Thomas Bernd Stehling

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Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Internationale Zusammenarbeit

19. August 1996

Mr. Michael Hayes
Publisher & Editor-in Chief
Phnom Penh Post
No. 10A, St. 264
S.K. Chatomuk
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Dear Mr. Hayes,

Back in Manila, I would like to extend my thanks for the friendly reception and fruitful discussion we had during my recent visit to Cambodia.

I hope this is just the beginning of opening the doors for cooperation and information exchange between you and I.

Looking forward to hear from you.

Very truly yours,

Thomas Bernd Stehling

Phnom Penh Post

Office Address: #10a Street 264, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel/fax: (855-23)426568, 428309 Mob: (855-15)912480, 912859
Intnl Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12-1074, Soi Suan Phlu PO, 10121 Bangkok Thailand

August 28, 1996

Mr. Peter Schier
Permanent Representative to Cambodia
Konrad Adenauer Foundation
Phnom Penh

Dear Peter:

With regard to the internship program for Cambodian journalism trainees at the *Phnom Penh Post* funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, attached please find the receipts for payments made to Ms. Ly Chhiv Rong, Mr. Soly Vann Pok and Mr. Chhum Phaveng. All payments were made at a rate of $100 per month.

Intern	period of work	payment
Ly Chhiv Rong	February 1 to July 16 — 5.5 mos.	$550
Soly Vann Pok	February 1 to Aug 31 — 7 mos.	$700
Chhum Phaveng	February 1 to Aug 31 — 7 mos.	$700

The interns began their work with the *Post* in February. While Soly Van Pok and Chhum Phaveng are still with the Post, Ly Chhiv Rong's internship was terminated as she repeatedly failed to show up in the office. It was explained to her on several occasions that this was unacceptable but her attendance record failed to change. Accordingly, I decided to inform her that her program was completed.

In addition to the receipts, please also find attached a brief summary of the interns duties and responsibilities during their tenure with the *Post*, as well as an assessment of what progress they have made to date.

With the approval of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the *Post* would like to continue the training for the two other interns, who are working under the supervision of Huw Watkin. We feel that the interns have made sufficient progress to warrant the continuation of this program.

For the funds disbursed to date, payment can be made by check made out to the "Phnom Penh Post" for a total of $1,950.

The *Phnom Penh Post* is grateful for the assistance of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and looks forward to your continued support as determined by mutual agreement between our two organisations.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require any further information concerning this program.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Hayes
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

To : Michael Hayes

From : Chhun Phaveng 31, December, 96.

I would like to say good bye to you to teach in Ek Phnom High School, Battam Bang province. I like journalism but my English is still poor so I go to improve it for two years before came back this city again. I'm very sorry to leave Phnom Penh Post but I was very happy to work as a trainee in your newspaper. Thanks for your kindness.

Long live and happiness.

your pitiful staff

Chhun Phaveng

To: Kathleen
From: Chhum Phaveng, 31 December, 1996

I would like to say good bye to you. Thanks for you kindness. I go to teach in Ek Phnom High School, Ek Phnom district, Battambang province. I'm very sorry to leave your Phnom Penh Post.

I want to practice my journalism skill, so is it Ok. if I send any arcticle to your paper?

Thanks goodness. Best wish.

Please:
Don't forget go to visit me at EK Phnom High school, if posible.

Chhum Phaveng

Phnom Penh Post

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December 31, 1997

Mr. Peter Schier
Permanent Representative to Cambodia
Konrad Adenauer Foundation
Phnom Penh

Dear Peter:

With regard to the internship program for Cambodian journalism trainees at the *Phnom Penh Post* funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, attached please find the receipts for payments made to Mr. Soly Vann Pok and Mr. Chhum Phaveng. All payments were made at a rate of $100 per month.

Intern	period of work	payment
Soly Vann Pok	Sept 1 to Dec 31 — 4 mos.	$400
Chhum Phaveng	Sept 1 to Dec 31 — 4 mos.	$400

For the funds disbursed since September 1, 1996, payment can be made by check made out to the "Phnom Penh Post" for a total of $800.

The program for the above two interns has been concluded. This letter serves as a final financial report for the two interns. A narrative report on the internship program is being submitted separately.

