

Divided Cambodia in the Era of Sino-Soviet Detente - The Paris Conference and its Background

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Divided Cambodia - a country which seems at first glance to have little in common with the problems of those divided countries Korea, Germany or China. Even the application of formal concepts such as 'citizenry', 'national territory' and 'government' must be approached with caution. And yet Cambodia has had two governments for the past ten years. The government of Democratic Cambodia has its regular seat in the United Nations and is recognised as the legitimate government by China, the USA, the states of Western Europe and the majority of Third World countries.

But, in addition, there is the government of the State of Cambodia (known until Spring 1989 as the People's Republic of Cambodia), which is recognised by the countries of the Soviet Eastern Bloc, by Vietnam, Laos and India. It has power over the greater part of Cambodia's national territory and people. For the past ten years, both governments have been involved in a military struggle to gain supremacy of a united Cambodia, and behind both governments stand both regional and international powers: here a comparison can be drawn between the history of the divided countries Korea and Germany.

However, while it is possible to regard the division of these two countries as an expression of East-West confrontation, the division of Cambodia is rather a demonstration of East-East conflict - the conflict between the Soviet Union and China.

The coalition government of Democratic Cambodia under the leadership of Prince Sihanouk, with the participation of both the Khmer Rouge and the party formed around Son Sann, is supported by the People's Republic of China, among others, whereas the government of Heng Samrin/Hun Sen is considered to be a puppet government under Vietnamese control and seen as belonging to the Soviet power bloc.

I will describe the development of the Cambodian question in the era of Sino-Soviet detente and in particular the events of the Paris Cambodia Conference in August 1989; on the basis of this analysis, I have also attempted to formulate assertions about the background to the situation and about possible future developments.

Divided Cambodia

In 1975, with independence and the takeover of power by the Communists in all three Indo-Chinese states - Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam - all the requirements for peaceful co-existence and economic recovery seemed to be present, after almost thirty years of fighting for independence and re-unification. But this peace only lasted for a short time.¹ Long-standing causes of dissent and old prejudices, partly rooted in historical events, flared up once more; it became clear that the

years of fighting together to overthrow the foreign rule of France or the USA had forced old conflicts into the background - the peoples of all three countries had been united by a common enemy.²

After the Khmer Rouge had seized power in Phnom Penh³ and Pol Pot's rule had gained strength in the interior of the country, bringing with it the murder of hundreds of thousands of native Cambodians, Pol Pot then began the systematic execution of all pro-Vietnamese communists.⁴ Territorial conflicts with the neighbouring state of Vietnam over islands in the Gulf of Thailand, unclarified boundaries between Cambodia and Vietnam, and the aim, formulated by Hanoi at the Fourth Party Conference in 1976, to cultivate 'special relations' with its two Indo-Chinese neighbours Laos and Cambodia,⁵ worsened relations between Hanoi and Phnom Penh still further.

Hanoi achieved part of its aim of hegemony over the whole of Indo-China with the friendship pact between the Socialist People's Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Laos;⁶ however, relations with Cambodia proved to be increasingly difficult. In December 1977 Pol Pot broke off diplomatic relations with Hanoi after growing numbers of military clashes.

Running parallel to these developments was a deterioration in relations between the People's Republic of China and the Socialist People's Republic of Vietnam. Beijing began openly to support Pol Pot's party.⁷

In March 1978 Hanoi had passed a series of laws relating to private trading, which robbed thousands of Chinese of their means of existence and forced them to flee Vietnam. This act placed further strain on China's relations with Vietnam.⁸ China had been showing increasing concern at the Soviet Union's growing influence in Vietnam, and now called a halt to all forms of aid. Thus Hanoi could no longer maintain that position of equidistance from both super-powers which it had held for decades. Long-standing relations with China which had been ambivalent for two millennia⁹ could no longer conceal conflicts of interest which were now diametrically opposed. China was interested in a 'Balkanised' Indo-China on her borders, whereas Vietnam was striving for a reunited Indo-China under Vietnamese rule.¹⁰

Dependence on the Soviet Union, which was presenting no immediate territorial threat, seemed to be the lesser evil. In 1978 the gulf finally became apparent. Vietnam, which was burdened with serious economic problems and felt that she had been abandoned by the West, joined COMECON in June of that year; in November a friendship pact was signed with the Soviet Union.¹¹ At the same time a meeting of the Central Committee in July 1978 denounced China and her ally Pol Pot as immediate enemies.¹²

At the end of December 1978, Vietnamese troops, together with a hastily founded Cambodian resistance group consisting mainly of pro-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge, crossed the border into Cambodia; on 7 January, 1979 they captured Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge fled into the area around the border between Thailand and Cambodia, where huge refugee camps were set up and maintained by the United Nations. The inmates of these refugee camps made up the greater part of Democratic Cambodia's actual population.

