

Cambodia since 1945 for the *Sudostasien-Handbuch*.

## **Cambodia**

### End of World War II--Renewal of French Control--Beginnings of Democracy

On March 9, 1945 Cambodia, a French Protectorate since 1863, became briefly and ephemerally independent when the Japanese abolished the French Indochina regime which had collaborated since the defeat of France by Germany in Europe.

The new government of Norodom Sihanouk, King since 1941, was staffed by ministers who had already served under the French. But in August 1945 a revolt by young radicals forced the nomination as Prime Minister of Son Ngoc Thanh, Cambodia's first modern nationalist who in 1942 had fled French prosecution to Japan. In October, the French returned with British support, no resistance was offered, Thanh was arrested and sent to exile in France, and the French reestablished their protectorate, staffed again by royalist conservatives.

French postwar policy permitted promulgation of a constitution similar to that of the French Fourth Republic, with a strong parliament, political parties, and regular elections, but with considerable power reserved in emergencies to the king. The resulting governments, however, would be solely concerned with local affairs, for France retained control of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and any matter which they deemed crucial to maintenance of the protectorate.

The first three elections, in 1946, 1947, and 1951, were won by the Democrat party, formed by a new bureaucratic and intellectual 'middle' class which had grown up with the Protectorate, attending modern schools, occasionally even universities in France. They wanted some degree of social change, were considered opponents of King Sihanouk and they sympathized with the anti-French struggle in Vietnam.

At the same time, that struggle attracted grass-roots support and in 1951 the first Cambodian communist organization was formed, consisting mostly of peasants with a small core of leaders from the petty bourgeoisie.

The combined pressure of anticolonialist sentiment in parliament and the developing rural insurgency forced King Sihanouk to campaign for independence in order not to lose credibility. The French, who were by then near defeat in Vietnam, granted independence to Sihanouk's government in November 1953.

### Full Independence and the end of Democracy

The Geneva Accords of 1954 required that elections be held in Cambodia in 1955 according to the existing constitution. Sihanouk, who abdicated for his father in order to play an active political role, would again be in danger of defeat at the hands of enemies who had won all previous elections, and who might be joined by former guerrillas who were to have full political rights, according to the terms of Geneva.

Unexpectedly, and probably unfairly, a newly organized Sihanoukist party won all Assembly seats in the 1955 election, and from then until 1970, through single party elections in 1958, 1962, and 1966, Sihanouk ruled as a

dictatorial Chief of State, with his policies ratified by a rubber-stamp National Assembly.

During this period, there was an explosive expansion of schooling, which enlarged the urban middle class, generally impatient with Sihanouk and his courtiers. Commerce developed rapidly, along with some industry, and was increasingly controlled by Cambodians. Agriculture at first prospered but declined after 1964 as the state pumped more out of the countryside to finance budgets that favored the urban elite.

Within the National Assembly there was tension among the Left and two groups of conservatives. The Left supported the communist struggle in Vietnam, wanted changes in domestic society, and a neutralist foreign policy, a matter on which they were formally in agreement with Sihanouk. One of the other factions was modernizing capitalist while the other was made up of courtier-bureaucrats who treated economic agencies and state enterprises as personal appanages.

### From Royalist Dictatorship to Revolution

By 1967 most of the Left had gone underground, emerging after 1970 as leaders of a revolutionary civil war; and by 1970 rivalry between the two conservative factions led to deposition of Sihanouk, seemingly in favor of the capitalists, but ultimately in favor of the old-style bureaucrats led by General Lon Nol, who assumed the Presidency of the new Khmer Republic in 1972.

The Khmer Republic had almost no support in the countryside, and it was weakened by involvement in the Vietnam War. In April 1975 communist insurgents (the 'Khmer Rouge') led by Pol Pot won the war and established the government of Democratic Kampuchea.

The economic policy of the new regime was a return to poor peasant agricultural life, organized in large collective units, for the entire country. Town populations were evacuated to rural areas, with a minimum of essential industry maintained in Phnom Penh. The result was great loss of life and alienation of the population; but what was fatal to Democratic Kampuchea was its anti-Vietnamese policy and attacks on Vietnam, resulting in a Vietnamese invasion and change of regime in January 1979.