On behalf of the *Phnom Penh Post*, please accept my sincere gratitude for the support provided by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Hayes
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Kingdom of Cambodia
Phnom Penh Post Publishing

KONRAD - ADENAUER - FOUNDATION

Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

Peter Schier
Permanent Representative
to the Kingdom of Cambodia

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Contract
between the Phnom Penh office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and the PHNOM PENH POST newspaper

The Phnom Penh office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAF), represented by Mr. Peter Schier, agrees to pay scholarships for three graduate students of journalism at the University of Phnom Penh in order for them to undertake as interns an on-the-job-training at the PHNOM PENH POST office. The scholarships will consist of monthly payments of US$ 100.00 per intern. The monthly scholarship payments will start as of February 1, 1996, and will be reviewed on December 31, 1996.

In return, the PHNOM PENH POST newspaper, represented by its publisher Mr. Michael Hayes, agrees to provide supervisory support services and office space and to assign journalism related activities to foster the professional development of the interns.

The KAF further agrees to pay separately an honorarium for an in-house trainer / lecturer in journalism who will be the training coordinator for the on-the-job training programme.

Peter Schier
Permanent Representative
of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation
Phnom Penh

Michael Hayes
Publisher
PHNOM PENH POST
Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh, 31 January 1996

Interns

At present two interns - Soly Vannpok and Chhun Phaveng - are undertaking a scholarship program at the *Phnom Penh Post* . Both began the program on February 1, 1996.

A third intern, Ly Chhiv Rong, was terminated due to a lack of committment. The Asia Foundations's Mike Fowler is currently looking for a suitable replacement through the University of Phnom Penh. In the interim, a student with the French journalism program at UPP, Ky Soklim, has joined us informally.

As mentioned in previous memos, the program at the *Post* is a combination of theoretical and practical tuition, with the emphasis on workplace training. The interns fill a descreet role in the overall editorial organisation and are allocated specific tasks under the supervision of Huw Watkin.

These tasks include:

— Daily monitoring of the Khmer press. This task serves several purposes.
1. To refine the interns appreciation of "news value".
2. To increase their awareness of topical issues.
3. To provide editorial staff with intelligence in order to effectively report on issues.
4. To provide material for inclusion in the *Post's* **Police Blotter** which the interns compile under guidance.

— Compilation of the *Post's* **In Review** section and, more recently, **Business Economic Briefs.**

— Translation and interpreting for reporting staff.

— Reporting and writing as assigned.

Assessment of Training to Date

Overall, the interns have shown a considerable improvement in terms of their performance. Vannpok and Phaveng are cooperative and dedicated, devoting many hours to the newsroom. While confidence levels could be better, they have improved noticeably in recent months. Both are much more willing to show initiative and appear to be more comfortable when conducting interviews.

Publication of stories that they have researched and written has increased significantly.

However, they still require close supervision. As young Khmers they have been socialised to accept authority without question — something which is inconsistent with the role of journalists in a free and open society.

In addition, their written English skills require further dvelopment — sub editing their copy remains a time consuming task. But we accept they are operating within an alien environment, which at times must be quite intimidating.The relatively non-hierachical management structure of the *Post* is a very new concept to them, given the culture within which they have grown up. It will take some time to build their confidence and initiative to a stage where they can operate independently.

Having said that we are satisfied with their progress. They appear to be very much more comfortable in the newsroom and are definitely considered part of the *Post* team. We are confident that their performance will continue to improve.

Future Strategy

From now, in addition to their set tasks, the interns will be required to take on a more active reporting role. It is our intention to have them deal increasingly with breaking news, exposing them more to Cambodia's decision makers and their colleagues in the Khmer press. In addition, and now that confidence levels have improved, Huw Watkin will be more demanding in his expectations concerning the basic conventions of news writing. Creativity and initiative will be further encouraged by the allocation of feature assignements.

more demanding in his expectations concerning the basic conventions of news writing. Creativity and initiative will be further encouraged by the allocation of feature assignements.

cc Soly Vannpok
Chunn Phaveng
Ky Soklim

Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation/Phnom Penh Post
On-the-job Training Program

Final Report
Jan 9, 1997

Regretably, and for the reasons outlined below, the program can not be considered an unqualified success.

Both interns were pleasant and intelligent young men. Chhun Phaveng is a hardworking individual and I believe he could have been an asset, initially as a journalist assistant, to the Phnom Penh Post. At this stage, however, he lacks the confidence and courage required of a good reporter — vital qualities for this kind of work, and qualities that simply can not be taught.

