

maintaining good relations with Hanoi. His attitude towards the Vietnamese regularly antagonized the movements of the right, such as the Khmers Issarak, the precursors of the Khmers Serei (Free Khmers) and it was they, led by General Lon Nol, who instigated the coup d'état against Sihanouk in 1970.²⁶ It is also worth recalling that in 1968 Sihanouk tried to move to the right by appointing Son Sann prime minister, but the latter held that post for only a few months before going into exile. Finally, when the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975 they persuaded Sihanouk to return to Kampuchea. He was relegated, however, to a purely symbolic role and later forced to withdraw from public life.

The artificial nature of the CGDK and the bitter dislike which the leaders of the three groups feel for each other, explains, at least to some extent, why ASEAN, the Europeans and the United States are all loath to give it anything more than political support.

China supports the Khmer Rouge, though with little enthusiasm, and accepts Sihanouk as an ally only because of what he symbolizes, but it cannot bring itself to accept directly the KPNLF nationalists, represented by Son Sann. The members of ASEAN, on the other hand, Thailand in particular, while making it possible for China to provide the Kampuchean resistance with arms, cannot bring themselves to provide military assistance to the Khmer Rouge. Thus, in the final analysis, the large coalition opposed to Vietnam is not really committed to bringing about a military victory for the CGDK. What some members of the large coalition want to do is to use the CGDK in a war of attrition to prolong a situation which will gradually undermine Vietnam, benefitting all the while from certain guarantees from China concerning the security of Southeast Asia, especially Thailand, and protecting the latter against nationalist liberation movements which will henceforward receive no further aid from Beijing.

This makes it easier to understand what an expert like Chang Pao-min has in mind when he writes: "In fact cynics argue that the ASEAN states,

²⁶ Craig Etcheson, "Civil War and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 1, January 1987, pages 187-203.