

History recurs: Cambodia under the Vietnamese rule

For more than one century, from 1700 to 1850, Vietnam could have swallowed up Kampuchea Krom completely. During that period, the Cambodian people was humiliated very much by their neighbours, the Youns and the Siamese, mostly because of the royal family faults, who fought with each other over power. Each clan went to beg for grants from his neighbours. But, since as the obliged was in office, the neighbour demanded some part of the Khmer territory in return and settlement facilities for his natives. The Vietnamese invasion was stopped by the intervention of the French troops in Indochina.

If we view the recent time, the head of state, Norodom Sihanuk, deposed by the two Chambers of Parliament on March 18th 1970, had begged for North-Vietnamese intervention in order to take over his power, without thinking he was not in authority over the army force.

The North-Vietnamese, who were invading Cambodia, directed commands on the field of battle, assisted by Khmers Rouges. The collapse of the republican regime, due to the shortage of American grants and individual ambitions of some republican leaders, enabled the Khmers Rouges to march into Phnom Penh without bloodshed.

Instead of reconstructing the country that regained peace with the population's enthusiasm, the Khmers Rouges began slaughtering them and purging different trends of their own movement. The Khmers Rouges were composed of several trends: Vietminh, Chinese, nationalist and royalist. The two latter ones were the first victims of the movement.

According to investigations made by Mrs Thi Ui KIM, a former Vietminh agent and vice-president of the UFORL (united front for oppressed races liberation), the slaughters and the destruction of Cambodia, from 1975 to 1978, were also caused by Vietminh agents infiltrated. By the end of 1977, Vietnam noticed the Khmers Rouges, Chinese trend, had got the upper hand on the Khmers Rouges Vietminh. Vietnam then initiated manoeuvres and invaded Cambodia in order to save them till the pro-Chinese Khmers Rouges' collapse. They installed the Vietminh Khmers Rouges in Phnom Penh. They managed the country like Khmers Rouges, by eliminating Cambodians more subtly. During that time, Vietnam conducted the policy in Cambodia. They fired Mr Pen SOVANN, who had dared to protest against Vietnamese hold on Cambodia.

That invasion was stopped by an international intervention, following the Paris agreement on October 21st 1991, that led to the withdrawal of the occupying Vietnamese troops and to free elections supervised by UN. But, unfortunately, new clashes within the royal family happened, between two Norodom Sihanuk's sons, Ranariddh and Chakrapong, which enabled the Vietnamese to come back to power.

Since 2003, particularly in 2008, when the Vietminh Khmers Rouges seized power again as a whole, the vietnamisation policy in Cambodia has been carried out briskly, which reminds us of events in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. According to Dr CHAU KHIM' s investigations, entitled: "History of Kampuchea Krom conquest by the Youns, from 1620 to 1947", there is a great similarity of events during this long period and nowadays. I pick out of the book some extracts in order to show the way they behaved at that time:

* Four thousand, out of ten thousand people, died at work on digging the Vinh-Té canal in 1815, like in the 1980' s when two hundred thousand an other casualties for the mobilization works K5.

* The plots of land being selected, you only have to apply to the Annamite mandarin for becoming the owner. This method of seizure relied on a mere occupation de facto. The procedure is now in practice along the border with the installation of frontier markers within the Cambodian territory.

* There were no rights for the former lords of estates (the Khmers) and any usurpation made by an Annamite was ratified by the court of justice since, as it was proved the field had lately been sown by him, whether he had let it, whether he had sown it without the owner' s knowing it, whether the Youn had occupied it during the owner' s absence. Now, in every lawsuit, justice sides with Vietnamese settlers. As our compatriots would say, it has been no use sueing Chinese, now it is no use sueing Vietnamese.

* The ploughmen soldiers worked on the fields seized from the Khmers, they lived with their families and didn't pay taxes. Now, hundreds thousands of hectares of land are transferred to Vietnamese companies, with a Vietnamese settler's family for every hectare. The whole Cambodian economy is supervised by Vietnamese companies. And the authorities protect retail trade run by those settlers.

* The Youn resident aspires to destroy the Khmer religion and replace it with the Annamite one. He urges monks to leave monasteries, he cuts the sacred trees down, the Stupas, he demolishes statues of Buddha. Now, they are campaigning against bonzes in order to institute the Vietnamese culture in the pagodas, to establish taxes, to restrict the scope of the bonze's behaviour, to spy within the bonze's circles and so on...

All these actions are made possible by the party in office, the PPC, under the Vietnamese supervision. When will Cambodia become Kampuchea Krom again ?

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