Phaveng was offered an opportunity to work at the *Post* for a probationary period of three months. He declined the offer, however, and has left Phnom Penh to be a teacher in Battambang on a salary of just $25 a month. Nobody really understands his decision — he says he wants to be a journalist, but that he needs to improve his English. It is unlikely this will occur in Battambang. The episode illustrates the high regard in which Cambodian's hold government jobs, but does little to explain why.

Soly Vannpock did not strike me as particularly enthused about a journalistic career. He was often unwell and preoccupied with other matters — particularly his role as an office bearer with a Hun Sen funded student association.

<u>Factors Contributing to Program Weakness</u>

Social and Cultural Factors: Cambodia's social system is hierarchical with a very "top down" mechanism. Young, middle class men are expected to show deference to their social superiors and government officials. This is anathema to the philosophy of western journalism — it creates a passivity which is inappropriate if the media is to operate as the "fourth estate."

Cambodian culture also demands elaborate formalities in inter-personal communication, this demand being deeply entrenched even in westernized Cambodians. This is incompatible with the "stripped down" nature of English news language and structure and requires a lot of work to eliminate.

In Cambodia journalists are often beaten and killed for what amounts to little more than impertinence. Their is a prevailing attitude that any form of criticism equates to an attack — that "you are for us, or you are against us." This has the understandable effect of intimidation which is so widespread that even Cambodian staff reporters at the *Post* sometimes request to have their identity concealed as the author of a story.

Cambodian's do not generally share the "western" work ethic. This may sound patronizing, but my experience suggests as individuals they rarely take the initiative. This does not auger well for the "task oriented" nature of journalism and newspaper production, and demanded that I spend a great deal of time initiating stories and supervising their development. The last few months of the year saw an unbelievable number of public holidays. The fact the newspaper still needed to be produced seems to have escaped the attention of both interns.

Linguistic Difficulties: The interns' standard of English language competence placed them at a distinct disadvantage. A good deal of my time was consumed re-writing and correcting stories in terms of structure, spelling, syntax and grammar. Any future program could be improved by the inclusion of formal English lessons.

Selection: I believe the selection of candidates for this sort of program should be much more rigorous. Even though the *Post* interns graduated from a journalism course offered at the Phnom Penh University, they were not adequately equipped in basic skills required for effective production of English language news. Future selection should be based on a series of tests including ability in English, knowledge of current issues and events and an interview. Candidates should be older with a background which demonstrates their courage and determination (human rights workers, for example).

My Position: In order to earn a livable salary, I was forced to take on a job as a reporter with the newspaper. This in itself is a full time job and meant I was often confronted with conflicting priorities. Toward the end of 1996 the problem increased with the departure of the paper's managing editor. I found myself playing an increasing overall editorial role on top of my duties as a reporter and a trainer. This had an inevitable impact on the amount of time and energy I was able to devote to Phaveng and Vannpok.

The Positives

Although the results of the program did not live up to my expectations, it also achieved some success.

Journalism — outside of the basic skills — can not be taught. Journalists may have been skilled, encouraged or polished by their tutors and mentors, but if they do not have what amounts to the "character of a journalist" they will never excel in the position. Flair, impertinence, curiosity, imagination and initiative are either part of the original package or they are not.

As a journalism professor in Australia it took me three years of teaching at undergraduate level to instill the basics in my students. Only one in ten students who began first year journalism courses were eventually employed in the media industry and then at a very junior level.

Given the factors outlined above, the success rate in Cambodia is probably much less.

Having said that, I believe my training efforts at the *Post* did have some impact. Even though the interns were the only people formally enrolled in the program, I often gave assistance and advice to the paper's three Cambodian staff reporters.

Huw Watkin

Easier to be ethical with money in your pocket

Khmer newspapers are queuing up where the money's greener in the run up to the elections. ***Huw Watkin*** *reports.*

SHIFTING allegiances within Cambodia's local press have exposed political patronage, corruption and extortion to a level which insiders describe as "unprecedented" and "out of control".

According to several industry sources both major parties are offering large sums of money to Khmer editors and journalists in order to buy favorable coverage and boost their propaganda apparatus in the run up to commune and national elections.

Khmer journalists are now frequently seen queuing for "payments" of between four and $20 following press conferences called by politicians and prominent businessmen, and at least two former "opposition" papers have changed their editorial line in recent weeks.

In its Sept 23 edition *Wat Phnom* — previously associated with the Khmer Nation Party (KNP) and highly critical of corruption within the government — ran a stinging attack on KNP leader Sam Rainsy and reported the party would soon self-destruct due to internal divisions.

