

Remembering the King

Norodom Sihanouk
1922-2012



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COLIN MEYN
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Cover photo: King Norodom Sihanouk speaks with reporters in April 1996. *Reuters*
 Contents photos: Clockwise from top left: Norodom Sihanouk and French President Charles de Gaulle are celebrated during a parade in Phnom Penh in September 1966. *Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres* Norodom Sihanouk (2nd from left) greets his son, deposed co-prime minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh (second from right), National Assembly President Chea Sim (left) and Prime Minister Hun Sen (right) at the king's palace in Phnom Penh. *Reuters* Norodom Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Khemanourak, center, stands between two Khmer Rouge officials in the early 1970s. *Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres* An image from the film "Crepuscule," directed by, and starring, Norodom Sihanouk. *Royal Cabinet*

We offer our deepest condolences to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni and Her Majesty Queen Mother Monineath Sihanouk and the people of Cambodia on the death of their beloved King Father Norodom Sihanouk

Our hospital was named after him in his honor. We will miss him. His legacy remains to give hope to the poor of Cambodia who receive free medical care at our hospital.



'I am but a man'

Norodom Sihanouk's decades-long dedication to shaping his legacy

BY MICHELE VACHON • THE CAMBODIA DAILY

In his 1980 book "Souvenirs doux et amers," or "bittersweet memories," King Norodom Sihanouk wrote, "In the past, I felt little inclination, I must admit, to speak about my public life, especially the private side of my life. Today, feeling old age approaching...I feel the duty to pass on to history what I know of the 'complex,' it seems, character that I am. If I don't dedicate myself to this task of introspection, others will take care of it."

The late King then explained that he had been described by some authors as a feudal blood-thirsty leader and by others as a depraved and corrupt Asian prince, which is why he wanted to write his story himself.

King Sihanouk's concern with the way historians and posterity would portray him and interpret his actions was lifelong. On his visit to Canada, the U.S. and Japan in 1953, during which he used the media to pressure France to negotiate Cambodia's independence, the 30-year-old King had discovered the power of public opinion. This would prompt him to control news stories released in Cambodia in the late 1960s, give lengthy press conferences to the foreign press in the 1970s and 1980s, and build in the process lasting friendships with some Western journalists.

In the 1960s, Norodom Sihanouk would spend a great deal of time sending letters and telegrams to foreign publications whose stories he was unhappy with, and had his comments on the articles reprinted in full in Cambodian magazines.

After the publication of an Asia Magazine story on May 19, 1968, the late King sent an official telegram to its editor in chief in Singapore, accusing the publication of pro-American and neo-colonial bias regarding Cambodia's borders and the country's future, saying that it was "disgusting that a magazine claiming to be Asian would put down the only Asian, non-communist country left."

In a letter to The Sunday Times in London that same year, Norodom Sihanouk complained about the headline of journalist Richard West's story, which read "Sihanouk's Cambodia: forward into the past," and criticized Mr. West's

comment to the effect that Cambodia "of course is rather corrupt."

In the mid-1960s, foreign journalists had been barred entry to the country except for those on the "white list" who were presenting a vision of Cambodia and Norodom Sihanouk's administration that he considered "objective."

Tolerating no criticism, King Sihanouk had prohibited foreign and national newspapers in the country in September 1967, only allowing the publication of four newspapers released respectively in Khmer, French, Chinese and Vietnamese, and which were under the control of the Ministry of Information.

"I was king. I virtually had unlimited powers.... I have a rather authoritarian and explosive character of which I'm weary," the late King told journalist Jean Lacouture in a long interview published in book form in 1972.

And after his years of house arrest in Phnom Penh under the Khmer Rouge, he wrote in "Souvenirs doux et amers:" "I spent far too much time confronting criticism and allegations which I deemed unfounded or ill-willed.

"I see things differently and in a more serene manner. The journalists, who incurred my rage, were merely doing their job which most of them did well. Their articles and press agency wires, whether favorable or not with respect to Sihanouk and his 'system,' had the merit of preventing Cambodia's problems from falling into oblivion."

In the 1990s, the late King would openly support freedom of the press while commenting on journalists' stories and current events in his monthly publication Bulletin mensuel de documentation and later on his website.

But his concern with the way historians and analysts would portray him never faded.

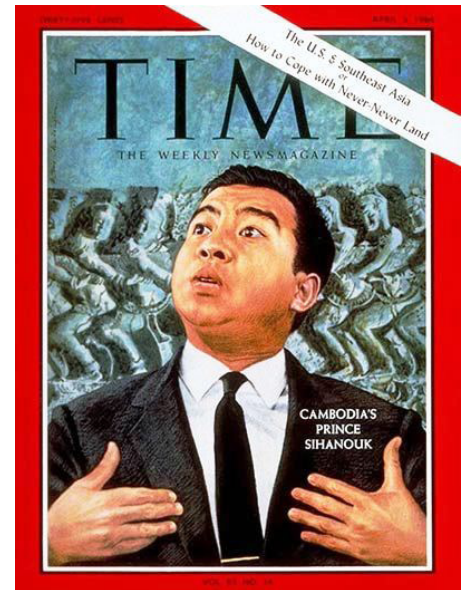
As he explained in his 1990 book "Sihanouk Reminisces, World Leaders I Have Known," which he wrote with American journalist Bernard Krisher, who later founded The Cambodia Daily, leaders who are worshipped to the point of creating "a cult of personality" while in power face a serious risk once gone.

"The tragedy of such cults, as in my case when I ruled Cambodia, is that the very same people who rush to erect monuments on your arrival are also the very first to rush to destroy those monuments when you have fallen," Norodom Sihanouk wrote.

King Sihanouk had seen his fears materialize in 1971 when French researcher Charles Meyer published his book "Derriere le sourire khmer," or "behind the Khmer smile," on the situation in Cambodia.

Mr. Meyer had been Norodom Sihanouk's media and public affairs adviser for years before returning to France in the late 1960s. In the book, the Frenchman described his former boss as follows: "A brilliant statesman and passionate patriot, he managed to give his country peace

"The very same people who rush to erect monuments on your arrival are also the very first to rush to destroy those monuments when you have fallen."



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres
Cover of Time magazine from 1964

through independence which was short of miraculous but failed in his search for original solutions to political and economic problems borne of decolonization."

The late King viewed the book as a personal betrayal and this led him to write his own version of events, usually in French, while in exile during the early 1970s and the 1980s. This included "Norodom Sihanouk, Prisonnier des Khmers Rouges," or "Norodom Sihanouk, prisoner of the Khmer Rouge," which he wrote in 1986 with journalist Simonne Lacouture.

After he was crowned constitutional monarch following the 1993 national elections and the adoption of the Constitution, the late King selected a biographer: Julio Jeldres, who had started communicating with Norodom Sihanouk while a teenager in his native Chile in the 1960s and had become his private secretary in the early 1980s.

"At the time of my appointment, there were reports that a number of people were writing biographies of His Majesty, and because of previous experience, His Majesty felt that it would be better if his Official Biographer was someone who knew him as well as I did, having spent 12 years working closely with him," said Mr. Jeldres in an email interview. "When a year later, the biography by Milton Osborne came out, His Majesty's fears were confirmed."

"For His Majesty, it was very important what history would say about him as it has become politically correct to belittle or to treat with derision whatever His Majesty tried to do for the people of Cambodia and to modernize Cambodia," Mr. Jeldres said.

In his book "Sihanouk: Prince of light, prince of darkness," Australian historian Milton Osborne had said of King Sihanouk in the 1960s: "In the face of massive problems both external and internal, only a man of Sihanouk's great energy and ability could have achieved even a measure of success. But that success was al-



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres
Money used during the French Protectorate



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres

Norodom Sihanouk records his resignation as Head of State of Democratic Kampuchea in March 1976.

ways qualified by his failure to find a formula that would ensure the stable development of the state and the division of power between its leader and those who claimed the right to play a part in determining policy.”

In February 2004, five months before he announced his retirement from the throne, Norodom Sihanouk sent a fax message to Olivier de Bernon of the Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient (EFEO) in Paris, offering his private archives to the EFEO—a French government research institution that had started restoring Angkor and studying Cambodia’s culture in the early 1900s.

“It would be impossible for me to have them kept in Cambodia for the sake of Cambodia’s history since the country will always be prone to changes in political and ideological systems,” the late King had written in his fax. “Each time the political regime changes, the Khmer monarchy and especially Norodom Sihanouk lose a great deal of possessions of historical importance.”

Upon his return to Cambodia in the 1990s, the late King had realized that a great many documents from his 1960s regime had disappeared during the years of war and conflicts.

King Sihanouk decided to donate his written documents to the EFEO, and his audiovisual archives to Monash University in Melbourne, where Mr. Jeldres, a fellow at the Monash Asia Institute, could catalogue them. They are now accessible at the university’s website under the name of “Norodom Sihanouk Archival Collection.”

The late King chose people he knew and trusted to handle his private archives.

In the early 1990s, the King had allowed Mr. de Bernon and his Cambodian researchers, who were focused on restoring palm-leaf books from pagodas, to set up the EFEO office on Royal Palace grounds.

