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INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH

COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

SECURITY COUNCIL

Forty-first year

Letter dated 9 October 1986 from the Permanent Representative of
Democratic Kampuchea to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, for your information, a document on the pursuit of Vietnamization in Kampuchea by the Vietnamese occupation forces (see annex).

I should be very grateful if you would arrange for the text of this letter and the annex thereto to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 25, 76, 88, 97 and 99, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) THIOUNN Prasith
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

THE PURSUIT OF VIETNAMIZATION
IN KAMPUCHEA

"The ongoing process of the Vietnamization of Kampuchea must remain the main focus of international concern." (*)

. . . .

*In the framework of their half-century strategy aimed at swallowing up Kampuchea into the "Indochinese Federation" (**) and eliminating progressively her national identity as their predecessors did in 17th century with the Islamic Kingdom of Champa which is now Centre-Vietnam, and in 19th century with the Lower-Kampuchea (Delta of the Mekong river) which is now South-Vietnam, the Hanoi authorities pursue feverishly their policy of Vietnamization of Kampuchea, in contempt of the condemnation by the international community.*

Hereafter are excerpts of an article by Ms. Marie Alexandrine Martin, Naturalist and Ethnologist, Maître de Recherche at CNRS (France), published in the review Etudes, (February, 1986)

(*) : H.R.H. Samdech NORODOM Sihanouk, President of Democratic Kampuchea, at press conference in Bangkok (Thailand), on Wednesday 6 August 1986.

(**) : See UN document A/40/678 of 24 September 1985 "The Vietnamization of Kampuchea: A process of absorption of a people and nation"

"Unofficial translation"

THE PURSUIT OF VIETNAMIZATION IN KAMPUCHEA

The settlement of Vietnamese nationals in Cambodia was legalized in Autumn 1982. Official documents so far available in Bangkok, and refugee testimonies collected in early 1984 give some hints as to the scope of this phenomenon. Besides, this is only a step within a more global process, that is the Vietnamization of Cambodia in all fields, administrative, educational, economic, military, political. What is the situation one year later?

ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATION

The double increase of Vietnamese experts which was under way at that time seems to be effective almost everywhere. Their growing tutelage is more and more resented by Khmer civil servants who keep fleeing after a six-year attempt at a cohabitation already difficult in time of peace and made even more unbearable in this period of occupation. Some have further reasons to flee, for there is every likelihood that they are thrown into prison on account of collaboration with the resistants; for others, Vietnamese oppression is the primary cause of their flight. Any project prepared by a Khmer must be scrutinized by Vietnamese experts who correct and give it the final touch, prior to any approval by the Prime Minister and President of the Republic(*). Even festivities in pagodas must be given permission by Vietnamese advisers in charge of festivities and entertainments. At the central office of Vietnamese experts, known as Office A 50, it is the expert in charge of the Party affairs who has the last say, even over the Chairman of the Office, Lê Dinh (formerly President of Ho Chi Minh city) whose main task is to execute the Party's orders.

Apart from two categories of priority people (orphans considered as State property and trained accordingly, and those having received an education in Vietnam, the USSR and the Eastern countries), selection in the civil service or for further education is tight and essentially based on the support given to the regime... Besides, the Khmers are concerned about a new phenomenon: some young Vietnamese settlers former residents in Cambodia and speaking Khmer, are now claiming admission into the civil service. Since naturalization of settlers has come under consideration, and the void left by each Cambodian who fled remains to be filled, the claim is quite feasible. Yet, the latter's exodus is a regular occurrence. Considering the aspiration, prior to the communist takeover, of the majority of educated Khmers to take a career in the administration, their confidence must have been seriously shaken to drive them to such a rejection of the State.