"Sam Rainsy is not a democrat ...[He] is a neo-Nazi...." the front page story read before going on to assert KNP was divided in a five way internal split which was being engineered by Funcinpec.

An editorial piece which recently appeared in *Sereypheap Thmei* — previously edited by Hen Vipheak who left the paper to concentrate on his work as a member of the KNP's steering committee and who was recently jailed for defaming the co-Prime Ministers — also has industry insiders perplexed.

The Sept 25 edition of *Sereypheap Thmei* ran a comment piece which praised Second Prime Minister and CPP Vice President Hun Sen as "the most outstanding figure within the CPP's leadership."

Referring to the CPP's efforts in boosting Cambodia's international relations through diplomatic links, the commentary said:"...[the world] increasingly recognizes the political ability of CPP leaders..."

One "opposition" editor, who requested anonymity, claimed both papers had "sold out" adding that *Wat Phnom's* shift in editorial policy came soon after the recent death from tuberculosis of former editor Meas Dararith.

"[Current editor] Dara Vichay was always urging Dararith to abandon the KNP because only Dararith benefited from the patronage of Sam Rainsy. Vichay said the paper should be aligned to the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) because they have more money.

"When Dararith died, Vichay took over and went to the CPP who gave him $30,000," the editor said.

The *Post* was unable to confirm the allegation as *Wat Phnom* editor Dara Vichay was unavailable for comment. But the suggestion his paper had joined forces with CPP was supported by a second article in its Sept 23 edition.

That piece criticized the CPP daily *Koh Santipheap* for "selling out" to Funcinpec and for accepting a $10,000 bribe from co-Interior Minister You Hockry — whose political future remains uncertain following allegations he stole three kilograms of drugs — in return for a favorable news story.

Wat Phnom has also asserted that *Proleong Cheat* had changed allegiance from CPP to Funcinpec and had also received a bribe from You Hockry. The article further claimed the CPP had made a mistake in previously patronizing "bad men" who supported "high ranking officials who destroy the country".

Wat Phnom's indignant tone has surprised insiders as rumors that CPP is reviewing the performance of editors on its payroll have been circulating in the industry for some time.

One source claimed the CPP was withdrawing funding to several publications because they had lost credibility with their readership.

"People are sick of reading cruel attacks on politicians...they are sick of reading pornography and seeing pictures of dead people, they are sick of the lack of professionalism."

A prominent Khmer editor further suggested that a recent halt in the publication of CPP standard bearer *Chakraval* — a paper notorious for its explicit coverage of crime and conflict — was the result of CPP withdrawing financial support.

In a front page editorial *Chakraval* explained its decision to temporarily close as the result of threats against its staff, but editor So Pwan declined an invitation to discuss the issue with the *Post*.

However, a usually well informed source and party member said *Chakraval* had not been abandoned by CPP.

"*Chakraval* has not lost its funding, it [remains] in the vanguard of the CPP press. I believe the newspaper may have had some threats — it is very good at attacking the Royal family, Funcinpec and even some members of the CPP. The paper has many enemies...," the source said.

Political patronage and its undermining of impartiality is just one of the problems compromising Cambodia's indigenous press and its role in contributing to the country's social and political development. Along with other questionable practices, patronage is encouraged by Phnom Penh's crowded newspaper market.

According to Deputy Director General of the Information Ministry Leng Sochea, approximately 125 publications have been granted ministry approval to publish since the 1993 elections. He said, however, around half had closed leaving 50 newspapers and ten magazines relying mostly on the revenue available through advertising in Phnom Penh.

"People think that running a newspaper is a good way to make money," he said. "The ministry receives an average of two new requests each month from people who want to start a newspaper — mostly they are young and inexperienced and have the support of rich people or political parties.

"[But] there are so many newspapers it is very difficult to make money through legitimate means and many journalists resort to blackmail — it is worse now than ever before," Sochea said.

"We receive many complaints — there are so many it is difficult to remember exactly how many — particularly in the provinces. Usually journalists will threaten people with bad stories and ask for money or motorbikes."

The most recent — and most public — example of extortion involved journalists demanding money from management at the Universal Network of Consumers Cooperation (UNCC).

UNCC — a marketing venture offering discounts and incentives to members who sign-up new subscribers — ran into trouble after it was criticized as a sham in a broadcast by a popular talk show host.

According to sources at UNCC, soon after the broadcast journalists began "queuing up" at the organization, demanding money in return for editorial silence on the cooperative's problems.