Mr. de Bernon, who is now president of the Musee Guimet in Paris as well as director of research at the EFEO, was often a guest at Royal Palace dinners during which King Sihanouk was “brilliant, funny, impulsive and always had a word to the wise,” he said in an email interview.

After receiving the King’s fax about his archives, Mr. de Bernon went to meet him at his

Beijing residence in March 2004.

“Norodom Sihanouk made no selection in his documents, he applied no censorship. He made no recommendation whatsoever as to how to handle the work,” Mr. de Bernon said. “The King wanted the documents to be immediately accessible to the public, without reservation, regardless of the content or nature of the documents: He wanted the fullest of transparency.”

But setting this up would take years.

“We finished the actual classification at the end of 2007, completed the audio collection digitization in 2008, finished the inventory manuscript in 2009 and published it in 2010,” said Mr. de Bernon, who personally handled the work. The “Archives de Norodom Sihanouk (1970-2007)” collection is now housed at France’s Archives Nationales.

To help pack all the documents in Beijing and Phnom Penh, which had to be sent to Paris and Melbourne, Norodom Sihanouk appealed to another person he trusted: Alain Daniel, a French

public servant who had taught mathematics at the Royal University of Fine Arts before serving as his private secretary in the 1960s, and had kept in touch ever since. Based in Phnom Penh, Mr. Daniel spent months sorting documents both in Beijing and Phnom Penh so they could be shipped.

Beside the fact that Norodom Sihanouk authored books with a natural concern for the way history would portray him, he had a genuine love of the written word, Mr. Daniel said. “King Sihanouk was a literary man...that is, a man who was truly fond of the written word.”

Fully aware of the importance of communication, Norodom Sihanouk also took to the Internet as soon as it became accessible, Mr. Daniel said.

“It’s rather amazing that a man of his age grasped early on the power of a media such as the Internet: He was among the first politicians to have a website, which was actually quite well visited.”

So how have historians so far described Norodom Sihanouk?

In his 1996 book “Facing the Cambodian Past,” American historian David Chandler summed up the late King in the following terms: “In Norodom Sihanouk, the man who has dominated a half-century of Cambodian politics, we have a tragic hero par excellence as well as an indefatigable impresario: gifted, prideful, loquacious, self-absorbed. Here was a man with a quick intelligence, genuine fondness for his people, a lively sense of realpolitik, and an overwhelming, even suffocating style. Here was a man who was overtaken in 1970 by his shortcomings, by treacherous colleagues, and by forces larger than himself.”

To all researchers past and present, the late King left this comment in his book “Souvenirs doux et amers”: “I have been, it’s true, an authoritarian head of State... I certainly don’t pretend to be infallible. I am, on the contrary, fully aware of my shortcomings, of my weaknesses, of my misjudgments. I am but a man, with his qualities and his failings, but, at least I believe, a man of good faith, passionately devoted to his country and to his people.”



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres

Norodom Sihanouk delivers a speech to international journalists at New York’s Cornell University in 1980.

A Dedicated Life

By MICHELLE VACHON
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The book "A Life Dedicated to Cambodia" commemorating the late King Norodom Sihanouk is the result of a concerted effort by the Royal Family.

It was co-authored by Norodom Sihanouk's daughter Princess Royal Norodom Arunrasmy and his official biographer Julio Jeldres. The preface was written by his son, King Norodom Sihamoni, and the cover was designed by his grandson, Prince Norodom Ravouth. Several of his other grandchildren also contributed to the work. Finally, many photographs in this richly illustrated, coffee-table type book came from the collection of his wife, Queen Mother Monineath.

Earlier this year, the Royal Family came up with the idea of publishing such a biography of Norodom Sihanouk complete with historical photos to mark his 90th birthday that was to be celebrated today, Mr. Jeldres said in an email interview.

Page proofs were being corrected prior to sending them to the printer when the late King passed away on October 15. This caused changes to the text, which is why the book of around 100 pages will only be available in a few weeks, Mr. Jeldres said.

When they started working on the book last



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres
King Sihanouk stands with French Protectorate officials in the 1940s.

August, the authors faced a huge challenge: To present in a book the life and work of a man who, for more than 50 years, was the face of Cambodia both in the country and on the international stage, and who played a leading role during complex chapters of Cambodia's history. The authors attempted to cover those decades by concentrating on Norodom Sihanouk's life and role in events, from the state visits he made and official dinners he attended to the foreign officials he met.

The book spans the life of Norodom Sihanouk from his childhood and coronation in 1941 with a detailed description of the coronation ceremo-

nies, to his retirement in 2004 and activities afterwards.

The work contains some fascinating, little known facts such as the open letter that the late King sent to the Sixth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in September 1979. In his letter, Norodom Sihanouk had asked to leave Cambodia's seat vacant at the organization. He had also requested a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces that had just rid the country of the Khmer Rouge, the dispatch of military forces from NAM members to oversee the ceasefire, and the appointment of an international control commission to supervise democratic elections so that a legitimate government could take power.

More than a decade later, a modified version of his recommendations would lead to the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991.

Historical facts are strictly described from the late King's viewpoint, presenting his official version of events that will be sure to clash with some historians' accounts.

Several photos in the book have rarely or never been shown, which will make this book an important addition to Cambodia's visual archives on the country's leading political figure of the 20th Century.



His Majesty The King-Father Norodom Sihanouk

31 October 1922 – 15 October 2012

On behalf of the management and staff of **qb** we are deeply saddened by the passing of His Majesty

King-Father Norodom Sihanouk.

We offer our deepest condolences to the Royal Family, the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and all the people of Cambodia for their great loss.



How I Want to Remember the King Father

As the central figure in Cambodia's quest for independence, Norodom Sihanouk always put his country first

By **POU SOTHIRAK**

The passing away of His Majesty the King Father Norodom Sihanouk on October 15, came as the saddest news to all Cambodians. As the whole nation grieves, I am among those who will never forget what a great leader he was.

History provides us with many examples. But there is one Cambodian leader, above all others, who merits our dearest respect and gratitude. He was the first of his kind—a man who served as a model for all those who knew him as leader of a country and a true patriot. I am referring to the descendant of the great Angkorian King and the most astonishing Cambodian statesman the country has ever had, His Majesty Samdech Preah Upayuvareach Norodom Sihanouk.

I would like the nation to remember His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia in the following ways: First, let us recall the historical events from 1941 to 1953 when Norodom Sihanouk rose to become a heroic leader who ended 90 years of colonialism, sanctioned by the treaty of August 11, 1863, which made Cambodia a French protectorate. From April 1864 to November 1953, Cambodia was a de facto colony of France. Norodom Sihanouk defied the French despite the fact that he was installed by France to succeed to the throne and led a crusade to free Cambodia from colonial domination. He travelled across the country to speak to the peasants, to articulate nationalistic ideas and develop a vision of Cambodia free from French rulers. The speeches were so effective that Norodom Sihanouk became a most respected leader—an advocate of liberty and national independence. He also travelled widely outside Cambodia and worked tirelessly to gain international recognition for the noble cause of liberating Cambodia from France. Norodom Sihanouk was indeed the pivotal political leader who succeeded in negotiating Cambodia's autonomy from the powerful French colonial ruler and brought independence to Cambodia on November 9, 1953, ushering in a new era of peace and optimism.

Those of us who knew Cambodia in the 1950s and the '60s would observe that at the time the country was at peace and the Cambodian people lived happily with Norodom Sihanouk as head of state, amidst the tensions brewing on the eastern border of Cambodia. Cambodia was severely affected by the Second Indochina War, which was characterized by a conflict between the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government and the China and Soviet Union-backed North Vietnam. Norodom Sihanouk perceived that the U.S.-backed South Vietnam would fall one day to the North as the North Vietnamese Army and Hanoi insurgents—the Viet Cong—gained more ground in the countryside. His perception did not fit well with U.S. foreign policy toward Vietnam. Later in 1970, he became a victim of the U.S.-backed coup d'état led by General Lon Nol which later plunged Cambodia into bitter civil strife and foreign occupation. In the supreme interests of Cambodia, Norodom Si-



Reuters
Norodom Sihanouk boards a flight from Beijing to Siem Riep in 1998.

hanouk never failed to speak bluntly to great powers such as the U.S. and China. According to a U.S. declassified cable by the Central Intelligence Agency of August 1968, Norodom Sihanouk told the Americans that they had made a mistake by supporting South Vietnam. He added that the Americans did not seem to understand that he was not a communist, but was pursuing policies which were in the best interests of Cambodia and the Cambodian people. He even threatened to break diplomatic relations with China, if the Chinese attempted to impose the Cultural Revolution into Cambodia. He banned the propagation of Mao's thoughts in Cambodia as well. In this sense, Norodom Sihanouk should be remembered as a stern nationalist whose preoccupation was to adjust to the geopolitical realities in Southeast Asia to keep Cambodia out of the escalating war in neighboring South Vietnam. Norodom Sihanouk knew that only neutrality would guarantee Cambodia's territorial integrity as well as securing as much economic assistance as possible for the national development of Cambodia.