(*) : (of the puppet regime installed by Vietnamese forces in Phnom Penh)

In the face of such new difficulties, bewildered, if not desperate, school children arrive at the border, some of them even hoping to find a university there! Great is their thirst for knowledge, and some choose to flee as a result of the recent decision of Phnom Penh to limit their studies to the cycle of secondary school so as to enlist them into the army or into "clearing" units⁽¹⁾. They were told of this decision in early 1985 by Khmer officials at the Ministry of Education in presence of Vietnamese advisers. It goes without saying that the school children were dismayed at the news. Besides, each and everyone of them regrets the inadequacy in the assigned programme of education: four hours a day, the rest being devoted to "socialist work", the compulsory teaching of Vietnamese, starting in 1984, the substitution of ancient history of Cambodia by Marxism-Leninism and modern history (Khmer books printed in Vietnam) praising the "age-old" Khmer-Vietnamese friendship; the Cambodian and Vietnamese peoples have always been friendly with one another, contentious matters existing only between their leaderships. It is as if the resentment of the Khmers against their neighbours was not real and had no historical grounds. It is perhaps necessary to point out that this resentment does not encompass the Vietnamese people in general, but only those who, in one way or another (Annam's Emperors in bygone days, South-Vietnamese leaders and soldiers in the post-independence era, today's communist leaders), have had designs over the national territory. In 1985 confrontation broke out between Khmer population and Vietnamese immigrants as a result of the latter behaving as conquerors in the wake of state protection granted to them, thus overstepping the limit of what can be tolerated by Cambodians....

SETTLERS AND BORDERS

Refugees are unanimous: in areas where insecurity was prevailing, the number of Vietnamese civilians was rather the same in 1983 and 1984. However, in 1984, new flows kept arriving in towns, provinces bordering Vietnam and along the waterways.

500 Vietnamese families now live in the region of Bavet, in Svay Rieng province. In the province of Prey Veng, Vietnamese fishermen form the majority of the population living in the region stretching from river and its affluents. Tradesmen, crossing the border at their will, go to and fro on roads (especially on road 1).

Generally speaking, settlers seize upon markets in big cities. In Phnom Penh, a sort of census was carried out in late 1984 to detect the "non-productive elements", that is all those who, not being civil servants, should have been sent to the ricefields. Those refusing to collaborate with the regime and small traders are also included in this category. Difficulties, however, keep growing: at the market, a stall of 1.2 m which was taxed 100 riels in 1980 cost 2,800 to 3,000 riels per month to a stallholder in 1984.

(1): "Clearing", "forced labour" refer to the requisition of Cambodian civilians by the Vietnamese army. See UN document A/40/750 of 14 October 1985: "Vietnamese genocidal crimes in Kampuchea: A new process of extermination of the people of Kampuchea."

If you set up a stall at home, you should have to pay 400 riels per month. The Khmers think that those measures are part of an overall plan aimed at provoking the departure of Khmer civilians from Phnom Penh. Indeed, there are very few people who can afford to pay such high taxes. Moreover, the population is allowed to live only in Chinese-style compartments, Khmer-style houses and modern buildings being reserved for the settlers. In 1984, flows of settlers kept arriving, their number reaching a peak in May. Senior civil servants reported that they came in at night time (as was reported by refugees last year) in large groups, without the knowledge of the Khmer authorities. The department concerned of the Revolutionary People's Committee in the capital must hold a night meeting to decide on their immediate affectation in order to avoid any notice from foreigners. The inhabitants, if unaware of these arrivals for a short time, would have soon realized the situation when they saw new houses in which lived the Vietnamese; these houses being built on a waste ground which a few days earlier was still empty. In Spring 1985, people living in Phnom Penh were simply driven away from their houses and replaced by the Vietnamese. They were sent to the countryside; some of them managed to escape and reach the border. New identity cards have been put into circulation following the last census; verifications and raids are frequent. Everything is therefore planned to gradually turn Phnom Penh into a Vietnamese town with only necessary administrative Khmer personnel...

The border agreements signed in 1983 between the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was immediately implemented: oil prospecting is now under way on the maritime territory gained over Cambodia. In this regard, access to the sea is forbidden by the *Bodoi* (Vietnamese soldiers). As for the land borders, people living in Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kompong Cham provinces had witnessed, at the beginning of the Vietnamese invasion in late 1978, the shifting of boundary markers from 3 to 5 km into Cambodia. A bamboo-fenced barrier had been built by Vietnamese civilians equipped with tractors to mark the new boundaries.