In Phnom Penh the government of Heng Samrin was established and the People's Republic of Cambodia was proclaimed. The rest of the world regarded

this regime as non-legitimate; apart from the Eastern Bloc states, only India was prepared to acknowledge the government as legitimate.¹³ The government of the Khmer Rouge continued to be accepted as the legitimate representation of Democratic Cambodia by the United Nations and the majority of the world. With China's and Thailand's assistance, the Khmer Rouge managed to build up its forces again and began the battle to win back supremacy from the Vietnamese 'Volunteers' Army' and the army of the People's Republic of Cambodia.¹⁴

Vietnam soon saw herself facing a war on two fronts; moreover, in February 1979 the Chinese staged their so-called 'punishment campaign'. However, Vietnam seemed to be determined to pursue her goal of a united Indo-China under Vietnamese leadership.

In February 1979 the treaty of friendship and co-operation with the People's Republic of Cambodia was signed. Hanoi had transformed the old dream of Ho Chi Minh into reality.¹⁵

Both the Cambodian monarchists under the leadership of Prince Sihanouk and the nationalists led by the former Cambodian Prime Minister Son Sann organised their own resistance troops against the regime of Phnom Penh.

In 1982 China, with assistance from the ASEAN states and the USA, succeeded in uniting the Cambodian resistance fighters. Thus the Khmer Rouge, Sihanouk and Son Sann formed the exile coalition of Democratic Cambodia, a government which was apparently free from the taint of the genocidal Pol Pot.¹⁶ Sihanouk took over the official leadership, Son Sann became Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister was Khieu Samphan (a member of the Khmer Rouge who could not be connected with the genocide). A joint army was formed. Despite differences in ideology and philosophy, and hostility stemming from earlier experiences, the government of Democratic Cambodia appeared in public as a united body. Until the mid-eighties no side could claim military victory. Both parties were increasingly called upon by their supporting powers to seek political solutions through negotiations. Of all the ASEAN states, Indonesia played a leading role in these proceedings. In March 1986 the Democratic Cambodian Government formulated its so-called Eight-Point Proposal, which could be regarded as the basis for subsequent proposals.¹⁷ Although Phnom Penh and Hanoi rejected this proposal, nonetheless some movement seemed to have crept into the inflexibility of the opposing fronts. At the Sixth Party Conference of the Communist Party of Vietnam, changes in the official position could be remarked, and a similar development had already been noted shortly before at the Fifth Party Conference of the Revolutionary People's Party of Cambodia. Part of the 'Old Guard' had been replaced, and extensive reforms had been announced.¹⁸

Hanoi's announcement, in March 1987, of its intention to withdraw troops from occupied Cambodia can be described as the true breakthrough in the Cambodia question. The same year saw the start of a series of 'private meetings' between the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk, in which the points of contention between them were discussed with a view to peaceful unity.¹⁹

In July 1988 the first Vietnamese troops were withdrawn, although the opposition described this manoeuvre as 'a deception'.

July 1988 also saw the first official meeting of the four Cambodian parties with representatives from Vietnam, the six ASEAN states and Laos. This was the so-called Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM I), and came about through Indonesia's initiative. But even at JIM II, which followed in February 1989, no rapprochement of Cambodia's hostile parties could be found in the decisive questions. However, the arrangement was made to hold an international Cambodia Conference in Paris in the summer of 1989.²⁰

Sino-Soviet Detente and Indo-China

The acknowledged main aim of the Soviet Union in Asia had, from the mid-sixties, been to strengthen her influence over the political, military and economic development of the area, and above all to force back the USA, to limit the influence of Japan and the People's Republic of China, and to prevent any political and military co-operation of these states. This was the reason for the Soviet Union's concern in securing a perpetual right to a say in all Asian affairs.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet Union had found herself in an unfavourable position in the strategic triangle Moscow-Beijing-Washington, owing to the US-Chinese rapprochement. Since that time she had been making efforts to improve her relations with China, on the one hand, and to expand her position of power in Asia on the other. In the autumn of 1982, the closeness of Vietnamese-Soviet relations caused the breakdown of official talks on the improvement of relations between the People's Republic of Cambodia and the Soviet Union;²¹ only afterwards were negotiations resumed.

As early as 1979 Beijing had spoken of two great obstacles along the road to normalisation, and in 1982 it formulated the so-called 'Three Obstacles':

1. The massive build-up of Soviet military presence on the Chinese-Soviet border and in the People's Republic of Mongolia.
2. The Soviet support of Vietnamese expansionism, and in particular the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia.²²
3. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The Chinese were irritated not only by the Soviet military bases in Vietnam and the danger of being surrounded by the Soviet power bloc through Afghanistan and Vietnam, but also by Hanoi's attempts to form an Indo-Chinese hegemonial association dominated by Vietnam herself. China, which regarded herself as a custodian of law and order legitimated by historical events, saw her position in this part of Asia threatened, and for this reason had always been fundamentally interested in having 'weak' countries along its southern flank, in other words a 'Balkanised' Indo-China.