Norodom Sihanouk appeared again as head of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), established in June 1982 with the blessing from China, the U.S. and Asean, to oppose the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, even though Hanoi's armed forces had liberated the people of Cambodia from the murderous Khmer Rouge regime. I personally remembered when Norodom Sihanouk spoke during a Funcinpec Congress in France in the 1980s explaining why he had accepted to be with the Khmer Rouge force, even though he had bitter memories and was a prisoner, and five of his children had lost their lives during the brutal regime. He simply said that it was a matter of national duty to liberate his homeland from foreign occupation and he had to place the interests of Cambodia above his own personal matters. Norodom Sihanouk diligently fulfilled his role as a true patriot and worked toward

peaceful modalities for a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and the organization of a free and democratic election with the support of the international community.

When all stakeholders reached an agreement for a comprehensive settlement to the conflict in Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk played yet another fundamental role as head of the Supreme National Council (SNC) of Cambodia, established in June 1990 at a meeting in Pattaya, Thailand, which included representatives from the four Cambodian factions. The success of the Paris Peace Agreements, which were signed on October 23, 1991, were due in part to the strong commitment to assist Cambodia from the international community and the strong spirit of national reconciliation under the auspicious leadership of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk and other Cambodian leaders. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk was able to enshrine the spirit of unity and remind us that we are all Khmer; belong to the same family and as such, we must bind ourselves together to rebuild our nation for all Cambodians to be assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a nation that is peaceful with itself and the world with freedom and prosperity.

Since becoming King again, for the second time after the promulgation of the 1993 constitution, and up to his retirement on October 7, 2004, Norodom Sihanouk became the protector of the Cambodian Constitution, which enshrined the Cambodian people's newly acquired democratic freedom. As King and head of state, Norodom Sihanouk had always enjoyed immense respect and popularity, particularly among the rural population of Cambodia. For them, Norodom Sihanouk was known as "Father" on whom they could depend when things went wrong. He ceaselessly engaged in charitable activities to help provide humanitarian assistance to families in need. He built countless schools, hospitals, deep wells and other useful infrastructure for the rural population all over Cambodia. He often spoke out on national issues such as poverty, illegal logging, violation of human rights, HIV/AIDS and often urged the government to be more proactive on these issues. He also upheld the idea that Cambodia should enjoy a free press, very active NGOs and civil society.

To me, the legacy of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk will last forever. Even with the Buddhist eternal truth, which tells us that when the inevitable call comes, everyone has to respond to it, we as Cambodians will always remember him as though he is always living in our heart perpetually. He has done so much for the country and for all of us. While the whole nation mourns the loss of its most prominent citizen, I would like to join all Cambodians to express my deepest condolence to Her Majesty the Queen Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk and to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni.

May His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk's soul rest in everlasting peace.

Pou Sothirak is a visiting senior research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.



The staff and management of **Monument Books**
would like to extend our deepest condolences to the Royal Family
and the people of Cambodia on the passing of His Majesty
The King Father **Norodom Sihanouk**

His Majesty The King Father will be missed and remembered



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The Moral Authority of the Monarch

Norodom Sihanouk was never afraid to speak his mind

By COLIN MEYN • THE CAMBODIA DAILY

If there were ever questions about the popularity of Cambodia's monarchy, they have now been dispelled.

An extraordinary outpouring of emotion was witnessed during and after the official mourning period for the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk.

A million people lined Phnom Penh's streets to watch the late King's body return from China, and tens of thousands gathered in front of the Royal Palace last week to mark the final day of official mourning.

When King Sihamoni left the palace grounds to join the mourners, his first public appearance since returning from Beijing with his father's body, he was embraced by an adoring crowd.

The death of King Father Sihanouk is the end of an era, but if King Sihamoni's reception by the public outside the palace is any indication, the popularity of Cambodia's monarchy will endure.

Though it is likely to be a monarchy much transformed from the politically-involved entity that it was during Norodom Sihanouk's reign to an institution with a more ceremonial and constitutional role under King Sihamoni.

Under Norodom Sihanouk, the king was anything but ceremonial, a position that often put him at the forefront of national politics.

In October 2005, nearly a year after King Sihamoni's coronation, Prime Minister Hun



Reuters

Norodom Sihanouk, left, greets Prime Minister Hun Sen at the King's palace in Siem Reap in 1997.

Sen put forth a controversial border treaty that was based on border agreements with Vietnam dating to the 1980s, rather than on border declarations ratified in the 1960s, when Norodom Sihanouk was head of state.

The King Father was vehement in his opposition to the proposal. In March 2005, he had said that by accepting renegotiation of its borders with Vietnam, Cambodia was committing

“suicide.”

“In this regard, the word ‘suicide’ is not an exaggeration. Because a Country that has no legal, precise border is a dead Country,” Norodom Sihanouk wrote in a statement posted on his website at the time.

Before leaving for negotiations in Vietnam, Mr. Hun Sen defended the border treaty. “The

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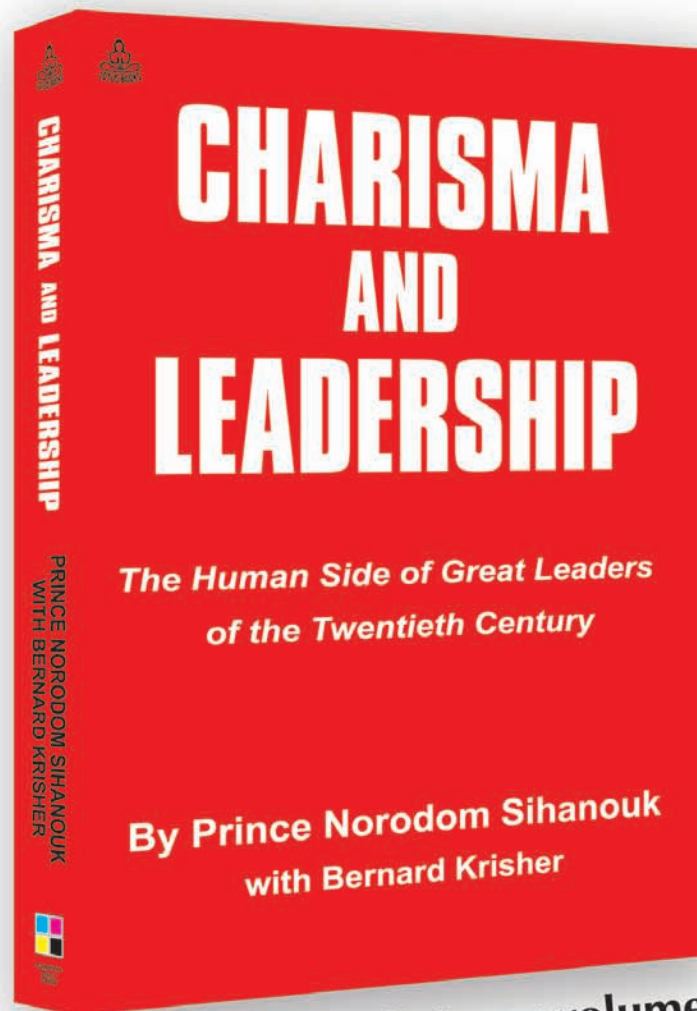
We offer our deepest condolences to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni and Her Majesty Queen Mother Monineath Sihanouk and the people of Cambodia on the death of their beloved King Father Norodom Sihanouk



We are deeply grateful for the support we have received from the Royal Family for the past 16 years. HOPE worldwide manages the Sihanouk Hospital Center of HOPE and operates several medical clinics that financially support the hospital. We are proud that the hospital is named in the King Father's honor, and we will remember to extend the love he had for his people in the care that we give.



"Charisma and Leadership," King Sihanouk's autobiographical book written in collaboration with Bernard Krisher, describes the world leaders he has known and admired. The book is available at Monument Books and other outlets in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. A Khmer translation is in progress and will be available soon.



\$10 per volume

This book is available now at Monument Books, other book outlets, Peace Book Center, International Book Center, and at the reception desk of *The CAMBODIA DAILY*

French drew maps biased [to Vietnam],” he said at a graduation speech at the National Institute of Education on October 7, 2005.

“In the old days,” Mr. Hun Sen said, referring to unnamed former Cambodian regimes, “Cambodia’s provinces were given away. Now I take back land [and] I am criticized.”

Public criticism of the border negotiations reached a fever pitch in October that year, when radio station owner Mam Sonando and Rong Chhun, president of the Cambodian Independent Teachers Association, were both jailed after Mr. Hun Sen launched a series of defamation charges against those critical of his handling of the border issue.

Mr. Hun Sen negotiated a treaty with Vietnam and, despite the retired King’s criticism and objections, it was King Sihanouki, as head of state, who signed the new border treaty into law on October 11.

It was a stark signal that the monarchy would not stand in the way of legislation supported by Cambodia’s elected government.

While Norodom Sihanouk’s losing struggle with Mr. Hun Sen over the border treaty may have been a decisive blow politically to the retired King, it was a predictable outcome.

Norodom Sihanouk’s influence had been greatly weakened, and Mr. Hun Sen had gained the upper hand nearly a decade before the late King’s abdication, said historian and Cambodia expert David Chandler.

