

CAMBODIA

December 8, 1998

APPEAL TO ASEAN TO DELAY THE ADMISSION OF CAMBODIA

On behalf of the oppressed Cambodian people, I appeal to the governments of ASEAN member states to delay the admission of Cambodia now under the legally and politically shaky leadership of former Khmer Rouge and communist-minded Hun Sen.

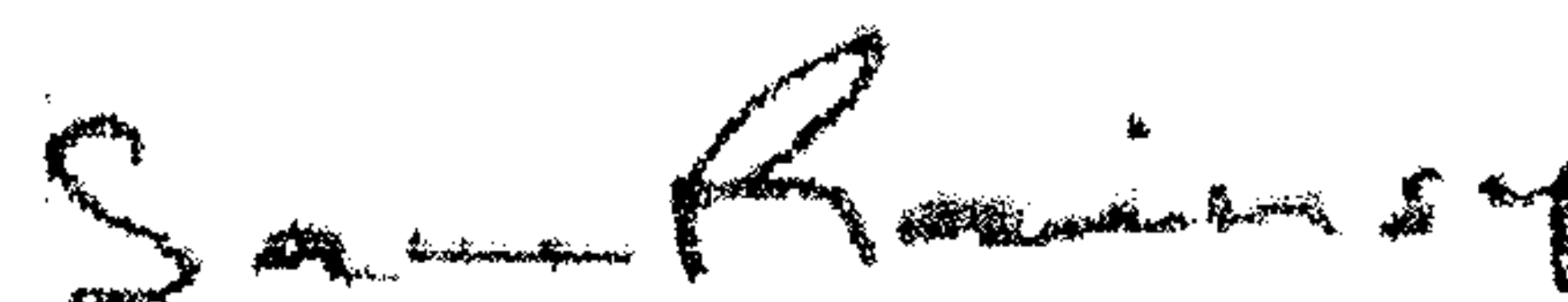
By admitting Cambodia under the present circumstances, ASEAN would not do any good to Cambodia and to itself.

To Cambodia :

- 1- Dictator Hun Sen has recently seized full power through manipulated elections and a dubious political deal with the royalist FUNCINPEC party which has been given nominal positions but with no means to exert any real power. Like the coalition government set up in 1993 and broken down in 1997, the 1998 arrangement is another recipe for disaster.
- 2- What Hun Sen expects from admission to ASEAN is just a stamp of approval for his tricky and dangerous maneuvers. Giving Hun Sen the stamp of approval he wants would be the worst service ASEAN could render to Cambodia. It would consolidate a mafia state in a banana kingdom. It would encourage Hun Sen to continue to pay lip service only to serious concerns about systematic human rights abuses, a warlord system, environmental destruction, rampant corruption and state-involved drug trafficking. It would prevent the implementation of fundamental reforms needed to make Cambodia a viable state with an effective government. The same dangers remain for Cambodia with the same people in power and the same system in place.
- 3- As elaborated in my December 7, 1998 letter to King Norodom Sihanouk, the way Hun Sen is planning to drastically amend the Constitution is totally unconstitutional, contrary to the will of the Cambodian people as expressed over the last five years, contrary to universal democratic rules and principles, and constitutes a violation of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords on Cambodia which all ASEAN present member states (except Burma) are signatories to. In particular, the proposition to create a Senate for purely political expediency, in the most undemocratic way, will prove to be a costly joke leading the country towards further instability.

To ASEAN itself :

- 1- If admitted this month as a full member, Cambodia is likely to be a headache for ASEAN in the next few months onwards with the looming instability compounded by a big question mark regarding the role of the newly "defected" Khmer Rouge forces traditionally allied with FUNCINPEC.
- 2- The present Cambodian government is faced with insurmountable problems and crumbling under its contradictions: the marriage of convenience between communists and royalists is counter nature while a mafia state incompatible with a democratic system and a real market economy will only make Cambodia a sinkhole for international assistance and push the country further and further down the drain. Therefore, Cambodia led by Hun Sen will be unable to meet its political, technical and financial obligations as a full member of ASEAN.
- 3- Cambodia under Hun Sen's rule will weaken rather than strengthen ASEAN which will be more and more deeply divided between very conservative and authoritarian states (Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Cambodia) and other member states which sincerely aspire to democracy and deserve the respect of the world.
- 4- As a full member of ASEAN, Cambodia led by Hun Sen can only consolidate the drug connection in South East Asia. Drugs from the Golden Triangle will more easily find a way out to the rest of the world through Laos and Cambodia since it becomes more and more difficult for drug traffickers to operate from Thailand. Theng Bunma, the leader of the mafia in Cambodia, operates a fleet of private helicopters which regularly carry heroin from Laos to Cambodia but they also occasionally carry soldiers and weapons for the present Cambodian government. Theng Bunma is a financial pillar for the Hun Sen regime which has promoted him President of Cambodia's Chamber of Commerce! As reported in this week's international press, Theng Bunma is now facing legal troubles in Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore but still enjoys the protection of Hun Sen in what is typically a mafia state which should be rejected by ASEAN.



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Leader of the parliamentary opposition