Up to 1986, the position of the Soviet Union in these matters appeared to be unyielding. Moscow rejected all discussions by pointing to the 'Third States Clause'.²³

The mid-eighties saw a change of structure in the power triangle USA-Soviet Union-People's Republic of China. Not only could increasing signs of 'new' attempts at detente between the Soviet Union and the USA be seen,²⁴ but the framework of relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China also appeared to be responding to detente attempts.

In a speech concerning foreign policy in Vladivostok in July 1986, Gorbachev declared that the Soviet Union was prepared to open discussions with Beijing on any question and at any time.²⁵

Moscow was now ready to renounce the Third States Clause and to deal with the Cambodian question in joint consultations. The dramatic drop in Soviet growth rates, Gorbachev's declared aim of striving to modernise the country and the acceptance of both socialist states that a peaceful international environment would be necessary for this, were all important motives for this readiness to compromise. In addition, the Soviet Union was obliged to attempt to drastically reduce the extremely high cost of the alliance with Vietnam and Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia.²⁶ Beijing's motivation in the field of foreign policy, in connection with this readiness for detente, was the explicit intention of giving its international position more flexibility, and possibly included the attempt to reduce any possibility of confrontation with the Soviet Union, in order to cover itself in the case of problems arising with Taiwan.

The real breakthrough in Sino-Soviet talks came in 1988. Vietnam had already begun her withdrawal of troops from Cambodia, an act which was put down to Moscow's influence.²⁷ The two further obstacles in relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China also approached a solution. In April 1988, the Geneva Agreement on Afghanistan stipulated the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. And at the end of 1988, Gorbachev announced a reduction in the military presence along the Sino-Soviet border.²⁸

The Chinese also advertised the possibility of concessions in the Cambodian question by distancing themselves noticeably from the Khmer Rouge.²⁹

In the spring of 1989, the three great obstacles to the normalisation of relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China had essentially been removed. The problem of Cambodia, in particular, which the Chinese had singled out as the most difficult obstacle, seemed to be nearing a solution. And the Sino-Soviet summit conference in May 1989 gave rise to hope that international influences could help to bring about a peaceful settlement to the Cambodian problem.

Regional Aspects of the Cambodian Conflict

The establishment of Vietnam's position of hegemony over the whole of Indo-China at the end of the 1970s split South-East Asia into two blocs. On the one hand there was the ASEAN bloc, consisting of six countries with a predominantly anti-communist stance: on the other, the bloc of the three socialist countries of Indo-China.³⁰

Although the ASEAN (founded in 1967) had originally been anything but a homogeneous association, the Cambodian question had had a unifying influence on the group. However, attitudes towards Indo-China varied. Thailand, as a border state, supported the so-called hard line approach for years, and the resistance troops were provided with the larger part of their military and non-military supplies via Thai territory. Indonesia feared Chinese supremacy after negative experiences gathered during the course of history, and for this reason was in favour of a peaceful solution; she took on the role of mediator.

A change of government in Thailand in the mid-1980s, combined with a general tendency towards peaceful solutions to regional conflicts and with economic interests, led to Bangkok's gradual willingness to participate in talks; this attitude was extensively supported by the other ASEAN states.

In the mid-eighties, Vietnam also had to accept that there were no prospects of a military solution in Cambodia. For a long time Hanoi had been unwilling to accept that its army, well accustomed to victory, had been exposed to a guerilla war in Cambodia, which was similar to the USA's war in Vietnam in that it was impossible to win. Moreover, long-standing animosities rooted in historical events prevented any real acceptance of Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia.

Vietnam's disastrous economic position;³¹ her boycott by Western states which, although never explicitly stated, was nonetheless carried out with effect; Phnom Penh's and Hanoi's complete isolation in matters of foreign policy; a dependence on the Soviet Union which was rapidly becoming a burden; the high cost of maintaining the army during the occupation and war in Cambodia; all these were factors which contributed to Vietnam's willingness to compromise.³² The change of leadership in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam after the Sixth Party Conference in December 1986 already mentioned only served to speed up the process.³³ In general it is possible to assume that growing understanding as much as pressure from Moscow were responsible for the change of attitude in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Hanoi also signalled a change in attitude towards Beijing; the Vietnamese National Assembly manifested this change by deleting the following sentence from its preamble: 'Resisting the aggression of Chinese hegemony'³⁴ Hanoi's announcement of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia paved the way for a readiness to compromise, and this extended to her relations with China.

The Cambodia Conference in Paris

A number of changes from the mid-seventies had made this conference possible. The most important of these changes were: the announcement of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia; the bilateral rounds of talks between the Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and the President of the three-party coalition government of Democratic Cambodia; the informal meetings of all the parties involved plus the ASEAN states at JIM I and JIM II; the rapprochement of China and Vietnam; the normalisation of relations between China and the Soviet Union; and certainly as well the world-wide trend towards defusing regional conflicts.³⁵

The opening meeting of the conference was held 30 July, 1989 and comprised 19 participating states as well as the UN.³⁶ The forerunner to the conference had been an internal meeting of the four conflicting Cambodian parties, at which there had been, however, no moves of rapprochement. As Sihanouk commented after the meeting, 'we disagreed on everything except the menu'.³⁷

Nonetheless, those participating in the conference, and above all the super-powers, showed a mood of confidence and optimism. The Eight-Point Plan of the government of Democratic Cambodia, which had been published in 1986 with the

support of the ASEAN states, can be regarded as the basis for the groups of themes to be discussed. The themes could be divided into two main groups: on the one hand, the questions dealing with the international aspects of the Cambodian problem; on the other, purely internal Cambodian affairs.