The government of the new People's Republic of Kampuchea (renamed State of Cambodia in May 1989) was formed at first from former Democratic Kampuchean personnel who had broken with that regime before 1978 and from older communists who had lived in Vietnam since 1954. But soon the administration was fleshed out, particularly at subministerial and provincial levels, with people not part of any previous communist faction, and many of whom had already served the Kingdom and Khmer Republic before 1975.

A constitution was promulgated and a single-party election held in 1981, resulting in a National Assembly, with an executive State Council and President chosen from it, and a Ministerial government responsible to it. A monopoly of political power was held by the People's Revolutionary Party, renamed Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in October 1991, which traced its history from the first communist organization of 1951.

Normal urban life was restored after 1979, and the population, based on the 1998 census, has recovered to around 10.5 million, over 3 million more than in 1975. Until 1989 there was orthodox socialist emphasis on industry, although development of private commerce was tolerated at all levels, and by 1991 it was decided to privatize nearly all state enterprises and convert to a free-market economy. Agriculture too, after a period during which collectivization was encouraged (although not enforced) gradually reverted almost completely to decentralized private family farming. In 1989 urban residential housing was given as private property to legal residents, and by late 1991 land was being transferred to cultivators as private property.

Reconstruction was hindered by attacks from armed contra bands on the Thai border, which eventually coalesced into three main groups, the Part of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK, 'Khmer Rouge'); the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), anti-communist republicans; and the royalist FUNCINPEC loyal to Prince Sihanouk. In 1982 these groups, under pressure from their foreign backers, formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), which was supported militarily, financially, and

diplomatically by China, the United States, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and to some extent by other Western powers.

Within the People's Republic security against aggression was at first assured by Vietnamese military, but Vietnamese and Soviet aid gradually enabled Cambodia to build up an army of over 100,000 regular troops plus local militia, while Vietnamese forces, beginning in 1983, were regularly reduced as the new Cambodian army took over defense responsibilities, and the last left in 1989.

As it became apparent by 1984 that neither side could win the war, a slow process of international diplomacy was set in motion. The result was an international peace agreement signed in Paris in October 1991 by the Phnom Penh government and the three Coalition factions. It provided for cease-fire, demobilization, political party pluralism, and a UN-supervised election to be conducted in May 1993.

#### International Intervention and a Charade of Democracy

The election was organized by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), while internal administration was still carried out by the Phnom Penh government, which already in 1991 recognized Prince Sihanouk as chief of state.

Twenty political parties were formed, but only four were considered serious contenders--the CPP of the Phnom Penh government; the royalist FUNCINPEC headed by Prince Ranariddh, but enjoying the aura of his father Prince Sihanouk; the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party which had devolved from the KPNLF; and potentially a party organized by the *Partie of Democratic Kampuchea*, if they chose to participate.

Some effort toward CPP-FUNCINPEC pre-election collaboration came to nought by the end of the year with a series of assassinations and other violence against FUNCINPEC personnel, generally blamed on the CPP, but with less credibility after the two CPP security chiefs widely considered responsible were invited to the US within a few months after the election.

Another simultaneous campaign of violence was by the PDK, which late in 1992 ordered their forces to target any and all Vietnamese for killing, a truly genocidal policy. Although UNTAC investigators discovered this at the time from interrogations of defectors, it was kept secret. Eventually the Democratic Kampuchea group withdrew from the election, and threatened to disrupt it.

The election days late in May, however, were generally peaceful, and 89% voted. Voting was for party slates by province, of which there were 19 plus the cities of Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, and there were 120 National Assembly seats to contest and to be allotted proportionally. Only 4 parties made it--FUNCINPEC with 45%+ of the vote and 58 seats, CPP with 38%+ and 51 seats, BLDP with under 4% and 10 seats, and one minor party with one seat. The 16 parties which won nothing together got about 11% of the total vote.

