

Sihanouk were to definitively quit the CGDK this might well lead to the breakup of that coalition and to increased dissension within ASEAN. Despite his extremely controversial personality all the parties would have to admit that Prince Sihanouk represents the only credible solution for Cambodia because of his presence as a member of the CGDK and his eventual participation in any government reconciling the various Khmer factions. The members of ASEAN, the PRK, and Vietnam are all perfectly well aware of this, and even China itself would find it very difficult to go on supporting the Khmer Rouge.

Finally, this scenario of maintaining the status quo, while it will make Vietnam even more dependent on the Soviet Union, will also increase the Soviet Union's hold over Vietnam. It might also improve relations between the Soviet Union, Indonesia and Malaysia. Indeed, for reasons previously given, the Soviet Union has now a great interest in supporting a settlement in Cambodia, while taking care not to upset its ally, Vietnam. The conflict in Kampuchea is a serious obstacle both to improving its relations with China and to extending its influence throughout Southeast Asia.

The third scenario, namely a concentrated attempt to arrive at a compromise based on Cambodian neutrality, would, therefore, have to be much more satisfactory from the point of view of all those involved. This idea of a neutral Cambodia is neither new or original. It was first raised at the time of the Geneva Agreements in 1954. What is perhaps a new development is that a large number of the states involved are willing to accept the word "neutral" as part of the description of a desirable status for Cambodia, though they do not necessarily agree as to the exact sense in which this word should be used.

As long ago as March 1980, when they met at Kuantan, the heads of state of Indonesia and Malaysia affirmed that establishing a dialogue with Hanoi would free Vietnam from its dependence on the Soviet Union without throwing it into the clutches of Beijing, and that any settlement of the conflict in Cambodia must take into account Vietnam's need to safeguard its own security.¹¹⁹ This agreement, known as "the Kuantan principle," was controversial at the time, but it has since gained

¹¹⁹ P. de Beauregard et al., *op.cit.*, page 254.