Aspects of the range of international problems included:

- the complete withdrawal of all armed Vietnamese organisations,
- a cease-fire,
- the question of an international supervisory committee,
- the halt of all foreign arms aid.

The range of national problems included:

- the formation of a provisional interim government following the dissolution of both Cambodian governments,
- the holding of universal, free, secret elections (under international supervision),
- a non-aggression pact with Vietnam,
- the problem of the Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia.³⁸

At the beginning of the conference, the following points were considered to be points of contention:

- the formation of a provisional interim government. Here, the government of the State of Cambodia (formerly the People's Republic of Cambodia) had strictly refused to accept the Khmer Rouge as an equal partner in the government, the administration and the army, citing the policy of genocide pursued by the Khmer Rouge; moreover, Hun Sen was not prepared to voluntarily renounce his office of Prime Minister, and did not agree to his government's premature voluntary resignation. At best, he was ready to accept the non-communist representatives of Democratic Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann, as part of his government.
- the questions of international supervision, of the withdrawal of troops, the supervision of elections as well as the setting up of a peace-keeping force. In this last point, Hun Sen refused to accept the troops of the UN as long as this organisation gave the government of Democratic Cambodia the sole right of representation.
- the question of the Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia.

These were the most important areas of conflict at the beginning of the conference. The role of the Khmer Rouge was held to be the key problem; this point demonstrated most clearly the wide range of differing opinions concerning the essential nature of the Cambodian conflict. For Phnom Penh and Hanoi, Pol Pot's genocide was the actual cause of division, and they used it to justify the Vietnamese invasion. They were not prepared to accept Pol Pot's return and drew attention to the attitude of the population to support their decision. Both the Khmer Rouge and the other representatives of Democratic Cambodia described the invasion by Vietnam as the cause of the conflict; Khieu Samphan, in his capacity as representative of the Khmer Rouge, denied all allegations that Cambodia was the scene of a civil war. Despite the obstinacy of the Cambodian parties, the other participants appeared to place their trust in the superpowers' interest in detente.³⁹ After the conference had begun, the *FEER* described the general mood thus: 'Prospects for peace and a widely acceptable political settlement looked unexpectedly bright after the first ministerial session of the 19-country international conference on Cambodia.'⁴⁰

And even the Soviet Foreign Minister was convinced that 'there would be no insuperable difficulties'.⁴¹ He explained in an interview that he would not have come to Paris unless he had believed that the conference would be successful.⁴² The UN Secretary General, de Cuellar, also held this view.⁴³ The Chinese Foreign Minister Qichen demanded a 'comprehensive solution' on his arrival and spoke of Beijing's willingness to stop all military aid to the resistance government following the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. His speech was remarkable in that he completely omitted all mention of the Khmer Rouge, hailed Sihanouk as the only competent leader of Cambodia and explicitly praised the Vietnamese decision to withdraw troops.⁴⁴ Hun Sen, whose international reputation had been enhanced by his meeting with the French Prime Minister Rocard, spoke of an atmosphere of warmth and of growing understanding,⁴⁵ and Prince Sihanouk appeared to follow the same line, describing Hun Sen as 'a good son' whom he loved, as he did every Cambodian.⁴⁶

The official Vietnamese party organ *Nhan Dan* printed the following comment on the start of the conference: 'the time is ripe for political settlement'.⁴⁷ The Vietnamese Foreign Minister Co Thach also demonstrated his conciliatory attitude and willingness to compromise by declaring his readiness to accept the UN in its supervisory capacity, providing the UN adopted a completely neutral stance.⁴⁸ Only the Khmer Rouge representatives refused to make any promises of reconciliation. After three days had passed and the first phase of the conference was at an end, those problems which had been solved were primarily matters of procedure. Four commissions were set up to draw up further arrangements. A group of UN experts was also formed despite vehement resistance from the Khmer Rouge. This group was sent to Cambodia under the leadership of a Norwegian UN general, to assess the situation.⁴⁹

The tasks of the commissions were as follows:

First group (Canada, India): organisation of the ceasefire, the international monitoring commission and the withdrawal of troops.

Second group (Laos, Malaysia): working out guarantees of Cambodia's neutrality, independence and territorial integrity, prevention of takeovers by genocidal forces.

Third group (Australia, Japan): solving repatriation problems of the Cambodian refugees, questions of reconstruction aid.