Having been compelled to give up half of their lands since 1975 to the Vietnamese coming from the North, the Khmers in Kampuchea Krom (former Cochinchina) also feel a strong resentment against this colonization. Economic and religious harassments, political persecutions (imprisonment) are very similar to those carried out in what Hanoi calls "new Cambodia" whose borders have been reshaped by it. Khmer families from southern Vietnam have therefore fled, since 1984, their homeland to reach the Khmer-Thai border, the men joining the ranks of nationalist resistants. "We, Khmers, do not want to stay with the Vietnamese; we do not have the same way of thinking". Indeed, this is not only a territory which is coveted but a whole ethnic group which, on both sides of the border, is reduced to impotence.

The Khmers are all the more concerned as they think that a great many military men are disguised as settlers for whom it will be easier to act when regular troops withdraw, should this happen. The fact that the Vietnamese population of Tonle Sap is armed to defend itself against Khmer Rouge attacks shows that those civilians, if need be, know how to use guns.

ECONOMIC HOLD

1. INTERNATIONAL AID

In 1979-1980, ridiculous distributions were carried out: 0 to 10 kg of rice or wheat or maize per year and per person. Since then, no refugee arriving at the border, whether he or she be from the countryside or from towns, has received any. Whatever the amount of the aid provided, it seems that it did not reach the population. And this without speaking of the national and foreign armies (puppet army of Phnom Penh and Vietnamese army - Ed) to feed and diversions often referred to in refugee circles.

Aid supplies are generally stockpiled in the agriculture departments or chambers of commerce in provincial chief-towns, not to mention other places. Defecting soldiers of the Heng Samrin army used to escort convoys of Vietnamese military trucks full of commodities destined for Vietnam; personnel of border police have checked the contents of land and maritime cargoes since waterways (Mekong, Bassac rivers) are also utilized, in particular during the period of high water. On road leading to Ho Chi Minh City, the inhabitants have seen lines of covered heavy trucks reminiscent of convoys which, in the 1960s, carried rice to the Vietcong and North-Vietnamese. Besides, they think that the Kratié-Ratanakiri road has been cut off on purpose since 1979 by the Phnom Penh authorities so as to cover up the diversion to Vietnam of a part of international aid destined for Cambodia. Since the curfew is imposed in every town, convoys depart at night time, safe from prying eyes, from the eastern provinces where the crossing is short. Books, notebooks, pencils given by UNICEF, fertilizers can be found on the market of Svay Rieng and Prey Veng provinces. Knowing that a bag of urea (coming from the aid programme and resold on the market) costs 50 rials in Cambodia and that there is a shortage of this fertilizer in Vietnam where the price is ten times higher, we can understand the presence of a daily trade along the border, from which "smugglers" (term used in the whole region to call those who do business at the borders), who are not necessarily the most deprived, reap the profits.

2. HOME PRODUCTS

The economic twinning of Cambodian and Vietnamese provinces has enabled the two countries to conduct exchanges which the Cambodians consider as advantageous to Hanoi.

A facet so far unknown to the public is the small amount of rice allocated to the population. First of all, it should be known that distribution of crops is made between each member of the production group, known as *krom samaki*, according to the productive force of each member, and sometimes according to the numerical size of each household. This means that the absence of the head of the family (husband rounded up for forced labour or child enlisted in the army) is tantamount to difficulties, if not famine to the household. As a general rule, each family (and more rarely each production group) is parsimoniously granted a tract of land: the peasant "owns" one third or half

of the area he cultivated previously, that is between 50 to 100 acres. In spite of that, the increase in taxes reported early in 1984 by fleeing civil servants is effective: the peasant is allowed to keep only 50 to 70 per cent of the paddy which have been distributed to him; locally, this figure may be lower, seldom higher. This deduction is generally levied without any substitute; it is a donation. In some reported places, the State pays 1.4 to 1.6 riels one kilogram of paddy. With those restrictions in mind (lands and crops), a person can spare on an average 100 to 130 kg of rice per year (a peasant needs usually 250 kg of rice). To offset this shortage, one has to earn money by resorting to his resourcefulness, hence the swarming of merchants selling cooked vegetables, cakes, fire-wood, who are no other than peasants; hence business around towns and at the border, enabling traders to gain some profits but also a great many families to survive. This extra rice is freely sold on markets: 5 to 8 riels per kilogram according to its quality. In late 1984, the price of rice rose up to 10 riels per kilogram at Puok, in Siemreap province.

