

Kampuchea 1976

Editor's Note: On July 20, 1976, Pol Pot, Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, granted an interview to Tran Thanh Xuan, Vice-Director General of Viet Nam News Agency, head of the Vietnamese press and television delegation on a visit to Kampuchea.

The interview was given in Phnom Penh in the presence of Ieng Sary, Deputy-Prime Minister in charge of foreign relations.

Here are the questions and answers.

Question: Could you give us some idea of the overall situation in Democratic Kampuchea since the complete liberation of your country and how you appraise it.

Answer: As you know, we had many big problems in Kampuchea after liberation. Firstly, there was the problem of safeguarding the revolutionary gains, maintaining security throughout the country and, in the matter of national defence, preventing the US imperialists and their lackeys from regaining power and undermining the revolutionary gains.

Secondly, we had to take urgent steps to supply the people with necessities. These are two post-war problems which we must try our hardest to solve.

On the first problem, the US imperialists and their henchmen worked out a plan to counter the Kampuchean revolution in every way after the complete liberation of Kampuchea. We have captured documents proving that they schemed to let the revolution succeed and then to seize power from the revolution six months later.

They schemed to attack Phnom Penh and other places with military force, to sabotage our economy and food supplies to cause difficulties for the people, and incite them to rise up against the revolution. But all these schemes and plans of the US imperialists and their henchmen have met with repeated failures. So far, we have been able to preserve the revolutionary gains, and maintain public order and security in the whole country.

So far, there have been no grave security problems and the situation remains very calm throughout the country. This is yet another setback for the US imperialists and their servants. In other words, their schemes and plans of sabotaging our revolution and our country have been repelled step by step and are now completely crushed. In our view, the ability of the US imperialists and their lackeys to come back and regain power and destroy our revolutionary gains is now much slimmer than before. Nonetheless, we must maintain high revolutionary vigilance.

The second problem is to ensure the people's living standard after liberation. During the five years of war, our national economy was heavily damaged.

The means of production, especially agricultural implements and draught animals, were destroyed to a large extent. So were our factories. This situation posed serious problems. This was a very difficult post-war situation. Moreover, we had to take care of millions of people leaving Phnom Penh and other newly liberated towns for the countryside. We had to solve this problem at all costs, and we have solved it.

The dry season was drawing to a close and the rainy season of 1975 was about to set in when we achieved the complete liberation of our country. We had to overcome numerous obstacles to organize agricultural production, especially to complete

the cultivation of terrace fields in time. Farm work in Kampuchea could not begin until late May and early June and in spite of shortages in many fields, especially of farm tools, thanks to the spirit of the people and revolutionary army, the will to overcome all difficulties, we had solved this problem by the end of 1975. When harvest time came we obtained the necessary amount of food which, though not abundant, created favourable conditions for us to start the 1976 plan. In 1976, the situation improved. We have made special efforts to produce enough food for the people. As far as we can see, bright prospects are before us this year.

With regard to the people's living conditions, and the questions of food, housing, and farming, the situation has improved compared with 1975. But we still have to strive much harder to meet the needs of the people.

In short, the overall situation is stable and is progressing step by step. We firmly believe that, thanks to this gradual improvement, we will make still greater progress in the days to come.

Could you please tell us about the achievements recorded by the Kampuchean people in various fields since complete liberation. Where will you direct your future efforts and what are their prospects?

We have made progress in all fields, but these are only initial and gradual steps. So far, we have made no great achievements. The first result, which is also our prime concern, is the broad mass movement working for economic rehabilitation after many years of war devastation and for reorganization for the gradual reconstruction of the country. In terms of material achievements, such as factories, grain output, cultural activities, etc., our performances have been modest, but we are very pleased with the development of the revolutionary movement of the masses. To our mind, if we can generate a stirring mass movement, there will be bright prospects for economic rehabilitation and steady national construction. As revolutionaries, we firmly believe in the revolutionary movement of the people.

We have made practical progress in the following aspects:

In agriculture: In the specific conditions of our country, we regard agriculture, as the basis of our economy and in agriculture, we give prime attention to the problem of food supplies for the people, including rice, maize and other crops. Proceeding from this position, we have launched a movement to grow water paddy as well as hillside rice with the aim of ensuring food supplies for the people and also exchanging rice for raw materials and other goods. That is why we have attached great importance to rice cultivation since 1975. Still lacking machinery at present, we have to dig ditches and canals for irrigation.

