

March 3, 1982
**Excerpts of Talks between Leading Comrades and
Foreign Guests (No. 2)**

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Summary:

A Chinese Communist Party digest summarizing a meeting held between Deng Xiaoping and Norodom Sihanouk.

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Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping's Conversation with Prince Norodom Sihanouk

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On February 18, Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping met with Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The main contents of the meeting are as follows:

Vice Chairman Deng: "Recently I went elsewhere to rest for nearly a month. There was a lot of foreign speculation about that. Some people said I had been shot, others that I had stepped down. There was a lot of this kind of speculation at other times too."

Sihanouk: People pay great attention to your whereabouts and physical condition. They hope that you will be healthy in order to fulfill your historical and patriotic mission for the benefit of the Chinese people."

Vice Chairman Deng: Many people hope so, but some other people do hope that I'll get shot. There is no basis to the speculation that they make about me. China, in fact, has rarely been so stable in all its history. Naturally there are many problems of this and that, it will take time, but they can all be solved, especially by the younger people.

Now we are engaged in institutional reform. We must overcome bureaucracy. We must eliminate overlapping agencies, organizations that have swelled to big and organizations that are overmanned. This will involve the retirement of many people. We have too many vice premiers on the State Council that aren't up to the job. Official documents circulate too much: one document might need over ten approvals. How does the work get done with so many deputy department heads? The tasks of government departments and commissions are divided out too much. There are over 90 departments and commissions directly subordinate to the State Council. Many of them should be merged. Another problem is the aging of the cadres. We must solve that problem. If we don't solve it now, when will we solve it? One year from now, everyone will be one year older. We handle this like a revolution, but as a revolution against organizations and not against people. From our experience of one month of institutional reform work, we can see that this work is going very well and that it will succeed. The success of this work in itself proves that our country is politically stable.

When we raised this issue, there was a lot of discussion in Japan, the United States and Europe. They said it was a good thing but it would be very difficult to accomplish. Now we are going to prove through practice that it is not only possible, but that it will not take a long time either. First of all, it was expected to take two years at the central level. But now we are going to prove through experience that it is not only possible but that it won't take a long time. First of all, at the central level, it was expected to take two years. Now it won't take that long either. We can get it done in seven or eight months.

We can carry out the institutional reform work smoothly because we have achieved political stability and policy continuity over the past several years. Of course, this is a difficult task, but our comrades in the Party, especially the old ones, are unanimous in understanding the need for this. This is a very favorable condition.

Almost none of the socialist countries have solved this problem. We are making the first experiment.

Sihanouk: Some revolutions are constructive and some are destructive. The institutional reform work you are doing now is a constructive revolution.

Vice Chairman Deng: Yes. The Cultural Revolution was also called a revolution, but

it was not right. In other areas we have done well. We have had difficulties because of certain international factors. We have encountered some difficulties, for example, in bringing in advanced technology. Some countries are very tight about sharing high tech. As Chairman Mao said, the main principle is self-reliance. That has always been our fundamental principle. If we don't rely upon our own efforts, many problems cannot be solved. We believe that with hard work, all problems can be solved. Of course it may take a little longer.

Last June, when Haig visited China, I told him that since the normalization of China-U.S. relations, the U.S. has not sold us a single piece of decent advanced technology. Haig was amazed to hear that, for example, the electronic computer for the census, which is a very ordinary computer, but they blocked the export of that computer to us. That problem was solved; the United Nations paid for it. A few years ago, when Kissinger visited China, we offered to buy a 10 megaflop computer. They wouldn't sell that one to us either so we had to make one for ourselves. So, we still have to be self-reliant. Of course, our policy of introducing advanced foreign technology and absorbing foreign capital should continue. We must not be too naive.

The U.S. is in trouble with us on the Taiwan issue. We are talking about it now. On the Taiwan issue, we have no room for maneuver. If there is no other way, we can only expect that Sino-American relations will regress. Maybe not back to where it was in 1972, but possibly back to where it was in 1979. Even if we choose to go back to 1972, it would not be a big deal, because the Chinese nation will still survive.

Sihanouk: That's for certain. Now it is the US that needs China and not China that needs the US.

Vice Chairman Deng: When Reagan won and George H.W. Bush visited China and we told him that truth. I said that the US is on dangerous grounds in four of its arguments. One of them is that they say that the United States does not need China, but China needs the United States. This is a bad judgement. China looks at things not from its own advantage but from the overall strategic situation. As we have told the United States several times, China is very poor but has a strong ability to survive trials. It could survive and live well in the Yan'an cave-dwelling era and of course it is no longer the Yan'an era.

