

**December 25, 1979**

**Cable from the Foreign Ministry, 'Notice on the  
Cambodian Situation and Changes in the  
Government of Democratic Cambodia'**

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**Summary:**

The Chinese Foreign Ministry provides an update on the leadership in Cambodia and the Cambodian-Vietnamese war.

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**Notice on the Cambodian Situation and Changes in the Government of Democratic Cambodia**

To all provincial, municipal, and autonomous region revolutionary committee foreign affairs offices with copy to regional military districts and provincial military districts:

With respect to the changes in the government of Democratic Cambodia, the Central Committee of the Cambodian Communist Party convened a meeting with the character of a national assembly, bringing together representatives of the Party, government, military to study the situation and tasks ahead, deciding to temporarily suspend the Constitution and to base the organization and mobilization of the anti-Vietnam resistance on a draft united front action program. Also discussed were adjustments in the organization and arrangements of the state, the government and the military. Nuon Chea will remain Chairman of the Standing Committee, Khieu Samphan will serve concurrently as the provisional chair of the popular front and premier of the government. Pol Pot will be chairman of the Military Commission and Supreme Commander of the armed forces. Ieng Sary and Son Sen will remain at their original government posts. Some people from outside the Cambodian Communist Party also took up government posts. The official documents from that meeting will be published on December 27.

In early December when Thailand and Singapore learned that the United Kingdom had decided to terminate its diplomatic recognition of Democratic Cambodia, both countries expressed to the Cambodian side their hope that Pol Pot would retire and that Khieu Samphan would take his place as premier. The central committee of the Cambodian Communist Party as it was contemplating making suitable changes asked for the view of the Chinese side. We expressed our agreement with this and so the Cambodian Communist Party, after some discussion, chose to make the above decision.

At present, the situation in Indochina and on the Cambodian battlefield are in a critical moment of change. Since mid October, several divisions of the Vietnamese army have been making sweeps in northeastern and central Cambodia. Since early November, they have begun to "eliminate bandits" in eastern and western Cambodia. According to reports from the Cambodian side, although the Vietnamese military has destroyed and occupied some of the base areas of the Cambodian army, the Cambodian army made some movements and transfers and dispersed in all directions to carry on guerrilla attacks and so the Cambodian army lost little of its fighting ability.

Currently the fighting strength of the Cambodian guerrilla forces is estimated at between 30,000 and 50,000. The Vietnamese military is now concentrating its forces in western and northwest Cambodia and are preparing to close the Cambodian border and focusing on surrounding and attacking the Kravanh Mountain region. The Vietnamese desperately hope that they will be able to destroy the Cambodian forces and leadership organization during this dry season. The Cambodian Communist Party, expressing a certain amount of confidence, said that it is determined to carry out a long-term guerrilla war. The Cambodian army no longer has organized forces but continues to oppose the sweeps of the Vietnamese army with guerrilla attacks. The 690 kilometer-long Thai-Cambodian border is mountainous and covered with virgin forest. It will be very difficult for the Vietnamese military to seal it all off. Thai Premier Kriangsak Chamanan, out of consideration for his own interests, has taken a relatively strong stance in support of Democratic Cambodia. The morale of the Vietnamese military is low, it suffers from logistical difficulties, and so it will be difficult for it to

achieve its aim of completely destroying the Cambodian army during this dry season.

Currently many countries have taken a wait and see attitude towards the Cambodian situation. They lack confidence in Democratic Cambodia and worry that the Cambodian army will be destroyed during the Vietnamese military's current dry season offensive. In this situation, in western countries the idea that there should be a political solution has begun to be raised. The UK has been wavering, it created a negative effect by terminating its recognition of Democratic Cambodia. That did not however lead to a chain reaction. Thus far no other country has followed the UK's lead. The communique of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting convened at the insistence of Thailand stated that they would continue to recognize Democratic Cambodia (although they publicly expressed some reservations), and insist upon their demand that Vietnam withdraw from Cambodia and implement the United Nations General Assembly resolution. Thus the overall movement on the issue is positive. Owing to policy differences among the five countries on the issue of Soviet and Vietnamese expansionism and invasion, there were also some negative aspects to the meeting. The communique continued to call for maintaining dialogue with Vietnam and urgently called for a political solution to the Cambodian issue.

Under the current circumstances, the important decision of Democratic Cambodia to make changes in its government will have a positive effect on improving its position in the international community and building a united front to oppose Vietnam; coming with the announcement of its united front action program, it was another step forward. Support for Democratic Cambodia in the international community for the sake of the stability of the ASEAN countries will help win support from other countries for continuing diplomatic recognition of Democratic Cambodia. Naturally, Vietnam and the Soviet Union and some others will take this as an opportunity to make more slanders and attacks.

The significant actions that we are taking will provide active support and complement Democratic Cambodia's own initiatives within the international community and will encourage countries, out of consideration for the peace and security of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, each doing what they can, to support the struggle of the Cambodian people to resist Vietnam, or at least giving moral support and not doing anything to damage the unity of the Cambodian nation in their war of resistance.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

December 25, 1979