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Discussion between Hua Guofeng and Pol Pot

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HUA GUOFENG^[1] AND POL POT^[2]

29 September 1977 [place not provided]

Pol Pot: The Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Cuba are cooperating in order to fight us in the border areas. We think that they have prepared intelligence personnel inside our forces. At the central level, they have 5 agents; at the division level, they have between 4 and 10; and in addition, they have some in the provinces. Since September 1975, they have been preparing to attack Phnom Penh, Preyvang, and the border areas. They are also preparing to assassinate our leadership with high-accuracy guns and poison. They have several times poisoned food that we by chance did not eat. Thailand, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam are cooperating to do so. We also have documents to show that the US and Vietnam also cooperate on this issue. In 1976, we started to solve the problem of the Vietnamese agents and by June 1977, the job was basically completed. We have placed carefully selected cadres to be in charge of Phnom Penh and the border areas, especially on the Eastern border [with Vietnam] where there are many CIA agents.

We understand that the nature of the Vietnamese armed forces has changed. They can no longer bear hardship. They now rely on heavy weaponry, tanks, and aircraft. At the same time, the nature of their infantry forces has also changed. Their troops do not want to fight. Many of their troops from the North have taken additional wives in the South and they cannot fight. We are not concerned about fighting, but about the constant threat from Vietnam. Not only does Vietnam want to annex Cambodia and Laos. It also wants to occupy the whole of Southeast Asia. We have conducted negotiations with them many times, but to no avail.

To solve the problem by military means will lead to a decrease in our forces. The strategic orientation, therefore, should be to develop revolution in Southeast Asia. Otherwise, it will take centuries to solve the problem between Vietnam and Cambodia. Laos, to our knowledge, will play an important role in the strategy of Vietnam. The Vietnamese-Lao Treaty of 13 July 1977 is a treaty under which Vietnam annexes Lao territory. Laos' population is three million. Yet, the number of Vietnamese in Laos alone—not to mention the Vietnamese Laotians—is three million. The Vietnamese population is increasing by between one and two million every year. After five years, the Laotians will be a minority. Vietnam, however, is not able to control Laos because it has insufficient human, financial, and food resources. If the revolution in Southeast Asia advances strongly, exploiting the opportunities, then the situation will be better and we shall solve our problem.

We have conversed with our Burmese, Malaysian, Indonesian, and Thai friends and reached agreement with them. This is a big political victory even though it will be more complicated when we go into details. We rely on our Chinese friends in the North. Southeast Asia is united. This situation encourages us strategically.

As far as our foreign policy is concerned, we try to unite the Southeast Asian forces. Our Central Committee considers this an important task. We spend time working with parties in Southeast Asia.

That Cambodia can defend itself is contributing to the defense of Southeast Asia. As before, we feel safe having the Chinese as friends. The recent 11th CCP Congress encourages us and promises us and the Southeast Asian revolution a bright future.

Hua Guofeng: Your strategy regarding the neighboring countries is correct.

[1] Hua Guofeng, as Mao's hand-picked successor, was then CCP CC chairman and PRC premier.

[2] Right before his departure for Beijing, in late September, Pol Pot made a speech in Phnom Penh in which he publicly revealed the existence of the Cambodian Communist Party and that he himself was its General Secretary. On September 24, Khmer Rouge forces had launched attacks against a number of villages on the Vietnamese side of the border.