The real problem is still the issue of Taiwan, which the United States considers to be its unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Far East. The United States believes that Taiwan is its unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Far East, which is different from the view of the Nixon and Carter eras. If this view predominates in the United States, then it will be very difficult to improve Sino-American relations. This is because it effectively denies that Taiwan is part of China. Anyway, we have to look at this issue and be prepared for whatever may come.

Why is France so interested in Vietnam? Why did it pursue a policy of tolerating Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia?

Sihanouk: Perhaps France recalls with nostalgia its previous position in Indochina and hopes through economic and cultural ties to maintain a close relationship with Indochina. The new French government, on the one hand condemned the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia while on the other hand maintaining its close economic and cultural relations with Vietnam.

France's attitude toward Vietnam was contradictory, since it both criticized the invasion while providing assistance to Vietnam.

Vice Chairman Deng: The political significance of that is not clear.

Vice Chairman Deng: Were you able to hold three-party talks in Beijing?

Sihanouk: I proposed that three-party summit talks be held in Beijing.

Vice Chairman Deng: Earlier we had avoided holding three-party talks in Beijing to discuss the issues. The main reason was to respect ASEAN so that they would have a larger role. Now that the prince has suggested holding three-party talks, most ASEAN countries, and especially Thailand, have expressed their support for the proposal. We are also optimistic about it. Whether or not the talk succeeded, that they could appear and talk would be positive and help move the joint process continue to move forward. If the talks could achieve positive results, that would be even better. The

issue now is whether Son Sann is willing to come and what time he would come. I have already invited Son Sann to visit China.

When the Singapore proposal was put forward, ASEAN asked us to press Democratic Kampuchea to accept it. We said we would not put pressure on any party. This is because, first, now that the Cambodia Tripartite Commission has already achieved some results, why throw away that mechanism and start anew? This would not be polite to Thailand either. Although Thailand did support the Thailand proposal, it did feel troubled about it.

Second, a loose coalition government could easily break up. It might well go from being loose to being dissolved all in one day. Instead of seeing it break up, it would be better not to do it in the first place. It would be difficult to reunite after such a rupture. Third, any coalition must share a common political basis, otherwise it will not be reliable. At least there must be a common political platform, all parties comply with, and mutual constraints. No matter which faction operates on the basis of this common political platform, it cannot be acting alone.

The Singapore formula also had the weakness of effectively weakening the existing anti-Vietnamese forces. Vietnam now has increased its military forces in Cambodia. It was the people who were actually fighting on the battlefield. It was dangerous to engage in a political solution that weakened the morale of the front-line fighters that is something that would work to Vietnam's advantage. Therefore, it was not unreasonable for Democratic Kampuchea to reject the Singapore option. The coalition must not weaken the existing anti-Vietnamese forces. We wanted to increase the strength of all three parties, but this strengthening must proceed in the course of fighting and resisting the Vietnamese aggression, and Son Sann proposed to wait until his strength had developed to a level equal to that of Democratic Kampuchea before talks begin. When will he be as strong as Democratic Kampuchea? I don't think that will be possible. That puts off the coalition indefinitely.

We hope that a coalition government will be formed sooner rather than later. The Singaporean proposal for a loose coalition government is unjust since it interferes with Democratic Cambodia's right to conduct its foreign affairs. The head of state has the right to speak to the outside world, and the president has the right to speak to the outside world. Democratic Cambodia is effectively isolated internationally. This will certainly affect the morale of the resistance fighters on the front lines. Therefore, we advocate a just solution to this problem. We hope that a coalition government will be formed sooner rather than later, and it is unjust that Singapore's proposal to establish a loose coalition government will interfere with the people's right to foreign affairs. The head of state has the right to speak to the outside world, the president has the right to speak to the outside world, and the fact that Democratic Kampuchea is effectively isolated internationally will certainly affect the morale of the resistance fighters on the front lines. Therefore, we advocate a just solution to this problem.

Vice Chairman Deng: If Son Sann does not come, it would be meaningful for the Prince and Khieu Samphan to hold a meeting between the two sides.

Sihanouk: Holding two-party talks first and achieving good results would be meaningful both at home and abroad and would show that we had taken a new step forward and made a new progress on the coalition issue.