We plan to build a system of ditches and canals for the plains to secure water for about one and a half-million hectares. So far, we have achieved one third of this program. However, even with this 30 per cent, we are not yet able to secure water in all circumstances. Instead we still have to rely partly on irrigation canals with pumping stations. If a network of effective ricefield boundaries and irrigation canals can be built, we can retain much of the rain water. At present, we are launching a real offensive in rice cultivation. What the result will be this year, we dare not say for sure, but we will do all we can. Thus, in the domain of agriculture, although we have not yet obtained significant results in terms of figures, we already have a vigorous movement. We still have to overcome many more obstacles.

As for rubber production, we have been striving to restore plantations and produce rubber for export. On foreign markets, people do not buy raw latex but only rubber latex already processed into crepe. We lack rubber-processing factories. We

have the necessary work force to tend rubber trees and collect latex, but there must be crepe-making factories. In the past five years of war, all our crepe factories were destroyed by the enemy. In the colonial days, we had very few crepe factories. Liquid latex was exported, but to do so required high techniques of transport both on land and by sea. We have not yet mastered these techniques.

That is why we must build crepe factories. So far, we have restored a number of crepe-making factories and we plan to export 20,000 tons of crepe this year. This is feasible because we have already achieved more than half of our program. Our crepe factories are combining semi-rudimentary and handicraft methods of production.

As for the other industrial establishments, we have only concentrated on repair and restoration and have built no new factories since 1975. So far almost all these establishments have been restored and most of them have been put into operation. Under the old regime, all the factories depended on foreign countries for raw materials. We are striving to solve the question of raw materials for our factories step by step. We are first of all concerned with those factories catering for the people's needs and for agricultural production.

Our orientation in this field is to consolidate and perfect these factories, and we do not plan to build other factories. At the same time, we pay attention to handicraft production and to trades catering for the daily life of the people such as the weaving of textiles, towels, mosquitos netting, blankets, and the making of soya sauce and fish sauce.

In culture: We are especially concerned about the eradication of illiteracy. As for secondary and higher education, we are not yet able to do much because our main concern at present is to ensure that within two or three years our entire people can read, write and calculate. In the past, although the old regime built many colleges and universities, the rural population was left illiterate.

That is why we regard the elimination of illiteracy as the most important task. Today, in our country, children go to school, adults go to school, and old people also go to school, and they study full-time day and night, and in between work hours as well.

We also give attention to technical schools. In Phnom Penh as well as in other regions, areas and provinces, we have built technical schools to train a contingent of technicians. By techniques, we mean applied techniques. We build workshops for each branch where students learn while doing practical work. This is how we learn techniques. We cannot wait until the students have finished general education before sending them to technical schools because this does not suit the practical conditions of our country. This is because generally speaking, the bulk of our people, our workers and peasants, still have a low cultural standard. In particular, the majority of our peasants are illiterate. Therefore, we think that learning techniques and improving the general cultural standards at the same time, and combining theory with practice, can help promote the movement step by step.

On health and social affairs: Our prime concern is to eradicate malaria. As far as we know, more than 80 per cent of our work force was affected by malaria in the past. Often during the busiest days of farm work, especially during the harvests, when the wind blew, many people shivered with malaria and could hardly work. We have built more hospitals and dispensaries, and trained a sizeable number of medical workers during and after the war. However, generally speaking their standard is still low. At present, all our co-operative farms already have their own dispensaries, but their medical knowledge is still low and medical supplies are still inadequate. We have been producing a good deal of traditional medicines, but their efficiency

is still low. We will continue to raise the quality of our medicines according to scientific norms. We cannot yet import large quantities of medicines. However, we have made some progress in the social and medical fields compared with the pre-war period as well as compared with 1975.

In short we have not yet achieved any noteworthy results except a revolutionary movement of the masses. Through this movement we have obtained some preliminary results and made some progress compared with 1975. But the needs and demands of the people remain numerous and require us to make more effort.

