demolishing or burning down government buildings and robbing the peasants of their property'. Viet Nam has also targeted the "fifth columnist army of more than 20 million overseas Chinese"—not Chinese bankers, merchants, and capitalists, but 20 million "overseas Chinese"—who are "scattered among the various countries, of among which—no need to beat around the bush—Thailand is particularly noteworthy", because, it quotes a French newspaper, "three out of four people" in Bangkok "have Chinese blood in their veins". The echoes of the 1930's become stronger. When we start talking about "blood", we are very, very close..."}

With respect to the Philippines, in April Viet Nam attacked what it termed "a pro-Peking extremist organization called the 'New People's Army'," which, it was claimed, tries to "conduct armed attacks and terroristic and divisive operations, wantonly massacring civilians and ransacking the people's property". Viet Nam has invited members of the old Communist Party of the Philippines, which participates in the Marcos Government's martial law regimen and which supports the Soviet Union, on a visit to Hanoi as representatives of the Philippine people's struggle. Amongst those invited was Mr A Tupaz, who heads an organization called TUPAS (Trade Unions of the Philippines and Allied Services), a WFTU affiliate. This October, as martial law came under increasing attack by the Catholic Church in the Philippines and Jaime Cardinal Sin warned of impending civil war. Mr Tupaz denounced the "true oppression" of the Church and recalled "the dark days in our history when they could impose their will on the state authorities".

There have been similar denunciations and manoeuvres against other countries, including an effort by Cuba to win Indonesian support for Soviet-Cuba-Vietnamese positions by promising not to raise the question of East Timor's right to national independence at the Havana meeting—a promise that was not kept and which simply increased the contempt felt by all parties for these manipulations. Viet Nam disavowed the FRETIILIN movement, and quotes approvingly the Indonesian newspaper Merdeka which openly links the invasions of Cambodia and East Timor, approving both.

And so a most significant constellation of forces has developed in Asia: the Vietnamese rulers against virtually every government, every guerrilla movement, and every people in South East Asia. The struggle for Cambodia's independence—or subjection—in short replicates the battle for an independent Asia as a whole.

We must underscore the striking triangulation of views—from capitalist and pro-western governments like those of Japan and ASEAN, from communist parties in power, as in China and Korea, or struggling for it, as in Thailand, Burma, the Philippines, and Malaysia, and from...
neutral governments like Burma's. All of these forces condemn Viet Nam and support Cambodia in one form or another. All of them are seeing something both wrong and threatening in Viet Nam's expansionism and aggression and Soviet intervention in the area. With such a consensus, we can only conclude that there is indeed a factual basis for these widely shared perceptions.

This is the view of the region, and we will do well to respect it. We should note too, how every step Viet Nam has taken since the 1972 debate about Cambodia has required a further step: first the overt intervention against Cambodia, then open aggression, then the explosion of refugees from Viet Nam and the clash with China, then the repudiation of every independent guerrilla struggle in the region, and finally the growing intervention in the political affairs of other countries. In fact this process has no end: other than a general war in the region, or, in fact, indeed, a world war. And the world knows this too, as the recent 91 to 21 UN vote to remove Vietnamese forces from Cambodia demonstrates.

The policies of the Vietnamese government, Party, and Army are totally wrong. They are a threat to the region and a threat to the world. They must be stopped – and they must be stopped now.

I strongly urge you to do everything you can to support Cambodia, to promote unity among the Cambodian people living abroad, to extend all possible aid to refugee victims of this aggression, whether Boat People or Lao and Cambodian land refugees – and, contrarilywise, to deny any form of aid or support to the aggressor at this time, and to support the human rights and democratic struggles in the region, so that the people – the one sure force we can count on – will be free to give their fullest energies in support of the independence of their countries.

In this way, with the unified efforts of all of the forces in the world opposed to this aggression, there is no doubt that our efforts will be successful.

Thank you