However, several sources confirmed that extortion is often unnecessary as an "unspoken understanding" between journalists and newsmakers is widespread.

The practice recently resulted in an unseemly and very public slinging match between former colleagues at *Sangkrous Khmer* after one refused to share a "gift" of money from senior provincial authorities in Siem Reap and Battambang.

As reported previously in the *Post*, the issue came to a head in the June 24-25 issue of *Sangkrous Khmer* when the paper published a front page story about a former reporter titled:" Dot Sadeth is a Dishonest Person". In its next issue the paper ran a second front page article asking the Information Minister to stop Sadeth working as a journalist.

Sadeth responded by taking his former employer to court and revealed the dispute centered on "gifts" he had received totaling $120.

After the editor at *Sangkrous Khmer* discovered Sadeth had spent most of the money he confiscated Sadeth's press card and made him sign an undertaking he would not use the paper's name for his own interests.

But the two had a further falling out and Sadeth was fired after he was accused of extorting money from an illegal gambling ring in Tuol Kork.

Sadeth later claimed this was a strange reason to dismiss him as the paper often accepted bribes from illegal gambling operations in return for ignoring their activities.

According to the Information Ministry's Leng Sochea, blackmail is a growing problem in the local press. The *Post* is aware of at least one senior Funcinpec official who was confronted with a story in which he was described as Khmer Rouge. The story was not published after the official handed over an undisclosed sum of money.

"The system now is to attack 'Mr A' and then ask him for money to stop the attacks. I have heard of blackmail demands of between $1,000 and $10,000 dollars...." Sochea said.

According to Tath Lyhok, co-President of the Khmer Journalists Association (KJA), the problems of corruption, patronage and blackmail have theirs roots in both financial and moral bankruptcy.

"Before Lon Nol, Khmers were very moral people. After the war and genocide, morality is very low — people will do anything to earn money. When I was young I was helped by strong family values, but today there are many hypocrites," Lyhok said.

"Its a very big worry for the free press. The purpose of journalists is to attack corruption, but if a newspaper is corrupt, how can it fight corruption?... but its difficult because the editors are so politicized. We hope the young generation will be better after study — we always talk about ethics and morality [in courses run by the KJA], but even after teaching some [journalists] still take bribes.

"But what can be done? The majority of Chamber journalists are very poor...many people see newspapers as a good way to make money because many leaders need the newspapers — you write [good things] about me and attack my enemies and I will pay you."

Pin Samkhon, also a co-President of the KJA, said the average salary for a Khmer journalist was between $50 and $200. He said salaries were paid from sales of publications and small amounts of advertising from a market which he described as "very tight".

According to Leng Sochea the advertising market is dominated by the daily *Reaksmei Kampuchea* which captures about half of the advertising dollars available to the press in Phnom Penh. The remainder is shared by close to 60 publications.

The market is further restricted by the influence of politics with advertisers conscious of the potential for trouble if they are seen as being associated — and therefore as supporting newspapers which are critical of the rich and powerful.

"A year ago, when the KJA split and the League of Cambodian Journalists formed, I had an advertiser withdraw. He paid me the money but he didn't want his company's name associated with me because of all of the politics involved with the split," said Pin Samkhon.

Ou Savann, the editor of *Voice of Khmer Youth* — a paper known for its anti-government line and its association with the KNP — said advertisers didn't spend money on his paper because they feared being identified with its political line.

"We only get about ten dollars from advertising in each issue — we have to rely on sales to pay our staff.

"Newspaper sellers buy the paper for 390 riels — we print about 3500 copies but only sell about 2000. My salary from the newspaper is only $40 dollars a month," Savann said.

However, he denied he supplemented his salary through unethical practices and said KNP leader Sam Rainsy no longer supported his paper.

"The KNP doesn't have enough money."

In a bid to solve the many problems undermining the press, the Information Ministry is drafting a sub decree to the press law which, according to Leng Sochea, could be passed by the Council of Ministers late in October or early November.

The key provisions of the sub decree — which apply only to new publications — include requirements that editors have qualifications from recognized journalism programs, that editors be at least 55 years of age and that any newspaper has a minimum capital base of $5000.

Within the industry the jury is still out on whether the sub decree is an appropriate measure to address existing problems — most of the players who talked to the *Post* expressed concern that it could be used to restrict freedom of expression.

And, they agreed, sticking to a code of ethics is easier when people have food in their stomachs and money in their pockets.

THE PACK
Money, it seems, increasingly helps to influence the final product.

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