We emerged from the war with virtually only our bare hands intact. That is why we had to make considerable efforts. But the results obtained since then are only initial steps. We believe that the situation will improve because we have an ardent revolutionary movement of the masses. Our revolution relies on the people, and we believe that once such a movement has arisen among the people, progress is certain.

Our course of action is to strive in all fields, especially in agriculture, in the production of rice and other essential food-crops. We will strive to solve this problem as soon as possible.

This is also the way in which to strengthen and develop the revolutionary forces of the masses. After having achieved success in ideological and cultural education and in organization, we must also solve problems of the people's daily life so as to take the movement vigorously forward.

How do you value the fraternity, friendship and militant solidarity between the peoples of Kampuchea and Viet Nam?

We consider that the friendship and solidarity between the Kampuchean revolution and the Vietnamese revolution, between Kampuchea and Viet Nam, is both a strategic question and a sacred feeling. Only when this friendship and solidarity is strong can the revolution in our two countries develop satisfactorily. There is no alternative. Proceeding from these principles, we hold that both sides, and we personally, must strive to preserve this militant solidarity and this companionship-in-arms, strengthen and enhance it with each passing day.

Whatever obstacles and difficulties may arise we will continue to stand firmly on this position. For a long time the revolution in our two countries has been conducted in the fight against our common enemies, and in this process we have built mutual understanding and mutual revolutionary affection which has become ever steadier.

Concerning the relationship between the Vietnamese leaders and ourselves it is marked by friendly sentiments and mutual understanding. Therefore, the friendship and solidarity between the revolutions and peoples of our two countries not only stem from political reasons but are also built on very friendly sentiments. Experiences of the past decades show that it is thanks to this solidarity that we have defeated the imperialists and their henchmen, and particularly US imperialism. Therefore, we think that in the future we will have to further strengthen and develop this friendship and solidarity. We should make full use of this experience, no matter what obstacles may arise.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm that we are delighted with the successes recorded by the Vietnamese revolution and the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, especially the recent success of the complete reunification of Viet Nam. This is not only an historic event for the Vietnamese people but also a major world event.

On this occasion, we wish to extend, through you, comrade head delegate and

all the other members of the delegation, our warmest revolutionary respect to the Vietnamese leaders and the Vietnamese people who are both our friends and brothers, and we wish the Vietnamese people still greater success in their noble revolutionary tasks.

We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Viet Nam Workers' Party and the Vietnamese people – who are both our friends and brothers – and who have given us constant support and assistance.

The Economic Situation in Ho Chi Minh City Two Years After Liberation

"After two years of continuous efforts, we can affirm that the situation has gradually been stabilized and the way has been cleared for further transformation," Mr Van Dai, Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee and Chairman of the Planning Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, told our special correspondent. The interview follows: (Source: Vietnam Courier, April, 1977)

Question: What were the economic tasks the people's power had to assume as of April 30, 1975?

Answer. With liberation, our city has entered a new stage during which the main task is to build a socialist city. This does not require any sacrifice of human lives of course, as did armed struggle, but just as great efforts are necessary. This is a new struggle full of difficulties, obstacles, and snares.

The old regime left the economy in chaos. It was imperative and urgent that we begin stabilizing the working people's living conditions, transform this consumer city into a productive one step by step, find productivity occupations for the majority of the working population who were then living on commerce and non-productive trades, and gradually reduce unemployment.

In short, we had to see to it that the people do not consume more than they produce, and that they did not live beyond their means.

First of all, a prerequisite: order and security were the *sine qua non* of economic stabilization and development.

Right from the outset, we concentrated on building the revolutionary power. A new administrative system has now been established, from the centre to the districts, wards and quarters, and the people's power has gradually been consolidated.

The revolutionary power set free almost all soldiers and policemen of the old regime. And in order to consolidate order and security, proceeded to the reeducation of those who had been in charge of the pro-American army and of political agents, in view of the considerable parts they played in the war and their close ties with the US aggressors.

Refractory and counter-revolutionary elements who continued to sow disorder and to carry out terrorist activities and sabotage were punished.

We did all we possibly could to enable all who recognized the criminal character of their past actions to become honest citizens. We can today affirm that order and security reign in Ho Chi Minh City and this is favourable for economic stabilization.