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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
Andy Card, Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Ambassador Thomas Pickering, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
Richard Solomon, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Sichan Siv, Deputy Assistant to the President for Public Liaison
Douglas Paal, Senior Director for Asian Affairs, Notetaker
Intrepreter

Prince Sihanouk
Keo Puthrasmey, Foreign Minister
Mme Khek Sysoda, Chief of Protocol

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DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 24, 1991 11:17 a.m. - 11:47 a.m.
USUN New York

The President: Welcome, welcome. (U)

Prince Sihanouk: My most profound respects to you sir. (U)

The President: We will have some press coming in here so let us take our seats. You are doing wonderful work. (U)

Prince Sihanouk: Thanks to U.S. help. We will never forget what you have done for us. (U)

The President: I hope you have not had too tiring a schedule at the UN. Do you want to do this in translation? (U)

Prince Sihanouk: I can speak English. (U)

The President: I want to hear your report. (U)

Prince Sihanouk: Mr. President, we have practically resolved all the problems related to Cambodia. We will sign an agreement. Since we have resolved all the problems related to the draft

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framework agreement, according to Mr. Solomon, the U.S. is satisfied with the work of the Supreme National Council (SNC). We had to take into account proposed amendments from Phnom Penh, from Hun Sen. But we found a good compromise solution. Two problems remained but we found a satisfactory solution. With respect to the military, 70 percent will be demobilized, 30 percent will be in uniform without weapons. The weapons will go to a store house permanently under UNTAC. A French proposal solved the military problem. (Ø)

The other problem was the electoral system. We achieved a compromise between the resistance and Phnom Penh. The system will be proportional in each province instead of having a system of nation-wide proportional elections. Hun Sen is satisfied with such a compromise. (Ø)

First, we would like to get for Cambodia a single winner constituency. But that system -- in conformity with the draft of the Permanent Five -- since it is proportional for each province, it is satisfactory. Hun Sen is satisfied. All the problems are solved. When there are questions of the relationship between the SNC and the UNTAC -- The Special Representative of the Secretary General -- in case we cannot achieve a mutual decision, Sihanouk, as Chairman of the SNC, will have the final say. But I wrote two letters to the Secretary General saying that I would not make decisions without consultations with the Secretary General's Special Representative and the SNC. I will give final say to the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, since I sincerely do not want to have the final say. I have to save the harmony in the SNC. If I have to take decisions, it hurts one part of the SNC, and that is bad for harmony. Mr. President, it seems that even Mr. Solomon accepts this arrangement. (Ø)

There were adjustments of the Permanent Five plan. Hun Sen accepted that he would withdraw many of his amendments. Finally, we accepted only a few amendments from Phnom Penh. We resolved many problems. There was a written adjustment of the peace plan. As far as the resistance is concerned, we accepted a draft agreement of the Permanent Five 100 percent. We did not want any amendments to be brought to the Permanent Five draft agreement. But we had to take account of objections of Phnom Penh. So we succeeded by resolving all the differences. We can say that we have a compromise settlement. (Ø)

The President: Congratulations. Your great efforts brought this about. You know we would have great difficulty with the Khmer Rouge. We cannot dictate, obviously, what Cambodia will do. But I would like to hear how you think the elections will come out. (Ø)

Prince Sihanouk: Mr. President, we have four factions: the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen, Son Sann, Funcinpec. Hun Sen controls 80 percent of the national territory. So he has had enough time to strengthen his position vis a vis the people. The resistance, including the Khmer Rouge, controls only 20 percent of the

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territory of Cambodia. So, we have not much influence on the people in Hun Sen's zone. We speak in terms of a just and democratic election. They will be organized by UNTAC. The SNC has no authority to oversee or implement the elections. The Khmer Rouge will have no means to influence the election. So, a priori, we will have regular elections. The Khmer Rouge will not have the force to intimidate the population or to influence the population. Hun Sen will have more of a chance to influence the people. Unlike Pol Pot, Hun Sen is somewhat liberal, although very corrupt. In Asia, of course, corruption is normal. (Ø)