“[King Sihanouk’s] significance faded after 1997, when Funcinpec lost its power in the coalition,” Mr. Chandler said, referring to the factional fighting that saw the Funcinpec party—led by his son and then First co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh—out-gunned and ousted from power by CPP military forces loyal to then Second co-Prime Minister Hun Sen.

“Hun Sen humored him, of course... but [Hun Sen] didn’t allow himself to be hampered by him [Norodom Sihanouk],” Mr. Chandler said.

Whatever the motives behind King Father Sihanouk’s decision to cede the throne in 2004—the official decision given at the time was that his health was deteriorating—officials within the Royal Palace said that it was a necessary move to ensure the survival of the monarchy, regardless of how Norodom Sihanouk’s legacy was impacted.

“Abdicating to his son in 2004 was the most important decision that [the King Father] made in preserving the role of the monarchy,” said Prince Sisowath Thomico, the late King’s chief of cabinet.

Prince Thomico explained that the priority of the retired King was to ensure that a successor to the throne was firmly in place prior to his death.

Though King Sihanouki ascended to the throne eight years ago, the role of the monarchy without Norodom Sihanouk remains to be seen.

“It will be a different monarchy,” said Prince Thomico. “But we don’t know if it will be a European-style monarchy, where they are symbolic, or rather more like the King of Thailand, who has a big role in decision making.”

King Sihanouki’s direction has already been foretold, said Milton Osborne, author of “Sihanouk: prince of light, prince of darkness,” a biography of Norodom Sihanouk.

“The present king is in a very different position from his father and has already clearly



John Vink

Norodom Sihanouk speaks at a news conference upon his return from exile in 1991.

shown that he will act strictly within the terms of the present constitution,” Mr. Osborne said.

“The reality of this society is that the king reigns but does not rule as written in the Cambodian constitution. Thus the monarch is not involved with politics,” said Ros Chantraboth, a political scientist at the Royal Academy of Cambodia.

For King Sihanouk, however, his involvement in the country’s political life was undeniable, as was his regular friction with Mr. Hun Sen and the ruling CPP.

Norodom Sihanouk was a central figure in the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991 and in efforts to stop factional fighting in the following years. But even when he was not called in to mediate between political factions, he ensured that his voice was heard through public addresses and “Royal Signings,” public letters that he would send to the media and members of the public at home and abroad.

In May 1996, Norodom Sihanouk wrote in an address that unless international aid was put in the hands of those truly working for the

people’s interest, Cambodia would become “the sick man of Asia.”

“Our population is surviving in a sub-human state,” he wrote, “to the rapacity of small local tyrants.... The development of Cambodia is, unfortunately, too often conceived in terms of immediate profit.”

Certain clans were trying, the late King wrote, without naming them, “to get absolute power by reigning through terror.”

In 1999, he publicly criticized the government for rejecting the concept of a joint Khmer Rouge war crimes tribunal dominated by UN-appointed judges and prosecutors.

And in January 2004, he wrote that certain Cambodian politicians, whom he called “specialists of blah blah,” were treating Cambodians like “simpletons.”

“This ridiculous comedy becomes more and more annoying and insufferable for a good number of Khmers,” the late King wrote about politics in the country.

Even after his retirement from the throne, Norodom Sihanouk continued to act as a moral

authority on decisions made by politicians and the judiciary.

The King Father wrote to the parents of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun in May 2007 to tell them that he believed their sons were innocent of the murder of Free Trade Union President Chea Vichea, for which they had been convicted.

“Under the pretext that the King ‘must not govern,’ I am accused of seeking to rule by not shutting up about the mortal dangers that are pursuing Cambodia,” he wrote in 2003 in response to criticism that he was meddling in politics. “I do not regret (quite the opposite!) having dared tell the truth.”

But the fact that King Sihanouki does not publicly express his opinions does not mean that the monarchy will no longer be influential, said Ang Choulean, an ethnologist and professor at the Royal University of Fine Arts.

“After The Beatles you can’t have another band named The Beatles. In the same way, you can’t have two Sihanouks,” Mr. Choulean said.

“[King] Sihanouki has his own personality, he is known for other qualities like being calm. Maybe he will have a quiet influence on politics. We cannot know.”

In his coronation speech in October 2004, the newly anointed King Sihanouki said that he would remain a man of the people and that under his rule, the Royal Palace “will never be an ivory tower.”

He stayed true to his word, embarking on a post-coronation tour of the provinces and making numerous well-publicized appearances in which he let crowds of villagers engulf him, exchanging pleasantries as he made his way to the chairs or podiums set up for him.

And while during his coronation speech he also vowed to stay out of politics, he has not



Siv Channa

Norodom Sihanouk speaks on the occasion of his birthday in October 2011.

avoided politically sensitive issues entirely.

In July of 2006, on the occasion of Forestry Day, he traveled to Mondulkiiri province, where a month earlier, 800 ethnic Banong villagers had demonstrated in front of the pulpwood factory of a Chinese company that they accused of encroaching on their traditional land.

“The sadness of the ethnic people is my sadness,” King Sihanouki said in his speech, after which he symbolically planted a beng tree.

Since then, King Sihanouki has continued to reach out to poor villagers, but has kept a low profile in doing so.

On four occasions this year, according to King Sihanouki’s website, the King has “sent the Samdech Euv Team” to undertake projects

such as plowing 55 hectares of rice field for poor farmers in Kampot province in June and July. However, photos or press coverage of the King’s outreach efforts are notably absent.

Independent political analyst Lao Mong Hay said King Sihanouki’s public profile also depends on the political administration.

“The King has been confined to the Royal Palace and has less chance to meet people face to face,” Mr. Mong Hay said.

“His role depends on the circumstances and conditions to be created by the present administration, whether they appreciate the role of monarchy as a unifying and strengthening force.”

(Additional reporting by Kuch Naren)



I extend my condolences to the Cambodian people and family of **King Father Norodom Sihanouk** on the sad occasion of his passing this month.

Nori Watanabe



I extend my condolences to the Cambodian people and family of **King Father Norodom Sihanouk** on the sad occasion of his passing this month.

John Schwartz

Sihanouk's Lost Children

The terrible toll of the Khmer Rouge regime on the royal family



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres

By JANELLE KOHNERT
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Though the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk supported the Khmer Rouge in the early 1970s, he and his family were not spared from the atrocities of the regime. After the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975, five of the King Father's 13 children and 14 of his grandchildren perished.

Prince Norodom Naradipo (1946-1976), Prince Norodom Khemanourak (1949-September 1976), Princess Norodom Botum Bopha (1951-April 1976), Princess Norodom Sorya Roeungsy (1947-April 1976), Princess Norodom Socheatvateya (1953-1975) and 14 grandchildren all died under the regime, according to the King Father's official biographer, Julio Jeldres.

Princes Naradipo and Khemanourak were in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975. Prince Naradipo had been imprisoned by the Lon Nol military government for so-called "terrorist acts," according to Mr. Jeldres. In his memoir, "Shadows Over Angkor," the King Father wrote that Prince Khemanourak had "since March 1970, respected the rules of the Red Khmers," and referred to him as "unfortunate."

As Phnom Penh fell on April 17, 1975, Princess Socheatvateya initially sought refuge at the French Embassy, but was later taken by the Khmer Rouge and was never seen again.

Princesses Botum Bopha and Sorya Roeungsy were in China with the King Father when the Khmer Rouge took power in April and returned with their father to Cambodia in September that year. But after the princesses returned from Peking, Norodom Sihanouk embarked on a three-month long diplomatic mission overseas. Upon his return, both the princesses were gone.

In his memoirs, the King Father recalls the moment when he realized he had been foolish to leave his family members behind in Cambodia during his diplomatic mission, though in September 1975 he believed he could trust certain members of the Khmer Rouge. The then mild-mannered Khieu Samphan was the public face of the regime at the time.

"I only remained...in Phnom Penh for three weeks, in an atmosphere that was more or less reassuring as far as the fate of my compatriots and that of my family was concerned," he wrote.

It was the King Father's then publicist, Nouth Chhoeurm, who divulged the King Father's "new life"—after 1975—under the Khmer Rouge to the media, mostly in Paris and Hong Kong. He "disclosed that Phnom Penh had become a ghost city and that all the relatives and friends of the members of my entourage had disappeared," the King Father says in his memoir. "He also told [the international press] that the Red Khmers had ill-treated and looked down on me."

The King Father had also been told, by Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan and central committee member Son Sen, that Princes Sihanoni and Narindrapong, his two sons by Queen Mother Monineath, would be allowed to continue their studies abroad, the King Father wrote in his memoir. But the two princes were secretly called back to Cambodia in March 1976. The letter asking them to return bore the signature of the King Father, but actually the signature had been forged by Khmer Rouge foreign minister Ieng Sary, Mr. Jeldres explained.

On January 6, 1979, when Pol Pot asked the King Father to fly to a U.N. Security Council meeting in New York to plead the case against the Vietnamese incursion that would topple the regime, Ieng Sary requested that Princes Sihanoni and Narindrapong stay behind in Cambodia, Mr. Jeldres said. But Ieng Sary did not

get his way, and the two princes were allowed to leave with their parents.

