

# A Possible Resurgence of Ancient Asian Frictions

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PARIS, May 1—The sudden and sometimes apparently contradictory twists of the various Indochinese Communist parties have surprised knowledgeable French officials and scholars.

A number of these experts are revising their assessments and concluding that a major result of the way the Indochina wars have ended is likely to be a reassertion of deeply Asian attitudes and possibly a resurgence of ancient Asian frictions.

"Two Western religions have been implanted in Vietnam—Catholicism and Marxism," said Jean Lacouture, a French expert on Indochina. "They are bound to leave profound traces. But they are being nationalized, Vietnamized."

Despite intense French efforts in the last few months to play a mediating diplomatic role in Vietnam and Cambodia, the effect of the efforts seems to be not so much a resurgence of French influence as a reversion

to attitudes of the precolonial era.

The Cambodian Communist representatives here, for example, have recently displayed a much more intense sensitivity to the role of their North Vietnamese allies than they showed during early phases of the war in Cambodia.

"It hurt us very much when the Western press said there were North Vietnamese in our revolutionary army units," Chau Seng, the Cambodian Communist delegate here, said when Communist forces entered Phnom Penh last month. "There were other forms of aid, yes, but they were never incorporated in our forces."

## Favor Nonaligned Bloc

He did not deny that North Vietnamese troops had been involved, but he went out of his way to reject the idea of continuing influence on Cambodia by Hanoi.

Speaking privately, other Cambodian Communist representatives here have permitted themselves expressions of the ancient Cambodian antagonism toward Vietnamese, regardless of political systems.

They not only emphasized

their determination to be part of the nonaligned group of nations but also insisted that the evolving political situation in Asia would favor their chances to maintain that position.

Their argument is that China favors nonalignment for the countries of Indochina as a buffer to Soviet influence, which is still strong in Hanoi. The Cambodians have looked to Peking for protection against domination by the historically expansionist North Vietnamese. Hanoi's relations with Moscow contain a similar desire to balance the influence of China, Vietnam's traditional enemy.

Last fall, before the sudden North Vietnamese military successes in the South, Hanoi was already considering joining the nonaligned bloc of nations. This information was confirmed by neutral diplomats stationed in Hanoi, by high Yugoslav officials who were involved in transmitting messages and by Cambodian Communist officials who cited it as proof that Peking favored nonalignment for all the Indochinese nations.

The same sources said that North Korea was planning a similar move, again apparently

with Chinese support for a way of limiting Soviet influence.

The intricate web of regional and national fears and ambitions is coming to the fore again as the Cambodian and North Vietnamese Communists achieve victory, the French experts now feel.

## To Bar Foreign Charities

As an indication of this trend, the Cambodian Communists have said that it would be a slur on their national independence to permit the continued operation of foreign charitable and cultural institutions in Cambodia.

"There is no reason for a private foreign hospital, a private foreign school," Mr. Chau Seng said, indicating that the French will not be allowed to reopen the facilities that religious and humanitarian groups have provided for generations.

The French considered the way they were ordered to evacuate their embassy in Phnom Penh to be a brutal reversal of an agreement that they thought they had reached with the Cambodian Communists through Prince Norodom Sihanouk, their nominal leader. The Cambodian Communists made clear that they did not consider relations

with any foreigners, certainly not any Westerners, to be privileged.

There have also been some hints of evolving attitudes among Vietnamese Communists.

## Intermarriage Frowned Upon

A North Vietnamese official, for instance, expressed open surprise that intermarriage with Chinese is common in Thailand.

"It's because they're farther away from China," he said. "It wouldn't be possible in Vietnam."

The same official spoke much more freely about the prospects for Vietnamese reunification than has been the habit of North Vietnamese in the last few years, when the responsibility of the Provisional Revolutionary Government for the fate of the South was stressed.

But he predicted a gradual retransfer of populations, with a return northward of the many Catholics who fled south after the 1954 partition and a return southward of those who moved to Communist North Vietnam.

It was, in effect, an acknowledgment of the ancient differences between the North, the central region and the South in Vietnam—and a surprising omission of political and ideological factors.

## A Change of Mind

Mr. Lacouture, who had long felt that the South's Communists represented an authentic assertion of South Vietnamese identity, said that he had come

to change his mind.

"I began to wonder when they allowed Le Duc Tho to negotiate the fate of the South," he said, referring to the North Vietnamese official who negotiated the 1973 Paris accords. "And now, with all those North Vietnamese troops there..."

"But," he added, "if Hanoi tries to swallow the South, it will have a very sore throat. I think they realize it."

No expert here is eager to predict what will happen in Vietnam in the next few months, during what Mr. Lacouture calls "the transition phase."

But from a longer perspective, there is a consensus among Indochinese officials and French experts that what is ending is not just 30 years of revolutionary war. Some 150 years of Western dominion in Indochina is also ending. And that, they say, may prove more important for what emerges in the long run than the essentially Western doctrine of Communism.



North Vietnamese demonstrating in Hanoi after hearing of the fall of Saigon. The picture was released by a North Vietnamese source.

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