Should a peasant kill an ox too old for labour, he must give 3,000 riels to the *bodoi* (Vietnamese soldiers) stationed in the area; he must pay them 60 R. for a pork. Each planted banana-tree is taxed 5 R., a sugar cane 3 R., a coconut (picked for personal consumption) 1 R.. As for vegetables grown along the riversides of the Mekong, one third of them must be donated to the State.

All those commodities are likely to feed Khmer and Vietnamese soldiers. Besides, the inhabitants say that a part of Cambodian products have been sent to Vietnam within the framework of the exchange programme, their selling price being low and serving at securing, at high prices, Vietnamese commodities whose quality is not appreciated by the Khmers.

Although Svay Rieng is twinned with Long Ang (in Vietnam), only 30 per cent of its exchanges with Vietnam are sent to Long Ang, the rest being primarily destined for Ho Chi Minh City. The figure of 23,000 tons of rice levied on Svay Rieng province in 1984 is likely to confirm that of 200,000 tons put forward several times as being the overall amount of Cambodian rice sent to Vietnam the same year. Even by setting aside these two figures, one can raise some questions as to why Cambodia, a former rice exporting country (with 200,000 to 400,000 tons of surplus per year) has failed to feed her population after six years of economic reorganization? And why, in order to feed his family, the Cambodian peasant, despite the aid granted (177,000 tons required for 1984) should have to buy rice whose price on the market is exorbitant if compared to the official rate. What is then the meaning of this information broadcast by Radio Hanoi on June 17, 1985 (FBIS, 6.19.85) stating that "for the first nine months in 1984, the Cambodian trade sector had bought more than 400,000 tons of paddy from different provinces of the country". The communiqué did not specify the beneficiary of this purchase.

Moreover, a major part of latex coming from the rubber plantations in Kompong Cham province would have been sent to Vietnam after being treated into crepe. On June 16, 1985, Radio Hanoi (FBIS, 6.18.85) reported the marked cooperation in the field of rubber exploitation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

In addition to those major trades, South-Vietnamese peasants, very poor, came to Svay Rieng and Prey Veng to recover materials, which one may call rubbish left over by the Cambodians, namely broken bottles, plastic, scrap iron,... As far as these small barterers are concerned, the Khmers do not feel any resentment against these Vietnamese families: "They are so poor and they are not looters; they even try to give some money in exchange." The Khmers, however, charge the (Vietnamese) leaders with dishonesty. On November 25, 1984, Chan Sen, Sor Denis, Mon Sitha, respectively (Khmer) Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Svay Rieng's Import-Export Department, and Chairman of Accounting Services, were charged with embezzlement, arrested and sent to Svay Rieng's underground prison which is usually reserved for political prisoners. Twenty nine million riels would have thus been stolen by Vietnamese experts, affirmed the Cambodians who explained that cheques had been sent regularly to Vietnam... Workers coming from Phnom Penh said that equipments and machine tools were missing in warehouses guarded by the *bodoi* and that reports prepared by the experts charged the Khmers with robbery.

There has been a sweeping reaction against those persecutions, and today the Khmer peasantry is deeply involved in the conflict.

3. POLITICAL COMMITMENT OF PEASANTS AND DESERTIONS OF KHMER SOLDIERS

Six years after the military intervention which, according to strategists in Hanoi, should have been a lightning operation, the Vietnamese, assisted by Heng Samrin's soldiers, have failed to pacify Cambodia. Early in 1985, they scored a victory on the "external front" by taking over all the bases held by the resistants along the Thai border. Inside the country, however, clashes have increasingly broken out on the "internal front" after the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea in June 1982. The peasantry, which gets closer to Prince Sihanouk, today is helping the three movements of the anti-Vietnamese government. Such a political commitment on the part of the peasants has had no precedent in Cambodia's contemporary history...

The increasing number of political prisons throughout the country (a dozen in Phnom Penh in comparison to one before 1975) and whose survivors have taken refuge at the border since 1980, the distribution of rifles to Vietnamese civilians living on the Tonle Sap, the fighting reported by Phnom Penh Radio, the rallying of resistants claimed by Phnom Penh and Hanoi, the construction of strategic fences and the forced labours constitute an implicit confession that there are many opponents to the regime...