"That probably saved their lives as had they stayed behind they would have been murdered like the others," Mr. Jeldres added.

The late King Father's contact with the Khmer Rouge was minimal and at first, he wasn't aware of their brutality, according to Mr. Jeldres. He gave his support to the regime because "his main concern was that Vietnam had not kept its promises and had violated the territorial integrity of Cambodia, which for Sihanouk was sacred. This is the only reason His Late Majesty agreed to collaborate temporarily with the KR."

Mr. Jeldres added that Norodom Sihanouk also was not aware of the structure of the Khmer Rouge, as when he first met Pol Pot, then known as Saloth Sar, and other Khmer Rouge leaders in February to March of 1973, Pol Pot was presented as a second- or third-tier leader. Alternatively, the King Father was led to believe that Khieu Samphan was in charge, since it was he who often paid visits to the King Father while he was held under house arrest in the Royal Palace starting in 1975. While under house arrest, the King Father feared for his own life but he felt that because of his close ties with China, he was spared, Mr. Jeldres said.

In order to discover the fate of his five children and 14 grandchildren, the King Father sought help from China, though they weren't able to provide any answers. However, he learned from refugee accounts in the early 1980s that his children were most likely sent to worker cooperatives in the provinces but he could not find out where.

In memory of his dead children, when Norodom Sihanouk became King again in September 1993, he posthumously bestowed on them the title of Samdech, and would often pray for them.

(Second person from left) Khmer Rouge official Hou Yuon, Prince Norodom Phurissara, Hu Nim, and Prince Norodom Khemanourak in the early 1970s. Norodom Sihanouk's son Prince Khemanourak, and his cousin Prince Phurissara both died under the Khmer Rouge.



The management, staff, teachers and students of IDP Education and Australian Centre for Education express our sympathy on the passing away of His Majesty King Father Norodom Sihanouk.

We extend our condolences to His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni,
Her Majesty Queen Mother Norodom Monineath and the entire Royal Family.

We are mourning the loss of the King Father of Cambodia with our fellow Cambodians
and the whole nation with deepest condolences.



A Center of Hope In Name and Practice

The Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope has treated over 1.1 million patients free of charge since 1996

By DENISE HRUBY • THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Standing in a line of about 15 other patients, the 36-year-old woman had traveled from Kompong Cham province to Phnom Penh. She was waiting for her monthly prescription of antiretroviral medicine—a therapy she has undergone since she was first diagnosed with HIV two years ago.

“I went to the hospital for a checkup because I was pregnant, and they told me that the blood results showed I had HIV,” the woman said on a recent afternoon at the Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope in Phnom Penh.

“I had no hope,” she said, recounting how she had first felt about her disease.

But after finding out about the Sihanouk hospital, where the poor receive free treatment, things started to look brighter.

“When I found out about the HIV, I didn’t want to be alive. But the doctors here encouraged me to carry on, and I am happy I can get the treatment for free,” the woman said.

She was standing a couple of meters from a large banner stating that, since the hospital opened its doors in October 1996, a total of 1,174,911 patients have been treated for free as of September this year—most had nowhere else to turn with their medical problems.

After decades of war, Cambodia in the early 1990s lacked many things vital to a functioning society, among them a proper health care system, said Bernard Krisher, publisher of *The Cambodia Daily* and founder of Japan Relief for Cambodia, now World Assistance for Cambodia.

“I mentioned the idea to Norodom Sihanouk and he was delighted with the idea,” Mr. Krisher

said of the plan to create a hospital for the poor.

After signing a memorandum of understanding with government officials, the hospital was launched and named after King Father Norodom Sihanouk, in honor of the many things he achieved for his people.

“Queen Monineath attended the opening ceremony and gave an eloquent speech. Subsequently on many occasions, King Sihanouk and later, King Sihamoni made generous donations to the hospital,” Mr. Krisher said.

Until today, Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope is unique in many ways: It provides further training of medical professionals and delivers free health care for the poor, who are often the most vulnerable to diseases such as HIV or malaria.

Over the years, the hospital has been able to expand its services, and now even sends a mobile clinic to Kompong Speu province’s Oudong, and Toul Sambo and Andong villages, on the outskirts of Phnom Penh where relocation sites are located for the many people evicted from Phnom Penh.

“Our doctors and supplies go out to these locations. A lot of people there [have] chronic disease, and then, depending on what their condition is, we bring them back to Phnom Penh,” said Grace Whitaker, head of human resources at the hospital.

Recently, due to the worldwide economic crisis, the hospital has faced financial difficulties, making it necessary to look for other ways of funding its free treatment of more than 250 new patients per day.

Ms. Whitaker said that because of its good reputation for treatment, “many patients are

coming to the hospital who could afford to pay.”

Instead of turning them away to treat the ones more in need, the hospital started its first commercial medical center close to Phnom Penh International Airport in 2007.

“Now, we have three medical centers, and all the profits go back to the hospital,” Ms. Whitaker said, adding that last year, 13 percent of the hospital’s operating budget were covered through the three medical centers.

On a recent morning, between the hospital’s main entrance and the parking lot, about 30 patients, most of them wearing green surgical masks, were waiting at one of the intake desks, where their blood pressure was being measured and basic information filed.

Among them, on a wooden bench, sat 33-year-old Kia Sarom, holding an X-ray in her hands. Ms. Sarom said that she was waiting to find out if a tumor that was detected in the left side of her abdomen was cancerous.

“Three months ago I went to [Kompong Cham provincial] hospital because I was feeling so much pain in my left side, and they told me it was from a tumor,” Ms. Sarom said.

To be able to pay for initial treatment at the provincial hospital, she had to sell the little land she owned. Ms. Sarom was able to raise \$500. But the money disappeared like water. She had quickly spent \$400 just on a couple of tests and some X-rays, she said.

“My friends told me that they heard about a hospital in Phnom Penh where you don’t have to pay, so I came here,” Ms. Sarom said.

“Now, I am so happy. If I need surgery, I don’t have to worry about how to afford it. I can just stay and go home to my family after surgery,” she said.

In honor of their namesake, the Sihanouk Hospital Center of Hope staff held a memorial service for the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk on the seventh and final official day of mourning last week. With a large picture of the King Father overlooking more than 200 staff who had come to the ceremony, people shared words and a moment of silence.

“Everyone loved him; we use his name and our patients are very grateful because this hospital helped them,” said Sok Khun, the hospital’s public relations manager. The King Father and his family had always been very supportive of the hospital, Mr. Khun added.

“Now, we cannot see him anymore, but this hospital will still have his name.”



Siv Channa

Staff at the Sihanouk Hospital Center for Hope light incense around a memorial to Norodom Sihanouk.



Siv Channa

Norodom Sihanouk arrives in Phnom Penh in 2011.



**WITH GREAT SORROW, WE HUMBLY PRESENT OUR DEEPEST
CONDOLENCES TO H.M. KING NORODOM SIHAMONI,
H.M. QUEEN MOTHER NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK,
THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE AND ALL THE FAMILY MEMBERS
OF THE BELOVED KING-FATHER NORODOM SIHANOUK
OF CAMBODIA WHO HAS SACRIFICED HIS WHOLE LIFE
TO SERVE HIS COUNTRY AND HIS PEOPLE.**

Mealy TRUONG and Naoto ODAGIRI

Sihanouk's Ode to Love

The retired King's 40-year career in film

By DENE-HERN CHEN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

They were all about love. From his very first feature-length film in 1966, "Apsara," to the 20-minute short film "Arsina" in 2006, the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk has used the heart's desires as a central plot device throughout his more than 40-year film career.

All the tropes and clichés that come with the genre—love affairs, forbidden love, unrequited love, love triangles, long-lost love—have been thoroughly explored in the King Father's film repertoire.

In "Apsara"—probably one of the King Father's best-known films among Cambodian audiences—Princess Norodom Buppha Devi is an unwilling participant to a love triangle when a powerful general falls for her as she performs a classical Khmer ballet dance.

Phantha, the princess' character, is forced to marry the general, who is played by Nhek Tioulong, a former cabinet minister under Norodom Sihanouk's government, though she is really in love with Phalla, a young air force pilot. In his more epic romances, Norodom Sihanouk cast his wife, Queen Mother Monineath, as the love interest opposite the characters he played.

"The Enchanted Forest," also filmed in 1966, is another movie that is commonly replayed on Cambodian television. The Queen Mother plays Eliane, a demure young lady who is part of a hunting party spending a night in the forest when they are whisked away to a magical reality. Their host, Preah Angkor, played by Norodom Sihanouk, introduces various Khmer dances and music to them. At the end, the rest of the group chooses to believe that their time in the forest was a dream. But Eliane, now in love with Preah Angkor, knows better and she ventures back into the forest to the open arms of her lover.

Perhaps tellingly of the King's affection for Queen Monineath, the four movies that the Queen has appeared in are the same four that the King cast himself in. Besides "The Enchanted Forest" (known as Prey Prasae in Khmer), there are "Ombre Sur Angkor" (1967), "Crepuscule" (1968) and "Rose of Bokor" (1969).

