

# Bernard Krisher

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January 15, 1993

Mr. Mon Vanna  
92EO, Road 298, Tuol Svay Prey 1,  
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Phnom Penh  
Cambodia

COPY

Dear Mr. Mon Vanna,

Thank you for your letter of December 14 which I received recently. I am gratified to know that you would be interested in working for a projected daily newspaper in Cambodia which I am trying to get some financial support for. I do not envisage a very ambitious, color newspaper, but rather, initially, perhaps eight or so pages (two thirds in English and the rest in Khmer) on A-4 paper (like TimesFax) which could be offset on a simple printing press or even faxed in from Thailand or Japan in the event that actual production in Cambodia might invite some security or safety threats from the regime or Khmer Rouge factions in spite of the fact that the newspaper would be independent, objective, free of bias in its news coverage and open to all ideas in its letters and "op-ed" page columns. Thus, even those who might be tempted to silence it, would have the right and opportunity to present their ideas on its pages.

In other words it would be "Cambodia's first and only independent daily newspaper, dedicated to disseminating the news objectively without fear or favor, creating the environment for a marketplace for ideas and in establishing a foundation for a lasting democracy."

I had been discussing such a project with Michael Hayes, the publisher of the bimonthly Phnom Penh Post, but he is not convinced that a daily has too much merit and he is also too busy publishing the Post to be additionally burdened with a daily. However, I feel a daily newspaper is essential in any capital city and the Cambodians and foreign residents there helping in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of your country deserve more than to be dependent solely on the Bangkok Post for their news; even the Asian Wall Street Journal and International Herald Tribune do not circulate there except at a very high cost, irregularly at one or two hotel bookshops. I still hope to get Michael involved in it, in some way, while you, your brother and colleagues might contribute the Khmer pages.

To start with, I already have a large supply of paper (stored in Prince Sihanouk's Royal Palace warehouse, set aside for me) contributed by Fuji Xerox of Japan and donations of simple offset presses, given to me by a Japanese printer, which are also already in Phnom Penh waiting to be used for such a purpose.

Meanwhile, I am contacting Lou Bocardi of AP, Reuters, Donald Graham of the Washington Post News Service, David Laventhol of the L.A. Times and Dow Jones, to see whether they would make their news reports available to this paper for one year, free of charge.

I will be contacting potential international advertisers for support and also the National Endowment for Democracy (a U.S.-based foundation aimed at establishing democratic institutions overseas) to see whether they would provide a grant to cover certain costs for personnel, training and equipment.

There is a very remarkable benefactor, Mr. George Soros, who has donated generously to similar projects in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and I am writing him to see whether he would be interested in supporting this newspaper or other humanitarian projects, in Cambodia, as well.

I hope to have more details when I come to Phnom Penh again at the end of February or early March for the distribution of goods and funds I am continuing to collect here in Japan. Prince Sihanouk has written me that he will again join us in the distribution activities in villages, orphanages, etc.

In the meantime, I would like you to think further about this project, the logistics at your end, distribution, security, news coverage, etc.

Even if the operation is fully based inside Cambodia, with Macintosh desktop publishing in English and some other computerized typesetting for the Khmer pages, and then using offset or xeroxing for printing, and distributing it by car to key points early in the morning and/or faxing it to subscribers who possess the equipment, etc., there should still always be a backup in Japan or Bangkok, with the news being faxed out and the newspaper faxed back in for xeroxing multiple copies in Phnom Penh, in the event of sabotage or violence so that there is no way a single day of publication could ever be skipped.

John Wilcock, a veteran journalist, has also indicated to me that he'd be willing to serve as the editor without salary; just the cost of his living expenses while in Cambodia.

Please think about all these points and come up with further ideas and a group of qualified writers, photographers who would participate. As such a paper is unlikely to be profitable for sometime, no one will get rich on it. Reporters and photographers may not be able to expect to survive on their salaries alone, but, on

the other hand, it will be a great and necessary contribution to the development of a free society, free elections and creating an educated, knowledgeable public which will strengthen democracy and prevent Cambodia from ever falling back into totalitarianism.

If there is a fax number that I can easily reach you at, please let me know. Meanwhile, I know telecommunications costs out of Cambodia are prohibitive so I look forward to hearing from you by mail.

As for the tape of the TV news program spotlighting my group's distribution of shoes and other gifts to the 350 amputated victims of mine accidents, held at the Royal Palace, in the company of Prince Sihanouk, on October 15, 1992, Prince Sihanouk has already sent it to me and I no longer need to search out the copy I asked you to try to get. Thank you so much for your effort.

All the best,

Bernard Krisher

P.S. I enclose a sample copy of the type of "newspaper/newsletter" that can easily be produced on a Macintosh without any effort; it's as easy as typing this letter. It would be a cinch to put out 8 pages like this every day.

I also take the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to Michael Hayes.

cc: Mr. Michael Hayes