

KHMER REPUBLIC

OPEN LETTER TO PRINCE SIHANOUK

By Sisowath Sirik Matak — August 27, 1973

To My Younger Cousin, Prince Sihanouk!

If you reflect honestly and in good conscience, you will realize that you yourself are the source of the current war of aggression that has caused immense damage and loss of life to our nation. If you had accepted with dignity and selflessness the judgment of the legitimate representatives of the citizens—who unanimously voted to depose you, just as many other heads of state were deposed before or after you under similar circumstances—you could certainly have spared our people from this suffering.

Instead, you did not do so. You turned around and fraudulently created a government-in-exile whose members are scattered across various capitals and have no clear headquarters inside Khmer territory. Worse yet, you called upon the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong armies—who were merely waiting for a signal to openly invade Cambodia—under the pretext that the covert and gradually intensifying encroachment they had begun in Cambodia five years prior was legitimate, claiming that you yourself had asked them to intervene.

You must understand that if your North Vietnamese-Viet Cong friends currently organize, equip, and fully support the Khmer Rouge movement inside Cambodia, it is certainly not to please you or serve your interests. They are very clever and dangerous, with a long-term goal of turning our country into a vassal state of North Vietnam.

In the end, it is you who have been deceived by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. Your misunderstanding has brought a brutal war to your own country, and through your fault, Cambodia could be wiped off the map of the world.

I believe it is not too late for you to engage in self-criticism and self-correction. I hope that by making this appeal to you, I am contributing to the salvation of our nation.

All of this is possible if, in good conscience, you acknowledge that you are responsible for the destruction of the Khmer monarchy, the current suffering of the Cambodian people, and the destruction of our policy of neutrality in the Indochina War and among non-aligned nations.

When His Majesty Norodom Suramarit—your father and my uncle—passed away without appointing a new king to succeed him, you could not ascend the throne either, because in 1955 (five years earlier), you made a fortunate decision to abdicate and solemnly swore never to return to power.

According to Article 30 of the 1947 Constitution, the Crown Council was required to convene within three days following the vacancy of the throne to appoint a new king, as well as a Regent if the new king was a minor.

At that time, you were still popular and the people still loved you. You could have easily succeeded your father to the throne if Article 30 (*bis*) of the Constitution—which you had forced through based on your own ideas—had not prohibited you.

In this regard, Article 30 (*bis*) stated: *"In the event that circumstances do not allow for the appointment of a new King, the Crown Council shall, within the same timeframe as specified in the above article, appoint a Council of Regency to temporarily fulfill the royal prerogatives under the conditions set forth in this Constitution."*

However, at that time, the "Khmer Royal Socialist Youth"—one of many organizations you created—organized demonstrations on your orders to demand that you take on the role of "Head of State," a position not envisioned by the Constitution at all. Using this as a pretext, you issued a message to the nation asking the country's institutions to amend the Constitution to create the position of "Head of State."

In those days, your desire was law. Both houses of Parliament convened to approve an additional article to satisfy your wishes. Subsequently, on June 15, 1960, they appointed you as "Head of State"—a title you held for a long time and illegally until both houses deposed you in March 1970. From that moment on, it became clear to everyone that through your personal abuse of power, you killed the Khmer monarchy with your own hands.

I must acknowledge one remarkable trait about you: you are a person of good humor, but humor in tragedy. The very people you believe to be your friends today are the ones who brought about your downfall and made everyone hate you.

For this reason, in an editorial in *Le Sangkum* magazine in September 1966, you denounced the Khmer Rouge as traitors—as "non-Khmers"—who, since the 1954 Geneva Agreements, had placed their country under the colonial rule of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Later, you publicly accused the Peking regime—the very regime that feeds you today. When dissolving the "Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association," you declared: *"The sovereign state of the People's Republic of China denies the sovereign Khmer state the right to be master of its own house."* In another statement, you added that the Khmer nation must not be represented by the likes of Hou Yuon, Khieu Samphan, Hou Nim, and Phouk Chhay, whom China recognized over the head of the legitimate Khmer government and state, claiming that only these individuals were the true representatives of the Khmer people.