Prince Sisowath Thomico, the former personal assistant to the late King Father who has painstakingly documented his film career and music collections, said the Queen Mother was somewhat "forced" by Norodom Sihanouk to take on the roles.

"She's a very discreet person, so to be appearing in movies..." Prince Thomico said trailing off, and then laughing.

Prince Thomico added that the historical drama featuring the queen as the "Rose of Bokor" was probably Norodom Sihanouk's favorite film.

"He loved that one, mainly because of the landscape of Bokor and of the Cambodian rainforest," Prince Thomico said, adding that the King and Queen's romance in the movie was set against the historical backdrop of the Japanese



Royal Cabinet

A scene from Norodom Sihanouk's movie "Enchanted Forest," starring Queen Mother Monineath (pictured).

occupation of Cambodia during World War II.

Casting himself as Colonel Hasegawa, Norodom Sihanouk did not set out to castigate the Japanese for their occupation of Cambodia—instead both the Cambodians and Japanese were portrayed as fiercely patriotic people who were simply acting on the wishes of their country's leaders.

As Japanese troops rolled through the lush countryside of Kampot in their army trucks, chamber music accompanies the scene. Queen Monineath's character Rosette is introduced tending a bed of roses, while her uncle praises her virtues. Not surprisingly, Col. Hasegawa, who is a lover of arts and music, falls in love with Rosette. However, their love is doomed to fail, not only because of their nation's differences,

but also because her brother is held by the Japanese for his part in a resistance movement.

Though Norodom Sihanouk has never experimented with breaking the fourth wall—whereby film characters speak directly to their audience—his Col. Hasegawa came close.

Before a performance of Japanese dance and music organized by the colonel, a general whispers to his companion, "His Excellence Col. Hasegawa has recently confessed that he likes music and dance better than wars."

The camera then cuts to the colonel apologizing to his fellow spectators.

"My artistic troupe is composed by amateurs," Norodom Sihanouk says in his role as Col. Hasegawa. "The musicians are coming from an infantry unit and the ballet dancers are

nurses at the Japanese hospital in Bokor.”

“[His films] weren’t really about entertainment,” said Davy Chou, a French filmmaker with Cambodian roots.

“The main idea, in my opinion, is to show the beauty of the landscape of Cambodia,” Mr. Chou said of Norodom Sihanouk’s movies. “All the time, he was choosing a new aspect of the beauty of Cambodia to show abroad. In that perspective, it is extremely different from popular films.”

Prince Thomico, who served as an assistant director on several of the late King’s films, said the King Father obsessed over every single detail of a scene and was hands-on in his directorial approach.

“The only star of the movies was Cambodia,” Prince Thomico said.

“I think he always tried to explain that he wanted to show Cambodia and the stories behind his movies were only excuses to show Cambodia—either its landscapes, tradition, culture or history.”



Royal Cabinet

Clockwise from top: Princess Buppha Devi appears in a scene from Norodom Sihanouk’s film “Apsara.” Queen Mother Monineath in a scene from “Rose of Bokor.” A young King Sihanouk in a scene from the film “Le Petite Prince.” Norodom Sihanouk in a scene from the film “Crepuscule,” or “Twilight.” Norodom Sihanouk in a scene from “Rose of Bokor.”

Prince Sihanouk: A Great Leader I Have Known

(From the book "Charisma and Leadership: The Human Side of the Great Leaders of the Twentieth Century,"
by Norodom Sihanouk with Bernard Krisher. Yohan Lotus Book 1990)

By BERNARD KRISHER

I first met Prince Norodom Sihanouk through Indonesian President Sukarno in 1963 and I met President Sukarno earlier that year in an antique shop in the arcade of Tokyo's old Imperial Hotel.

Shortly after I arrived in Tokyo and joined Newsweek as a rather green correspondent, I was thrown into a story totally out of my realm and expectation. Indonesia and Malaysia were on the verge of war over Sukarno's "confrontation" or konfrontasi policy and both Sukarno and the Tunku (Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman) were in Tokyo for a futile meeting that settled little. I was assigned to write about the meeting and, to understand it better, spent a day trying to follow Sukarno and the Tunku. The Tunku devoted a great deal of his time praying in a mosque. Sukarno went shopping, to the movies, quietly slipped away to be with girls, and there was always a big geisha party at night at the Shinkiraku geisha house or the like.

Sukarno was heavily guarded by security but one morning I was able to slip into the antique shop in the Imperial Hotel, where he always stayed, and watched him try to bargain down the price of a lovely old statuette he eyed. As dozens of his ministers, staff and embassy officials looked on, Sukarno pointed at the owner of the shop and shouted: "I am the president of Indonesia, I want 50 percent off." As I took furious notes, Sukarno stopped, looked at me, pointed at me and inquired who I was and what I was doing there. I replied that I was a correspondent for Newsweek and assigned to write about his visit to Tokyo.

"I don't like Newsweek, they only publish lies" he said as two of his men grabbed me, "but... I like you," he added, ordering his men to let me go. He asked for my notebook and wrote "I like you..." into it and signed it. We exchanged some more banter and I told him I wanted to visit Indonesia but understood American reporters were barred. He said that's because they wrote lies, especially Newsweek. I insisted that I didn't write lies. Then he replied that I would be welcome. Later that day I took my passport to the Indonesian Embassy but was told as a journalist I was not eligible for a visa. So that night



Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres

Norodom Sihanouk speaks with Kil Il-Sung, former leader of North Korea, in Pyongyang in 1991.

as Sukarno and his party, including Foreign Minister Subandrio, descended the stairs of the hotel to attend another geisha party, I stopped Sukarno and handed him my passport with my application. He laughed and told me to give it to Subandrio who was walking next to him. The next morning the Indonesian Embassy phoned to advise me my visa was ready.

I joined Robert Kennedy who was dispatched to Jakarta by President Johnson shortly after his brother, Jack's, assassination, on a mission to attempt to intervene against Sukarno's aggressive policy toward Malaysia. When the Kennedy party and three accompanying reporters, I being one of them, were driven to the Merdeka Palace to greet Sukarno after our arrival, Sukarno turned to me right after greeting Robert and Ethel and was so extremely friendly and in a very jocular, kidding mood, that Kennedy seemed somewhat miffed. As an aside, Bob later said to me: "maybe you should take over this mission."

My friendship with Sukarno deepened and I was able to visit Jakarta frequently and always had to see him. He even tolerated some of the critical pieces that appeared in Newsweek but

on the whole, and from today's historical perspective they were quite fair. Prince Sihanouk happened to visit Jakarta on one of my visits, in August 1964, and I went to the airport to see him arrive, then joined the press corps which followed him and Sukarno to the Palace for the traditional protocol arrival visit. Sukarno spotted me, beckoned me and gave me a most warm introduction to the Prince. I used the occasion again to wrest a visa out of the Prince as Cambodia, too, had recently decided to close its doors to Western reporters.

A conference of the Indochinese People was coming up, with Hanoi and the Viet Cong included, and it would be quite a coup to be able to cover that. On Sukarno's good word, Sihanouk did not hesitate to invite me and so I left my passport with one of his aides. The next day I found a visa, good for a month, at the instructions of Monseigneur, stamped into my passport.

During Prince Sihanouk's visit, I witnessed his close and warm relationship to Sukarno. They were like brothers. Princess Monineath, who accompanied the Prince and who is the only real living Princess in my book, was [and



The management and staff of
Jotun (Cambodia) Limited
are deeply saddened by the passing
Of His Majesty the King-Father
Norodom Sihanouk

We share the mourning of the Royal Family members and
the people of Cambodia and join them in their prayers.





**OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO THE CAMBODIAN
PEOPLE AND TO H.M. KING NORODOM SIHAMONI,
H.M. QUEEN MOTHER NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK
AND THE FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE BELOVED
KING-FATHER NORODOM SIHANOUK
OF CAMBODIA WHO PASSED AWAY
THIS OCTOBER AFTER A LIFETIME OF
SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY AND PEOPLE.**

**Mealy TRUONG, Kenji SASAKI, Hideo OKAUCHI, Sumie TSUGE, Yoshio ASAMI,
Yuichi YASUDA, Kazuo YAMABE, Hirofumi INDEN, Yuka YUASA, Mika Hattori VERMEULEN**

**SIA: Sasaki International Academy, Nagoya, Japan
and SIA Phnom Penh, Cambodia.**



Documentation Center of Cambodia (top) /Private Collection of Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres (below)
 Norodom Sihanouk shakes hands with U.S. President Ronald Reagan in 1988, above, and leader of China's Communist Party Mao Zedong in 1975, below.

is] charm, beauty, intelligence, bearing and common sense exemplified. And truly the Prince's secret weapon. Billboards all over Jakarta, depicting giant portraits of the royal couple, and crowds thronging on the streets whenever their cars passed, showed the enthusiasm their visit had generated.

