

Ghazali Shafie: 'I told Vietnam why they could leave Kampuchea'

During the New Delhi summit meeting of the Non-Aligned nations, one of the major political issues under discussion was the question of who would represent the Southeast Asian nation of Kampuchea in the Non-Aligned. Since the overthrow of the genocidal Pol Pot regime in early 1979 by Kampuchean forces backed by the Vietnamese and the formation of the Heng Samrin government in Phnom Penh, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore), backed by China and the United States, have backed the exiled "government" of "Democratic Kampuchea." This exile regime, the Pol Pot-led Khmer Rouge, still holds the United Nations representation for Kampuchea.

At the Havana Non-Aligned summit in 1979 a decision was made to oust the Pol Pot group and to leave the seat of Kampuchea empty, denying representation also to the Heng Samrin government. Last year, with ASEAN backing, and U.S.-China backing, an attempt was made to put a new face on Pol Pot in the form of the "coalition government" of the Khmer Rouge, former Prince Sihanouk (who was a previous ally of the Pol Potists), and the forces of former Premier Son Sann. This "coalition" managed to retain the U.N. seat during the past session of the General Assembly but it is widely known that the support for the coalition, despite its Sihanouk "cover," is wearing thin.

At New Delhi, the ASEAN countries who are members of the Non-Aligned—Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, with the Singapore in the lead—made a bid to reverse the Havana decision and have Sihanouk invited to speak at the conference. Vietnam and other countries alternately pressed to have the Heng Samrin government seated at the conference. The decision of the summit was to continue the Havana decision, leave the seat empty, and to reconsider the issue at the 1985 foreign ministers' conference of the Non-Aligned.

During the conference there was a meeting between Malaysian Foreign Minister Ghazali Shafie and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach. It has been widely reported that there was some movement at that meeting toward holding a meeting between the Indochinese countries and the ASEAN nations, an event which could mark a breakthrough in the impasse between the two groups of countries.

EIR had the opportunity to interview both foreign ministers. We talked to Malaysia's foreign minister just following his meeting with Foreign Minister Thach. The following day we interviewed Thach. The two interviews, which follow, provide a unique side-by-side picture of ASEAN and Indochinese views on the current situation in Southeast Asia.

Below are excerpts from an interview conducted by Peter Ennis and Paul Zykofsky with the foreign minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie. The interview took place on March 11 in New Delhi during the seventh summit meeting of the Non-Aligned nations.

EIR: After the summit, is there any possibility of a meeting between the ASEAN countries and the Indochinese nations to resolve the Kampuchean problem?

Shafie: Well, we have been making contacts at this conference with [Foreign Minister] Co Thach of Vietnam. I think we have been able to exchange our thoughts and clarify many things in each other's minds. For instance, I have been able to explain to him—whether he believes me or not is another matter—that the [exile Kampuchean] coalition government is intended to facilitate a political solution for Vietnam. We know that Vietnam would never be able to talk to a government led by the Khmer Rouge. And I think most of the people don't approve of it [the Khmer Rouge]. But with a coalition government you cannot dismiss it. So this is the point I am telling him.

I told him also: surely Vietnam is the first country to recognize that to occupy a foreign country is the easiest way to allow your enemy to subvert you because that is how you subverted the Americans when they were occupying South Vietnam. So, by your being in Kampuchea, it is very easy for the Chinese to subvert both Kampuchea and Vietnam. So why don't you leave if you say you are afraid of China? And we can help to deny the Chinese any interference in Kampuchea and even Vietnam.

EIR: The Vietnamese say that they would like to leave but that so many men in Kampuchea were killed under Pol Pot, that Kampuchea doesn't have the ability to form any army to prevent Pol Pot from coming back. So, what kind of concrete

guarantees could ASEAN or the international community provide to ensure that Pol Pot would not come back?

Shafie: Well, this is all found in the [U.N.] International Conference on Kampuchea resolution which can be used at any point. It simply means that if there is an agreement to withdraw there will be a process of reconciliation amongst the Khmer people, and if self-determination is practiced . . . then Pol Pot becomes irrelevant. He becomes irrelevant.

But the use of Pol Pot is a bogey to justify—and I asked him [Thach]—in all Marxist books and Lenin's teachings and everything else, I've never found a sentence where it justifies a socialist country to attack another socialist country and occupy it. I said: show it to me—for whatever reason,

'I was never a friend of the Chinese. It is Vietnam that is disillusioned with the Chinese. The worst mistake the Americans made was not to understand the Chinese in Vietnam. The Chinese didn't want South Vietnam to be lost to the North. What China would want now is that if it cannot itself be in Kampuchea, then let no other communist group be in Kampuchea. And that falls in line with our thinking.'

genocide or any reason. All that I could read from Lenin or Marx and everybody else is that you must, as a matter of responsibility, create revolution inside the country, not to occupy with your army but to create revolution.

EIR: But as long as there are twenty or forty thousand guerrillas that are being armed by China on the Thai border with Kampuchea, what kind of guarantee would there be that Pol Pot would not come back?

Shafie: The point is this. For one thing the Chinese themselves—I've been explaining this—the worst mistake the Americans made was not to understand the Chinese in Viet-

nam. The Chinese didn't want South Vietnam to be lost to the North—you know that. But none of you understood it. And I've been trying to say this [during] those years. And now you continue to say it, that the Chinese want Pol Pot back.

You see, Pol Pot is a product of the Gang of Four [in China]. Any communist government inside Kampuchea would only be susceptible to another communist subversion or takeover by Vietnam. What China would want is that if it cannot itself be in Kampuchea, then let no other communist group be in Kampuchea. And that falls in line with our thinking—it's just a congruence [of thinking]. So what is the guarantee? you are asking. The point is China does not want a communist government in Kampuchea. . . .

The Chinese want an International Conference on Kampuchea resolution which is that the people will have a chance to decide. And you know that the moment the people are given the chance to decide, without coercion, the Khmer Rouge becomes irrelevant. Because no one is going to support the Khmer Rouge anymore. That is the greatest guarantee, the people themselves. Nobody else from outside can guarantee that. Now if for some reason they want it, well then good luck to them. There's nothing that anybody can do about it. . . .

EIR: Has China said to you that they would stop supporting Pol Pot if this were to take place?

Shafie: I don't believe either [China or Vietnam]. I believe in myself. In my own perception. Why should I believe them?

EIR: What I mean is they [the Vietnamese] say they will withdraw if the Chinese stop supporting Pol Pot. So it all depends on whom you believe.

Shafie: But I know that the Vietnamese don't want to withdraw unless they are forced to or unless there is some measure of persuasion from some other quarters. And let us not forget that if once they were friends of China, they can become enemies. Today they are friends of Russia—they too can become enemies. They do not believe that. That is why I told Co Thach, there are no real permanent friends and permanent enemies in international relations. You say your enemies are the Chinese but you were hugging the Chinese and condemning me.

I told him: during the period when we were forming Malaysia and after, you were condemning us as neo-colonialists together with the Chinese. And now you say the Chinese are very bad. He said: "Don't trust the Chinese." I said—who are you, asking me not to trust the Chinese? You don't have to teach me about that, because you were the friends of the Chinese before. I was never a friend of the Chinese. Until today the Malaysia passport is stamped 'not valid for China.' You don't have to tell me that. It is you who are disillusioned with the Chinese. So I'm telling you [Vietnam], your best friends are the ASEAN, so why don't you follow us.'