The results were a shock for CPP, who had expected a clear victory. They refused to accept the results, and accused UNTAC of manipulating the vote. Indeed, locks and seals on ballot boxes had been broken, there were discrepancies in numbers of ballots counted compared to numbers of persons

who had voted, and some ballots had been lost. Probably, however, these irregularities were not enough to swing the election in favor of FUNCINPEC.

There ensued a period of rapid and confusing events. Sihanouk at first tried to effect a compromise by proclaiming on June 3 a coalition of the two major parties with himself as Prime Minister, but he withdrew this proposal after objection from the US Embassy. Then on June 6 and 9 he made extremely inflammatory speeches in which he accused UNTAC of trying to impose a colonial, imperialist rule over Cambodia, he disavowed the election, and encouraged the four factions to divide and govern Cambodia on their own.

Following this, on June 10, Sihanouk's son Prince Chakrapong, who had been fined by UNTAC for election campaign irregularities and was out of favor with CPP, and State Security Minister Sin Song, widely considered responsible for pre-election violence, proclaimed an autonomous zone in the provinces of Kompong Cham, Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, loyal to Sihanouk and in protest against the unfair election .

This secession was just one day before official announcement of election results by UNTAC, which revealed some surprises among the CPP winners. Thirty-two of them who had been at the top of their respective provincial lists had resigned. This permitted other candidates lower on the provincial slates to take their places. Among those dropped were Sin Song and Prince Chakrapong.

The reasons for the replacements by CPP were transparent. Expecting to win over 60% of the seats, they had followed party ranking, not potential parliamentary competence, in listing their candidates in each province. This meant that many younger persons with intellectual or administrative capabilities were farther down on the lists, but would still have been chosen if CPP had won what they expected. In the end some with higher party rank had to be dropped to provide entry to the National Assembly for more capable people. Few of those dropped participated in the secession, which does not appear to have been organized by the CPP.

The secession did not last long. By June 15 Hun Sen, apparently, had persuaded provincial leaders to refuse support to Chakrapong and Sin Song, who were called to the palace by Sihanouk for a meeting with him and Hun Sen in which peace was made.

That same day the new Assembly met for the first time, and in the following days they declared Sihanouk Chief of State continuously from before his fall in 1970. A new coalition was established between all the parties in the Assembly, with co-Prime Ministers, Prince Ranariddh as first Prime Minister and Hun Sen as Second Prime Minister, and co-ministers of different parties in each ministry. A new constitution, which re-established Cambodia as a kingdom, was drafted, and in October the coalition took its final form.

#### Breakdown of Showcase Democracy and a New Try

At first the CPP and FUNCINPEC seemed to work well in tandem. A major problem, the PDK, which still had troublesome armed forces in the North, and whom some, including King Sihanouk, tried to have included in a broader coalition, was dealt with in July 1994 when they were outlawed by the National Assembly.

Thereafter, the coalition began to come apart. Finance Minister Sam Rainsy and Foreign Minister Norodom Sirivudh of FUNCINPEC were expelled from their party and from the National Assembly. Thereafter Rainsy became the most important opposition figure.

Both Prime Ministers, sometimes jointly, sometimes separately, began to entice PDK troops and leaders to defect, and with some success, in particular the defection of Ieng Sary, former PDK Foreign Minister, who settled with his followers in Pailin in the Northwest.

The defections, however, coming at a time of increasing tension between the two parties, encouraged each of them to try to use the defectors to increase their own factional strength, and each party dominated units within the armed forces. Moreover, a powerful group within the FUNCINPEC forces were officers who were adamantly anti-communist and anti-Vietnamese and who could not forgive Hun Sen his communist background and close relations with Vietnam.

By 1996 relations between the two prime ministers and their cohorts were increasingly explosive. Bodyguard units of both Prime Ministers increased in numbers and armament, and Ranariddh's generals began negotiating an alliance with the remaining PDK forces under Pol Pot and Ta Mok.

Armed conflict between the two sides broke out in Phnom Penh on July 5, 1997, started, it now seems, as a putsch by Ranariddh's military. Two days later they had been defeated, with many of the FUNCINPEC officers killed either in battle or as soon as captured, while a few escaped and fled to the northern border region where they began to cooperate with the remaining PDK military. Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy were already abroad, and some of their followers fled during the fighting.