Fourth group (an ad hoc committee consisting of the four Cambodian parties together with France and Indonesia): questions of the interim government, national reconciliation, international supervision of elections.⁵⁰

In the course of the following weeks it became clear that rapprochement and consensus could most certainly be achieved in the international questions. Hun Sen confirmed: 'that we declare that the State of Cambodia will not take part in any military alliance or any treaty which would be contrary to its status of neutrality. It will permit neither the presence of foreign armed forces nor the installation of foreign military bases in its territory.'⁵¹

However, no agreement over domestic Cambodian affairs could be noted. The representatives of Democratic Cambodia continued to demand the resignation of Hun Sen's government and the formation of an interim government comprising all four parties. In questions of the Khmer Rouge's share of power,

there was no readiness to compromise at all. Sihanouk had maintained a distant attitude to the Khmer Rouge from the start of the conference, had accused them in a speech of 'sabotaging all attempts to bring about peace' and had appealed to the People's Republic of China 'to put pressure on the Khmer Rouge and force them to adopt a more flexible attitude'. He explained to journalists that Khieu Samphan had reduced the prospects of a peaceful consensus.⁵² He also underlined the role of the superpowers: 'It would depend on the result of the international conference with the superpowers and the latter could decide the future of the Khmer Rouge'⁵³ and elsewhere: 'China has been the main supporter of the Khmer Rouge, and the Khmer Rouge could not survive if China ceases to breathe life into it.'⁵⁴

Hun Sen's delegation now retracted the declaration it had made at the start to allow so-called 'moderate' members of the Khmer Rouge to resume positions of power at medium level. Even the Vietnamese leader Co Thach demanded a package deal, making total Vietnamese withdrawal dependent on the prevention of the return of Pol Pot's supporters.⁵⁵

In this problem area it became evident that no amount of pressure from the superpowers - assuming they decided to use any - would be enough to achieve a peaceful solution.

As already mentioned, the future treatment of Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia was a further point of contention. Hun Sen spoke of around 80,000 settlers and mentioned that there had always been Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia; however, the opposition placed the figure at around one million Vietnamese and demanded that they should be expelled immediately, referring also to Hanoi's 'fifth column'.⁵⁶ Hun Sen rejected this proposal with the remark that in that case around 500,000 Chinese would also have to be expelled from Cambodia. Even while the conference was still in progress, reports came in of new military offensives along the Thai-Cambodian border.⁵⁷

News of the introduction of a three-year compulsory military service in Cambodia and of Phnom Penh's increasingly inflexible attitude to the UN's supervisory and monitoring capacity meant that the end of the conference was seen far more sceptically than the beginning had been.⁵⁸

Shevardnadze had already drawn a parallel with the Geneva Agreement in a speech, and cited the ineffectiveness of the UN's monitoring machinery as a major reason for the continuing drama in Afghanistan.⁵⁹ At the end, no progress had been made even by the ad hoc team. France still made attempts to solve the question of the formation of a provisional interim government, but met with no success.⁶⁰

Hun Sen's concession to extend the deadline for new elections from three to six months after the Vietnamese withdrawal was also not enough to save the conference from failure.⁶¹

The conference 'ended in an atmosphere of bitterness, disappointment and disillusion. Four weeks of diplomatic effort had only resulted in a five-point declaration whose contents were largely meaningless and which ended with the resigned remark that the time was obviously not ripe for a political solution; on this note the participants handed Cambodia's future back to the armies of the Khmer Rouge and their internecine warfare.'⁶² And the *International Herald*

Tribune wrote: 'Although the new era of detente did lead to an international consensus at the start of this conference, the Cambodians failed to reach a solution among themselves. Neither side gave an inch during their talks, and all rejected a final compromise proposal presented last week by the French.'⁶³

Each party blamed the others for the failure of the conference. The USA and most of the ASEAN states put the blame on Phnom Penh, while other participants accused the Khmer Rouge of lack of willingness to compromise. It was also conjectured that internal dissent within the Chinese delegation had prevented Beijing from exerting sufficient pressure on the Khmer Rouge.⁶⁴ The People's Republic of China criticised Vietnam's attitude as being destructive and expressed the suspicion that Hanoi had not been interested in reaching a genuine solution.⁶⁵ The leader of the Soviet delegation, Rogachev, was noticeably restrained with his reproaches: 'The work here was useful ... We have more or less finished a framework for an agreement but 30 days are not enough to solve these very difficult problems.'⁶⁶ The Cambodian delegation rejected all blame: 'In the one month between the opening and the closing of the conference, the US has drastically changed its attitude to the Khmer Rouge. At the opening the US was strongly opposed to the Khmer Rouge. At the close it wanted Khmer Rouge participation in the government.'⁶⁷

All in all, many commentators accused the superpowers of ambivalence.

Further Developments after the Failure of the Conference

The Vietnamese largely adhered to their promise to withdraw all troops from Cambodia by 26 September, with or without international monitoring. Reports about an increase in arms deliveries to both sides now followed.⁶⁸ Sihanouk handed in his official resignation as leader of the coalition party, but retained his position as president of the exile government.