In a broadcast over national radio on October 5, 1967, you once again denounced Hou Yuon, Khieu Samphan, Phouk Chhay, and Hou Nim, stating: *"They must know that I, Sihanouk, am always ready to confront them, and I, Sihanouk, will fight without mercy to the very end—until these non-Khmers are completely destroyed, even if I, Sihanouk, am flayed alive."*

In January 1968, during a press conference, you denounced the subversive acts of the Red Chinese, declaring: *"The Khmer Rouge... have decided to end peace in Cambodia, which the people have enjoyed for many years... They have received weapons, ammunition, medicine, and propaganda material printed in China featuring portraits of Chairman Mao Zedong along the Khmer-Thai border."*

My cousin!

I could add many more such quotes, because from 1966 to 1969, all your statements were compiled at the Ministry of Information. To create balance, you criticized Western powers, especially the United

States, which international media picked up and published. By misleading international opinion in this way, you mistakenly thought you earned the title of "Champion of Neutrality."

Instead, you secretly maintained "close" relations with the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, even allowing them to establish military bases, hospitals, training centers, logistical supply depots, and troop staging centers inside Khmer territory to launch attacks against South Vietnam. All those military bases were located along our eastern border, from Ratanakiri Province all the way to the sea. You can draw your own conclusion that such a policy was by no means a neutral one; it was a policy that dragged Cambodia into the present war, which the Khmer nation never wanted.

When these forces were attacked by the local population in the areas they illegally occupied with your sole permission, and when the legitimate Khmer government denounced them, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong did nothing less than launch an open and blatant aggression at your request made in Canton in March 1970.

That is why at the beginning of the invasion on March 29, 1970, we clearly identified the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong units inside our territory as follows:

North Vietnamese & Viet Cong Troop Deployment (March 29, 1970)

Division / Unit	Regiments / Components	Troop Strength	Location / Station
1st Division	101st D Regiment	2,000	Angkor Borei, Takéo Province
5th Division	174-05 & 275th Regiments	5,000	Snoul, Kratié Province
7th Division	141st, 165th, & 209th Regiments	6,200	Memot, Kampong Cham Province
9th Division	95th-C, 271st, & 272nd Regiments	6,000	Chup, Kampong Cham Province
B-3 Front	24th, 28th, 40th, 66th, & 95-O Regiments	10,800	Ratanakiri - Borkeo
Command & Staff	Headquarters & Staff Posts	12,000	Border Region
Logistics	Logistics Supply Units	23,000	Border Region
TOTAL FORCE STRENGTH		65,000 Troops	

My cousin!

By now, this war of aggression has lasted nearly four years, causing endless death, suffering, and destruction for the Khmer people. Meanwhile, the Khmer Republic stands on a firm foundation with

legitimate institutions. I would like to remind you of your own words published in *Sangkum* magazine in July 1966:

"The Throne is willing to transfer power to a Republic in good faith if the majority of male and female citizens desire such a Republic."

"And the Throne requests that republican citizens make every sacrifice to avoid the shedding of Khmer blood over the takeover of a Republic. The monarchy has no intention of 'clinging' to power if it no longer holds the trust of the people."

My cousin!

Now, this war of aggression has spilled a great deal of Khmer blood, and the vast majority of the Khmer people have decisively expressed their will since March 1970 that they want a Republican regime. I appeal to you to help the Khmer people end this war, as fighting has steadily decreased in South Vietnam and Laos, signaling a peaceful resolution to the problem.

At this point, I ask you to be reasonable and sensible. You know better than anyone that you are not the "leader" of the so-called "National Resistance." The resistance you mistakenly believe in is nothing more than an aggression by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong armed forces, in collusion with roughly 20,000 Khmer Rouge troops—and these Khmer Rouge are not your people either.

Furthermore, an undeniable fact is that you rely entirely on China and North Vietnam for personal funding and for what you call your "government."

This prevents you from being neutral in any way. Without them, you would not have the funds for your travels or for the members of your "government," most of whom live permanently in Paris, Africa, or Peking, with no hope of ever stepping foot on Khmer soil again.

My cousin, behave like a true prince. Finally, you must accept your defeat and abandon your existence as a servant to foreigners who have no other goal than to exploit your desire for revenge for their own personal interests.

If you agree to do this, you will demonstrate to the entire world your pure patriotism by sacrificing your personal ambitions, as you have publicly declared many times. You should know that your entire family in Phnom Penh is waiting for this noble gesture from you.

Signature: Sisowath Sirik Matak