Sukarno invited me to most of the official functions, including a wonderful outing by yacht to a small island off Jakarta harbor, where I met the Communist leader, Aidit, who has also been invited, along with General Yani, later murdered with eight other generals by Aidit's henchmen. It was a feast of food and song. Sukarno and the Prince took turns all afternoon standing in front of a band with microphone in hand, singing away as though the most important thing in life was music. And it was. While Washington and Moscow and Peking fretted and fought over Cambodia and Indonesia's politics, Sukarno and Sihanouk seemed to care less. More important were the joy of such gatherings. Sukarno, however, belied his reputation: he was no dictator at such events. He would go into the crowd, bring someone on stage—be it a minister, or me, or even a waiter (more likely a waitress) and ask them to sing, then occasionally join in and make

it a duet. He—and the Prince—had a larger repertoire of songs than anyone I knew. Besides, the Prince was a composer himself and would sing songs he had just composed and dedicated to his hosts. That day, I recall, he sang “J’attendrai,” “La Vie en Rose” and “Sayonara.”

A few days later I was invited to join the Sukarno-Sihanouk party to Bali. It was an exhilarating experience. The entire island turned out to greet them. It was one of the greatest command performances in history. We sat for hours at a grandstand, and procession after procession of village artists passed by, each performing their unique dance. There was the elaborate traditional Balinese wedding and the incredibly skillful traditional dances passed on from generation to generation. At night we went to some of the villages to see such famous dances as the Chak-Chak.

Occasionally I would be summoned by Sukarno and have the pleasure of chatting with him and the Prince.

I flew from Tokyo to Saigon in February 1965 to sit in for a few weeks for Francois Sully, the most capable of all the Newsweek correspondents ever based in Saigon, while he took a brief vacation shortly before he was tragically

killed in a helicopter accident. After that stint I planned to go to Cambodia on my treasured visa though I had just learned the Cambodian government announced it was barring all Western journalists from the country during the period of the Indochinese Peoples conference—even those with valid visas. I decided to risk it anyway, and boarded a late Sunday afternoon flight out of Saigon to Phnom Penh on the chance that airport officials working on a Sunday (usually not the sharpest or most experienced) might not be so alert and if I were asked my profession I would say “executive” rather than journalist, which wasn't exactly a lie. I did just that and it worked. I was in the country. I checked into the beautiful old Hotel Royal and spent that first balmy, early Sunday evening walking through the city of Phnom Penh. It was as invigorating as that first sip of beer on a hot, stifling day. I would spend a whole month in Cambodia, keeping a diary and then near the end file a succinct two page take-out which appeared in Newsweek, would be read by several million, and make history.

That visit made an indelible impression on me, and it is still as clear to me, 25 years later, as yesterday. I began to see the magic that Prince Sihanouk possessed which made Cambodia such a fairyland. Today, in retrospect and with greater insight, I believe the whole world has come to recognize that he was and has always been the only person with the right glue to hold that nation together. Such wisdom did not exist then; the U.S. and its allies have since paid too high a price to learn that had they not conspired to oust him, replacing him with the more pliable Lon Nol who then facilitated the takeover by the Khmer Rouge which brought on the atrocious mass genocide, Cambodia might still be the paradise today which I discovered on my first visit there.

I am looking back on the diary of that enchanted Cambodia visit, March 1965, to recapture the time and the mood of that gentler, peaceful era; perhaps it can be recaptured once the Prince returns.

My diary says: Driving through the capital city of Phnom Penh is a pleasure. It is like a park, a well-kept suburban town with landscaped islands of grass separating noisy lanes of its broad boulevards, but with a dirty, noisy, jammed Chinese section appended to it.

The weather, always so warm and humid, drives everyone indoors at 1 p.m. for long naps. In the cool of the evenings, the crowds are out in the streets again, talking in front of the shops, while semi-nude youngsters wander about. The sidewalk cafes and the air-conditioned, glass-enclosed restaurants are filled with chatting customers and in the streets the omnipresent ‘cyclopusse’ (bicycle-driven rickshaw) carries its human cargo about. Everywhere the Cambodian ‘joie de vivre’ abounds. There are numerous dance halls and in some half-dozen bars like the Cave or Calypso where one can buy the company of a bevy of lovely Cambodian or Vietnamese hostesses.

The influence of the French in their former colony shows up all over. In fact, this city of 600,000 could easily pass for a large, rather sleepy, French provincial town. Shop displays are all in French, bookstores sell French books, streets carry such names as Avenue Charles de Gaulle and Avenue de France.

I remarked there was also a partly paved Av-

enue Mao Tse-tung and an Avenue de l'U.S.S.R. and while Cambodia appeared to be swinging politically toward China, it wasn't headed that way culturally. Bikinis were not banned, American music was rampant as well as the American drive to live the affluent life. The younger generation of lycee students and college graduates also were Francophones and Francophiles. I saw a counter girl in a bar reading Sartre and dreaming of a future trip to France.

I noted that one of the strongest national traits was an intense sense of pride and I found it in a 10-year-old barefoot girl at a bus-stop, on my trek through Cambodia who wanted to sell me some hard boiled eggs but refused my offer of five riel (12 cents) for the eggs as a gift. She returned the money to me without her initial smile unless I accepted her eggs. She was in business.

I began thus to better understand Prince Sihanouk, whose apparent erratic behavior was based on the same stubborn pride. During my month there, I did not succeed in gaining an interview with him—the timing was wrong, I shouldn't have been in Phnom Penh at all, but because of the Sukarno introduction he was too correct to have me expelled. But I ran into him on various public occasions, as he inspected a military camp, invited me to a black tie affair for the Indochinese delegates (and I had to scramble around the capital for two days trying to borrow a tuxedo my size—from a restaurant head waiter!), or launched a new school or clinic. Through there was no interview, he would often interject French or English into a public comment, looking my way, making sure I had heard it and noted it. And I was also invited to attend a spectacular event—an “auto show” at the palace, where the latest and most luxurious cars were driven by beautiful models, at night,

under lights, like an elegant Paris fashion show.

Wherever we went, I noted the Prince's popularity with the masses. He was worshiped and adored. And he literally loved to be devoured by the crowds. He was not a Maoist cult-of-personality at all. He did not need statues or monuments. He was Prince in every meaning of the word. On such occasions, we would also exchange a few words on these occasions and a handshake, but the protocol chief reminded me sternly each time not to approach the Prince in public.

Prince Sihanouk was and remains very sensitive. In my diary I wrote: Nothing galls the Prince more than criticism of himself and his nation by the foreign press. On the desk of Kheng Sophorn, head of the press section of the Ministry of Information, I noticed numerous foreign newspaper clippings all translated into French. The Prince would personally draft letters and dispatch telegrams to errant editors throughout the world; it was an effective way, after all, to keep his position clear.

I remember there appeared an article in a Western financial paper which threw the Prince in a rage because it printed a list of Asian countries and their gross national product. It was based on U.N. statistics and Cambodia was at the bottom of the list. “Sihanouk,” a diplomat told me, “was beside himself. ‘We're even lower than Laos,’ he remarked, ‘and they don't even have an economy.’” Immediately letters went off to the paper and the U.N. and the text also appeared in the Cambodian press and radio. Cambodia was like a glass house. The Prince had to tell everybody what was happening. The daily Agence Khmer Presse bulletin, which everyone read, reported, for example, the complete list of all the reports whenever a foreign shipment arrived, down to the number of rolls

of Kodak film or bottles of Perrier that came into the country. The Cambodians, under Sihanouk, lived in a glass house. No one should have thrown stones.

I traveled to Kompong Cham and Bokor and Sihanoukville, imbibing the happy village life but also tasting the growing suspicion and distrust of Americans. I was well advised, as I spoke French, to travel as a “Frenchman” and noted the difference in attitude when people thought I was French from when they knew I was American. The anti-Americanism was understandable. We gave few reasons to the Cambodians to like us. We appeared to favor Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia's historic enemies, with more aid—better planes and trucks. And though we had built Cambodia a 141-mile “Friendship Highway” from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville, it was without an adequate foundation so the road began to break up almost immediately after completion and became virtually unusable.

Sihanouk, to protect Cambodia's independence, had devised an art of inconsistency and unpredictability, which in my view was very consistent and calculating. He seems to change his mind every day but that was the art of survival for the leader of a small country which could so easily be manipulated by the big powers which pursued only their own national interests, as we later saw. Like a trapeze artist, who must constantly balance himself against a swinging rope, so did and does Sihanouk wake up each day to adjust against the changing situations. It is a wonderful bluff (which he will deny) and testimony to his talent that he has always remained steady on that rope, never ever really fallen, as have most of his contemporaries from Nixon to Marcos, and all those others who have fallen from grace, from Mao to Brezhnev.



The Jewish Community of Cambodia extends its deepest condolences to the people of Cambodia and to the family of the King Father Norodom Sihanouk on the sad news of his death.