Summary and Conclusions

The Paris Conference on Cambodia was doomed to the same fate as the earlier informal rounds of talks JIM I and JIM II. Like them, it failed because of unbridgeable contradictions between the two Khmer camps, and probably also because of the lack of a genuine desire for reconciliation.⁶⁹ As the conference progressed, both sides became increasingly intransigent - obviously with the approval of their mentors. Prince Sihanouk insisted that the Khmer Rouge, branded as genocidal, should participate and that as the strongest military force they should be included. Son Sann had also pointed out in an interview that neither he nor Sihanouk were friends of the Khmer Rouge, but that they could only be brought under control by being involved in collective responsibility.⁷⁰ The Heng Samrin/Hun Sen government refused to approve an official sharing of power, citing the explicit will of the Cambodian people, who had already suffered enough. Although Vietnam had brought its regional involvement to an end - and thus also its international involvement - by withdrawing its troops, France had

evidently announced its optimism too early as initiator of the conference, and had been premature in placing its faith in the superpowers' influence and interest in a settlement. However, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the conference began with expressions of hope from all sides, and evidently a certain change of mood took place during the course of the proceedings. At present it is hardly possible to make an informed judgement about the reasons why the conference failed, the more so since many of the countries involved are only willing to release fragments of their confidential material, even after many years. Nevertheless, the attempt should be made to draw some conclusion about the proceedings, their possible background, and the interests and perceptions they conceal.

In connection with Sino-Soviet detente it can be assumed that the Soviet Union achieved her main aim, that of removing the obstacle along the path to normalisation of relations with the People's Republic of China, viz. the presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia. At the same time the Soviet military bases in Vietnam were clearly not seen as an issue which should be included in the conference, a further indication that Moscow's interests had largely been realised already. Since, then as now, the Soviet Union would like to reduce the massive amounts of support she gives to Vietnam, she will welcome Vietnamese withdrawal for this reason, hoping as well that the Vietnamese will succeed in keeping a pro-Vietnamese regime in Phnom Penh in the future. The comment from the French newspaper *Liberation* about the passivity of the two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union, is probably not without foundation. Perhaps Cambodia's significance has waned for Moscow.⁷¹

The USA had always expressed their interest in achieving a peaceful solution and simultaneously in preventing the Khmer Rouge from regaining power. Since the USA were not directly involved in this Indo-Chinese conflict, and involvement in this region is a difficult subject for American public opinion, the US government had primarily supported the two non-communist powers in the coalition government, Sihanouk and Son Sann. Perhaps Washington had misjudged the balance of power within the coalition government; after all, the USA had been convinced that Sihanouk played a leading role.

It could also be said of Sihanouk and Son Sann that they were interested in a swift and peaceful solution and thus in returning to Phnom Penh. The decisions of the exile government were certainly influenced by Sihanouk's and Son Sann's weak military position compared to the army of the Khmer Rouge, which was many times more powerful. Statements about the USA's passive stance were backed up by a quotation from Richard Solomon, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs: '... the US has neither the political position nor the resources to promote a peaceful settlement in Cambodia'; he added, however, '... that the same cannot be said for the Soviet Union and China'.⁷² Hun Sen, on the other hand, spoke of a secret understanding between the superpowers: 'There is now a collusion between the US and China on Cambodian issues. I don't think Sihanouk brought this about. The US needs the Prince, China needs the Khmer Rouge.'⁷³

Even without fully agreeing with this opinion, the fact remains that the superpowers of the USA, the Soviet Union and China very probably would have had the means to induce the Cambodian parties to make compromises.⁷⁴

Beijing will probably also continue to be interested in a weak, divided Indo-China, and in this context also in a pro-Chinese government in Phnom Penh. Possibly the events in Beijing in June gave the impression that a moderate stance would be the most appropriate for the first international appearance. The elimination of the Khmer Rouge and the continuation of a pro-Vietnamese government would run contrary to Beijing's interests of power.

By putting the promise of withdrawal into action, Hanoi proved to the world that it was prepared to compromise and was ready for reconciliation; it could now refute the accusation of being an invader. For Vietnam, this act removed the greatest obstacles to international assistance and support. Hanoi is also interested in moving the issue of Cambodia away from the centre of the world's attention. Vietnam will continue to support every pro-Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh, and is relying on the ability of the Hun Sen regime to assert itself in the future, like the government in Kabul. Vietnam will continue to pursue her main foreign policy interest of close political and economic cooperation between all three states of Indo-China.

Probably the Khmer Rouge saw hardly any chance of gaining a majority of the votes in internationally supervised free elections. Even the demands of both other coalition partners that in the case of civil disturbances international troops should stay in the country for as long as necessary - Son Sann stated in an interview that a ten-year period would certainly be necessary - only pointed to the demise of the Khmer Rouge as a political force. Khieu Samphan (Khmer Rouge) and Pol Pot decided on a struggle purely out of the will to survive - and seem to have achieved their aim.