FUNCINPEC, however, was not disbanded, nor did Hun Sen abolish its parliamentary and ministerial prerogatives, nor attempt to become sole Prime Minister. The large number of FUNCINPEC parliamentarians and officials who had refused to participate in the putsch were retained in their posts, and one of them, Foreign Minister Ung Huot, became First Prime Minister in place of Ranariddh. Security throughout the country dramatically improved.

From then on attention was focused on the election constitutionally scheduled for May 1998, in spite of opposition protests that it should be canceled. Governmental continuity, improved security, and assurance that Prince Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy could return in safety to campaign, opened the way for foreign aid, particularly from the European Union, and for foreign recognition of the results provided they could be deemed 'free and fair'.

The election, postponed to July 26, surprised all observers, even the most hostile, by its smooth organization under a Cambodian National Election

Commission, and by the very peaceful, apparently very free and fair, proceedings on election day. The official results, based on a complex formula for calculating proportional results by province, are 41.2% of the total vote for CPP, giving them 64 seats, 31.7%+ and 43 seats for FUNCINPEC, and 14.3%+ and 15 seats for Sam Rainsy. The 36 other parties won nothing. Thus CPP has a majority of the 122 seats, but is far short of the two-thirds majority constitutionally required for a vote of confidence and formation of a government.

The only possible coalition which would satisfy this requirement is still CPP with FUNCINPEC. The latter, however, starting soon after the election, together with the Sam Rainsy Party, has refused to form a coalition, claiming extreme election irregularities and that a different formula for allotting proportional seats, which would favor them, should be used. Their claims have been rejected both by the National Election Commission and by most qualified foreign observers, and so far they have failed to gain the international support they hoped for. It seems that these two losing parties, especially that of Sam Rainsy, hope, through denying a coalition, to provoke a political and economic crisis which will destroy the CPP-led government, even at the risk of civil war. In August and September Sam Rainsy organized increasingly violent demonstrations in Phnom Penh, which threatened, through calling Hun Sen a Vietnamese puppet, to turn into pogroms against Vietnamese.

Their efforts have gone far to cripple the economy, which was already in a weakened state before the election, both for local reasons, and in connection with the general recession throughout Asia.

There had been very slow, but steady, economic recovery after 1979, and this was continuing even after the too rapid leap from semi-socialism to extreme free market which accompanied the 1991 Paris Agreement and the 1993 election. In 1996 the Cambodian economy grew by 6.5% and the same was expected for 1997, until the July coup attempt, followed by the general Asian crisis. In the end GDP growth for 1997 was about 2%, and the official projection for 1998 is 3%, with per capital income at \$300. Probably the true situation will be worse.

After the July 1997 troubles most foreign aid was cut and many foreign investors withdrew. Some of the garment factories built with foreign investment were looted and destroyed. That branch seems to have recovered, however, for in the first six months of 1998 garment exports were \$140.5 million, 63% higher than one year earlier, that is, in 1997 before the fighting in Phnom Penh.

In general, however, the economy has not recovered from the July 1997 damage, political insecurity, and general Asian crisis. Consumer spending in Phnom Penh is depressed, 48% down from levels before July 1997, while inflation has been 13% with prices of basic foodstuffs, including rice, rising sharply in the three months to August, that is the election month and the months preceding and following.

Rural poverty is worsening, due mainly to drought this year. The Asian crisis has had a severe effect on the important wood-processing factories. Sales have dropped and some companies have cut prices by 50% in the first half of

1998. Tourism, which was expected to develop rapidly as a major income earner, has declined, and hotels are operating at a fraction of normal capacity.

The most important negative influence on the economy is the continuing political uncertainty, which since the election has been deliberately exacerbated by the two losing political parties, particularly that of Sam Rainsy, who call publicly for other countries to withhold trade and aid as long as the CPP is in power. And, in fact, a number of important foreign aid programs are being held back until a new government is formed, which, it now appears, may not be for another month or two, even without more political violence.