Khmerization of the army, as hoped by Hanoi, cannot be achieved easily. Refugees have drawn the attention to the presence in Heng Samrin's army of Vietnamese nationals, who were former residents in Cambodia. This is a disguised means aimed at Vietnamizing the army, said the refugees. Besides, deserters point to the fact that the occupiers have no confidence in the Cambodian soldiers who are mostly assigned to public works, digging of trenches, gardening, cutting

The apathy of the population --a hostility hardly concealed if not for fear of being harassed-- the assistance, sometimes tracked down by the Vietnamese, granted to the resisters, the ensuing difficulties faced by the *bodoi* in the interior of the country, have prompted Hanoi to take drastic measures in an attempt to check the advance of the resistance. of stakes for the construction of fortlets. Most of them have not taken part in any combat for the past five years...

A POPULATION UNDER FORCED LABOUR (*)

Kept under silence for more than a year, this massive conscription drive had not caught the headlines of French newspaper until, on the one hand, the arrival at the Thai border of Cambodians who had taken part in those labours, and, on the other, the highlights by press reports. This operation was mentioned by Bangkok newspapers as early as October 1984, and has regularly been on the news since January 1985. It should be noted that the peasants, who had been rounded up for two and a half years, did not react until conscriptions became official in January 1984 (circular signed by Say Phu Thang): hence their flight from the country. It is mainly the civil servants who, as soon as they were affected, began to echo the news.

Intended to support military operations, those labours meant clearing the forests in order to drive away the resisters who were hiding there, building roads, sealing up the border with fences and ditches (stretching from Laos to the Gulf of Thailand), to prevent guerrilla infiltration. They were mostly feared by those likely to be rounded up, mainly men aged 18 to 45, women aged 18 to 35 with no infant in charge, and school children on vacation. By mid-August, even senior civil servants were also affected...

There had been no denial from the Phnom Penh authorities... Today the Government can no more conceal consequences of those labours, in view of the number of people being treated for malaria in the capital. The authorities seem to have been surprised by the scope of this disaster. Nevertheless, forced labour keep going on, even if the speed has changed during the rainy season: the duration of conscription has been reduced from three to two months, but, since the number of conscripts is maintained to the same level, that means more people are risking their lives. In October 1985, the speed would have gone back to that of the dry season. Health personnel, nurses, doctors had been sent to those labour camps or to hospitals in nearby towns, where there was a shortage of medicines. For lack of quinine or effective related products, malaria fits which could have been checked earlier had yet claimed a heavy toll. Moreover, not all the conscripted surgeons were prepared to deal with amputations or severe wounds resulting from explosions of mines with which the forests are covered and whose strings cannot be detected without adequate instruments. As a result, hospitals in provinces and in Phnom Penh have had their already insufficient medical staff reduced and assigned to a task which they have no means to assume.

(*): See UN document A/40/750 of 14 October 1985: "Vietnamese genocidal crimes in Kampuchea: A new process of extermination of the people of Kampuchea."

On the other hand, rice growing was adversely affected: those sent to forced labour --that is able-bodied men and women-- cannot at all or very little take part in production. In 1984, rice deficit announced by FAO was up to 177,000 tons (Le Monde, 10.21/22.84). Mr James Ingram from World Food Programme gave the figure of 400,000 tons for 1985 (The Nation Review, 8.13.85). In giving a part of responsibility to climatic hazards, one can come to the logic conclusion that the main cause lies in the rounding up of agricultural manpower by Vietnamese soldiers.

Deadly and economically disastrous for the Khmers, but very advantageous to the Vietnamese who send home logs of the biggest trees, that forced labour could still have had consequences on the natural heritage of the country: being successful in preserving her forests (73 per cent of the national territory in 1969), Cambodia is now losing one of her most beautiful species and is likely to see a change in ecological conditions (diminution of rains, disappearance or rarity of some animal species) should this deforestation go too far. Since 1982, many species from hardwood and bamboo forests have been cut down to build strategic fences around hamlets visited by the resisters (northern and central provinces) and around towns where are stationed major military headquarters (Battambang, Siemreap, Leach in Pursat).