It is possible that Prince Sihanouk had overestimated his own significance, also as a symbol of integration. He had attached great importance to the superpowers' declaration of interest in achieving peace, but the confidence expressed by the four Cambodian parties at the start of the conference had been far more cautious. It must be feared that both non-communist forces have lost their chance of participating in shaping the future of Cambodia for the present. Evidently the Hun Sen government feels it has enough military strength to risk a confrontation with the Khmer Rouge. It can rely on support from the majority of the population and probably too on unofficial support from Hanoi and the Eastern Bloc. *Neues Deutschland* wrote on the 19 September: 'If the exile coalition can ask for help from abroad, then the Cambodian government will also make use of this right.'⁷⁵ And Hun Sen explained in an interview on 5 September: 'If the Khmer Rouge threatened the Cambodian capital, it is up to the United States and the Soviet Union, along with other nations, to figure out a solution.'⁷⁶

In the last resort, the government of the State of Cambodia is probably relying on world opinion to prevent the return of the 'genocidal' Khmer Rouge.

For the present, each side in Cambodia will attempt to conquer its opponents by military means, with the now largely unofficial support of both socialist superpowers. However, a solution for Cambodia and a permanent, peaceful solution in Indo-China can only be envisaged with the consent and cooperation of both Vietnam and China.

Notes

- (1) Cf. Will, Gerhard: "Die Konflikte in Indochina seit dem Ende des Zweiten Vietnam-Krieges; Entstehung und Eskalation". *Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien (BIOST)*, Köln, 56/1988, p.10.
- (2) *Ibid.*, p.11.
- (3) April 17, 1975.
- (4) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Die Konflikte in Indochina ...", p.16.
- (5) Cf. Will, Gerhard: "Vietnam nach dem VI. Parteitag der KPV: Zwei Schritte vorwärts, ein Schritt zurück", *BIOST*, Köln, 20/1988, p.63 ff.
- (6) July 18, 1977.
- (7) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Die Konflikte in Indochina ...", p.24.
- (8) *Ibid.*, p.26.
- (9) Cf. Sommers Heidhues, Mary F., *Politik in Südostasien*. Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, Hamburg, No.136.
- (10) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Die Konflikte in Indochina ...", p.23.
- (11) Cf. Weggel, Oskar: "Die Kambodscha-Frage vor einer Lösung? Annäherung und offene Probleme", in: *Europa-Archiv*, 10.11.1988, No.21, p.616.
- (12) *Ibid.*
- (13) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Die Konflikte in Indochina ...", p.40.
- (14) Military strength 1989: Khmer Rouge (National Army of DC): approx. 40,000, Son Sann (KPNLF): approx. 15,000, Sihanouk (ANS): approx. 10,000, aus: *Südostasien aktuell*, May 1989, p.263. Refugee figures 1987: approx. 297, 199, aus: *Südostasien aktuell*, September 1987, p.408.
- (15) Cf. Schier, Peter: "Der Konflikt zwischen der SR Vietnam und dem Demokratischen Kampuchea und seine Ursachen", in: *Draguhn/Schier: Indochina, Der permanente Konflikt*, Hamburg 1985, p.94.
- (16) Cf. *Südostasien aktuell*, September 1986, p.491.
- (17) Cf. *Südostasien aktuell*, May 1986, p.227.
- (18) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Vietnam nach dem VI. Parteitag ...", p.5.
- (19) Cf. Klintworth, Gary: "Vietnam's Withdrawal From Cambodia", Working Paper No.117 (Australian National University), Canberra 1987, p.25 ff.
- (20) Cf. Buszynski, Leszch: "ASEAN: Security Issues of the 1990s". Working Paper No.165, Canberra 1988, National Library of Australia.
- (21) See Vietnam's (SRV) Membership of COMECON, June 1978, Vietnamese-Soviet Friendship Pact, November 1978.
- (22) Cf. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)*, 5.12.1979.
- (23) Cf. Heinzig, Dieter: "Sowjetische Chinapolitik unter Gorbatschow. Der Abbau der 'drei großen Hindernisse'", in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 12/89, p.31.
- (24) Cf. Kazuko, Mori: "The Impact of Sino-Soviet Détente", in: *The Pacific Review*, Vol.1, No.3, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.290.
- (25) Cf. Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostock on 28 July 1986 and Glaubitz/Heinzig (ed.): "Die Sowjetunion und Asien in den 80er Jahren", Vol.18, *BIOST*, Köln 1988, p.327.
- (26) Cf. Heinzig, Dieter: "Moskau und Peking: Abbau der sicherheitspolitischen Barrieren", *BIOST*, Köln, 26/1989, p.10.
- (27) Cf. Buszynski, loc. cit., "ASEAN: Security ...", p.20.
- (28) Cf. Gorbachev's speech before the UN General Assembly on 7.12.1988, in: *Europa-Archiv*, 1989, Issue 1, D23-37.
- (29) Cf. Heinzig, loc. cit., "Sowjetische Chinapolitik unter Gorbatschow, ...", p.37.
- (30) Burma also belongs to South-East Asia, but cannot be said to be part of either bloc and is not a member of ASEAN.
- (31) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Die Konflikte in Indochina ...", p.6.
- (32) Cf. Weggel, Oskar, loc. cit., "Die Kambodscha-Frage vor einer Lösung?", p.616-618.
- (33) Cf. Will, loc. cit., "Vietnam nach dem VI. Parteitag ...", p.63 ff.
- (34) Cf. *Neue Zeit*: "Tauwetter - von Konfrontation zu Dialog und Kompromiß", Moscow, No.8, p.36.
- (35) Cf. *International Herald Tribune (IHT)*, 7.8.1989: "Why Singapore Wants To See A Peace Accord".