The President: Will the 20 percent under the Khmer Rouge be free to support someone else? Is there any chance to vote freely? (Ø)

Prince Sihanouk: The Khmer Rouge are rich. They have much aid and money from China. Now China has ceased giving them money or aid. But the Khmer Rouge controls Pailin. There are gems in the soil. They cooperate with Thai entrepreneurs. There are good trees, and they cooperate with Thai entrepreneurs to export them. So they are rich. They have bulldozers to build roads and reservoirs for the people. They have modified the treaty with the Vietnamese, and the treaty benefits Vietnam. This disturbs the Khmer people. Prince Ranariddh's people tell the people about this. They hope to use the radio. They think they can reach the people in the Phnom Penh zone area. The poor are getting poorer, the rich get richer. The treaty of Hun Sen benefits Vietnam. Look at the many settlers from Vietnam in Cambodia. Phnom Penh says there are 100,000. The resistance says there are 1,000,000. The people think that many of the settlers have taken over the land and the businesses. Your excellency, Mr. President, there are so many Vietnamese advisors in Cambodia. They dominate the Hun Sen regime. The Vietnamese Ambassador to Phnom Penh is like the former French Governor General. Those are the weaknesses of the regime. Prince Ranariddh and Son Sann are able to exploit these weaknesses. So we might have, for the people of Cambodia, a balanced situation concerning the parties. The dominant party will be Hun Sen, but there is a question of an absolute majority. I do not think he will get an absolute majority. Second will be the Khmer Rouge, because they have their zone. But the NCR has their chance. Prince Ranariddh and Son Sann, if they unite, will have a few seats. (Ø)

The President: You know what interests me, in describing the Khmer Rouge, I would think that the young -- farmers around the age of 30 -- will just remember the killing fields. We see the leaders there as so bad, that we cannot have anything to do with them. (Ø)

Prince Sihanouk: Mr. President, the weaknesses of the Khmer Rouge -- the rich families, the merchants and the rich farmers -- the Khmer Rouge wants only the poor, the rich are outside Cambodia. The poor are 80 percent of the population. As for the atrocities, the Khmer Rouge said they were undertaken for the poor. They do everything for the poor. They also have a younger

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generation. They cannot know, like young Germans know Auschwitz, German atrocities. We had to see the realities on the ground. I am Khmer. I know the realities of the people. I had to repeat to you, with frankness, those realities. Yesterday, I saw Congressmen Solarz, Atkins, Green. They would not like to see the armies of Hun Sen, Son Sann and Ranariddh cooperate. It is like AIDS, we do not know the source of AIDS, is it the CIA? I prefer not to know. We cannot tell them, please do not make an alliance with Khmer Rouge, please do not associate, then the Khmer Rouge will not get a majority. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: Where is Pol Pot? (Ø)

Prince Sihanouk: Mr. Secretary of State, Pol Pot, Mme Ieng Sary refuse to go into exile. Son Sen and Khieu Samphan say nobody will have the power to force them to leave Cambodian soil. In fact, they have left Khmer soil from time to time. They led the war from inside Thailand. They were protected by the Royal Thai Army. The other day I talked to General Suchinda -- who said he met the other day with Pol Pot. He had a good conversation. Pol Pot is in very good health. I said thank you, but I am not interested in the health of Pol Pot. Unless you persuade them to go to China or France you cannot expect them to leave. In our history -- Siam and Annam used the Khmer as proxies to fight. This continues today. The only weapon of the Royal Thai Army to contain Vietnamese influence is Pol Pot. They continue to protect the Khmer Rouge. The key is in Bangkok. (Ø)

The President: Once again, congratulations. I look forward to free, fair elections in Cambodia. You are the key to the reunification of the country. You have never given up. (Ø)

Prince Sihanouk: Thank you. I am inspired by your determination to keep Cambodia peaceful, nonaligned and a reunified state. (Ø)

END OF CONVERSATION

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