- (36) Participants: five permanent members of the UNO Security Council; the six ASEAN states, Laos, Vietnam, four Cambodian parties (with one seat), Canada, Australia, Japan, India, Zimbabwe (representing non-aligned countries), UN General Representative.
- (37) Asiaweek: "Indochina's Last Talk Show?"; see further: Neues Deutschland (ND), 26.8.1989.
- (38) Cf. Südostasien aktuell, May 1986, p.227 and 285; see further: China aktuell, January 1989, p.7.
- (39) Cf. interview with Son Sann held in Paris on 1 August 1989.
- (40) Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), "Starting to Tango", August 10, 1989, p.10; see further: ND, August 4, 1989, p.2.
- (41) BPA Ostinformation, 31.7.1989, "Cambodia", p.65.
- (42) Ibid.
- (43) Cf. Information Service, United Nations Office at Geneva, Press Release SG/SM/1012, 31.7.1989.
- (44) Xinhua, English, 31.7.1989.
- (45) Cf. Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB), 2.8.1989, FE 0525/C1/3.
- (46) Cf. SWB, 5.8.1989, FE 0527/C1/1.
- (47) SWB, 2.8.1989, FE 0525/C1/4.
- (48) Cf. NZZ, 1.8.1989: "Opening of the Cambodia Conference in Paris".
- (49) Cf. NZZ, 3.8.1989: "Slight Progress at the Cambodia Conference"; see further: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 9.8.1989: "The UN Mission in Cambodia".
- (50) SWB, FE 0526/C1/1, 4.8.1989; cf. FEER, 10.8.1989, p.10.
- (51) SWB, FE 0526/C1/3, 4.8.1989.
- (52) Cf. BPA Ostinformation, 1.8.1989, p.33.
- (53) Korean Herald, 4.8.1989: "Cambodia: Hope At Last".
- (54) SWB, 5.8.1989, FE 0527/C1/1.
- (55) Cf. Die Welt, 15.8.1989: "Only a beautiful facade?".
- (56) Cf. Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), 11.8.1989; see further: SZ, 29.8.1989; SWB, FE 9546/C1/2, 28.8.1989.
- (57) Cf. FAZ, 9.8.1989: "New Offensive by Cambodian Troops"; see further: Asiaweek, 11.8.1989, p.23; IHT, 21.8.1989.
- (58) Cf. SZ, 11.8.1989: "Cambodia's mistrust of the UN".
- (59) BPA Ostinformation, 31.7.1989, p.66.
- (60) Cf. SZ, 24.8.1989: "Cambodia makes first concessions".
- (61) Cf. FAZ, 24.8.1989: "Progress at the Cambodia Conference".
- (62) NZZ, 2.9.1989: "Failure of Cambodia Talks in Paris".
- (63) IHT, 30.8.1989: "French Expect Cambodia Talks to Fail"; see further: SWB 2.9.1989, FE 0551/C1/1.
- (64) Cf. Financial Times, 31.8.1989, p.3: "Cambodian peace conference breaks up in bitterness".
- (65) Cf. SZ, 29.8.1989: "Cambodia Conference is on the verge of failure"; see further: SWB, 30.8.1989, FE 0548/C1/1.
- (66) IHT, 31.8.1989: "Cambodian Talks End in Limbo"; see further: FAZ, 1.9.1989: "Paris: Superpowers have to support Cambodia more strongly".
- (67) The Times, 5.9.1989: Interview with Hun Sen: "Hun Sen rules out a role for Prince Sihanouk".
- (68) Cf. IHT, 3.9.1989; see further: The Washington Post, 30.8.1989: "US blames Phom Penh Regime for Cambodian Talks Stalemate".
- (69) Cf. NZZ, 1.9.1989: "Scheitern der Pariser Kambodscha-Gespräche".
- (70) Cf. Interview with Son Sann, Paris 1.8.1989.
- (71) "Liberation", in: FAZ, 1.9.1989: "Entscheidung auf dem Schlachtfeld", in: Stimmen der Anderen.
- (72) Korean Herald, 10.9.1989: "Moscow, Beijing urged restraint in Cambodia".
- (73) The Times, 5.9.1989, Interview with Hun Sen.
- (74) Interview with Son Sann, 1.8.1989: "... the superpowers USA, SU and VRC wish peaceful settlement and they have the power to realise peace for the Cambodian people".
- (75) ND, 19.9.1989: "Kambodschanischer Regierungschef warnt vor Bürgerkrieg".
- (76) Interview with Hun Sen, loc. cit., The Times, 5.9.1989.