Rabbi Bentzion Butman

So, America was perplexed and angry that Sihanouk wasn't 100 percent in the American camp. It didn't like this bothersome prince of tiny Cambodia, making speeches critical of American policy. The American press, in a free country, could say some of the very same things Sihanouk espoused, and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield could also support Sihanouk and understand his prime motive, Cambodia's independence, but the State Department couldn't tolerate it, so even the badly-built "Friendship Highway" was left in disrepair. As I personally experienced having to exit that highway and ride in a rickety truck-converted bus through small, unpaved country roads to continue my journey, I wondered what a lost opportunity for America! Had we sent in a crew to repair that counterproductive gift of ours, how much goodwill we would have generated among the Cambodians and the Prince!

Americans never, until very recently, understood Sihanouk nor his "mercurial" personality. When you are the leader of a small, defenseless country in need of foreign aid and the big powers are only anxious to compete to place you in their camp, the only meaningful strategy is to be unpredictable. Play one against the other and keep everyone guessing. It was an art and Sihanouk was a master. Unfortunately it could work only to a point; when the flames of Vietnam began to envelop Cambodia and Henry Kissinger engineered to help oust the Prince because his presence stood in the way of his own misguided policy, that maneuverability was temporarily braked. Today Kissinger frankly admits Cambodia was his greatest foreign policy mistake.

Cambodia, to all appearance, seemed, in 1965, to be moving more and more steadily into the Chinese camp and away from American and the West. But Cambodians in Phnom Penh were trying to persuade me that Cambodia was not necessarily pro-Chinese.

Indeed, my diary reads that many were quick to point to a recent speech by Sihanouk in which he attacked the Khmer Rouge (Cambodian Communists) and stated Communism would not benefit his country.

Others often quoted Sihanouk's suggestion that "we ought to stop sending students to France where they become Communists and instead send them to Peking where they can see Communism in action and from where they will surely return anti-Communists."

A Cambodian former diplomat in Phnom Penh told me in 1965: "No Asian nationalist, like Sihanouk, really likes China. But it is a sleeping giant you cannot ignore.... We want to be neutral even though you [the West] might think otherwise. We want to be truly independent."

In my Newsweek article I wrote: "There is no doubt that Sihanouk believes the U.S. will soon be pushed out of the Asian scene. In a speech he delivered during my stay, he declared: "We can't ignore that after the departure of the Americans we will be face to face with Communism, and worse for us, Vietnamese Communism. It is obviously for us the worst kind of Communism. If it was Russian or Chinese it would be less dangerous. We know it because we don't live in the clouds. That is why for several years we pleaded for a political solution [in Vietnam]. In effect if they [the Americans] had devised a political solution several years ago we wouldn't have had Communism so near to Cambodia. We would probably have had a neutralized South

Vietnam and South Laos. One doesn't talk about North Vietnam—c'est fichu [it is lost]."

In that Newsweek article, I committed one serious mistake which I regret today. After acknowledging that "the Prince is revered by his 6 million people" and "even though he has formally renounced his throne for the role of chief of state, he is respectfully called "Monseigneur" (a French title for princes and clerics) and he refers to his nation as *royaume*," I casually quoted rumors I had heard from students and intellectuals who opposed Sihanouk and the royal family, that the Queen mother [Prince Sihanouk's mother] was said to be "money-mad and reportedly runs a number of concessions in town plus a string of bordellos at the edge of the city."

That sentence, invoking *lese-majeste*, succeeded to dilute the objective report I had intended to publish so as to have Americans gain a more balanced view of the situation in Cambodia. Although many readers complimented Newsweek on its balanced report, Prince Sihanouk thought otherwise. Within a week, he publicly attacked me and the article. This was followed by a massive demonstration in front of the American Embassy in Phnom Penh. Embassy windows were broken, handbills were distributed with the words: "pas de quartier pour Bernard Krisher" and a strongly worded cover story appeared in the weekly, "Realites Cambodgiennes," attacking the U.S., Newsweek and myself. In it I was even accused of being a pimp!

A few days later Cambodia officially broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. My article was cited as a major cause (because the State Department refused to apologize) along with a border village attack that resulted in several Cambodian casualties.

I was also permanently barred from returning to Cambodia.

In the following year I tried somehow to send a signal to Prince Sihanouk that I respected him and did not wish this to have happened, yet as a journalist, with my own canons of professional behavior, I did not wish to apologize as I felt the intent of my article has been fair, my motives were pure and an apology would likely cause him to exploit it inside Cambodia, where there were no secrets, and to the world it would make Newsweek look foolish and weak.

So I spoke to the Cambodian ambassador to Tokyo, Sirik Matak (who later became Lon Nol's co-conspirator in ousting the Prince and he himself was killed by the Khmer Rouge.) Matak was returning to Phnom Penh shortly for consultations and it coincided with the Prince's birthday. I bought a beautiful birthday card and sent it to the Prince through Matak with my warmest wishes.

I had become Asian enough to know that such an indirect signal would serve to get my message across. When Matak returned to Tokyo he had word that the Prince had appreciated my greeting, indicated all was forgiven and that I was welcome to return to Cambodia. That, however, was never to happen.

Soon thereafter, while the Prince was abroad, Lon Nol and Matak engineered their coup against the Prince (which shocked me), the Prince supported the Khmer Rouge to defeat the Lon Nol-Matak regime and when they were victorious, they turned around to place the Prince under house arrest while killing five of his children.

I did not meet up with Prince Sihanouk again until 1979, when the Khmer Rouge were forced to flee against the onslaught of the Vietnamese troops who initially liberated Cambodia from the murderous Pol Pot regime but later opted to stay as an unwelcome occupation army. The Prince flew to New York to plead Cambodia's cause before the U.N. and as I was on a sabbatical at Harvard that year, immediately contacted the Prince at the U.N. Plaza Hotel where he and Princess Monineath had been put up. He urged me to come to New York to see him and I flew down the next day, a Sunday, and spent most of the day with them "at home." It was a wonderful reunion. We embraced and kissed (as is Cambodian custom) and reminisced. I taped a long, definitive interview which I could not get into Newsweek but it ran full text in the Japanese mass-circulation magazine, *Shukan Asahi*, and also took up most of a page in the *Asahi Evening News* and in turn was picked up by the wire services and appeared in newspapers around the globe. It confirmed that several years of Palace arrest and isolation in Phnom Penh had not in any way diminished the Prince's zest or determination to regain his position in Cambodia and bring that country back toward its former glory; he had begun establishing a program to gain its independence, democracy and prosperity.

The Western press, which Prince Sihanouk often chided in the past for misrepresenting the reality of Cambodia, turned out now to be his greatest ally. While governments were not yet ready to support his cause, the press kept it alive and seemed to be the major force pushing him on toward his goal. Everyone loves a determined underdog and a survivor. The Prince was both and he never ceased to amaze observers with his skillful turnabouts, his dedication to a most just cause, and the amazing support he gained from as distinct personalities as Charles de Gaulle and Kim Il Sung; Chou En-lai and Jimmy Carter! Both the Chinese and North Korean governments provided him with royal facilities and hospitality. In Beijing, the Chinese presented him with the old prewar French Embassy, the best residential building in Beijing, as a permanent home, and so did Kim Il Sung, who built him a lakeside palace mirroring his own luxurious residence in Pyongyang and all the staff and logistical support he needed. In both capitals one need only address a letter to "Prince Sihanouk, Beijing" (or Pyongyang) and it is delivered to him just hours after the plane has landed. Gradually everyone else, Washington, Tokyo, Paris, the Asean nations, etc., rushed to support a Cambodia with the Prince back at the helm.

Only a handful of Americans had been able to enter North Korea since the Korean war, but when Prince Sihanouk invited me to Pyongyang in 1979, I obtained a visa immediately from the North Korean Embassy in Beijing and on my arrival there, after a memorable 18-hour train ride through China and North Korea, immediately spent two days with him.

During his stay in Pyongyang, recharging his batteries and containing his patience by composing songs, making movies and keeping contact with Cambodian exiles, Prince Sihanouk remained much out of the news and I feared, was threatened by being forgotten. Through my visit and article I wished to tell the world he was alive and well and had neither lost his determination nor skill to liberate Cambodia.

Thanks to the Prince I stayed more than three weeks in North Korea and was able to see the country and talk to many of its people. I found the North and South Koreans, though separated by a sealed border for some 40 years, still shared the same culture and language. The desire for unification was strong and in my view, inevitable. After two days with the Prince, however, I filed a piece which was titled: "Prince in Waiting" and I aimed to describe how, against all the conflicting players trying to grab a piece of Cambodia, the Prince, the most qualified heir, was plotting his own return to power.

"Sihanouk remains Sihanouk," I reported. "Tireless, effervescent and totally engrossed in the affairs of his homeland. He rises at 7 a.m. and listens to two hours of news on the Voice of America before plunging into his daily routine—conferring with visiting Cambodian refugees and firing off cables and letters to foreign journalists and supporters around the world. He is writing three books and has just finished "Rose of Bokor," a movie he shot in Cambodia with English subtitles and Korean dialogue dubbed by local actors. Amid such activities, Sihanouk has just executed the kind of sudden about-face that has made him famous as a political maneuverer: he has abandoned a much-publicized plan to set up a coalition government in exile."

Sihanouk made this about-turn because the exiles wished him to abandon his princely title. "They want me to be just a Monsieur Dupont or Durand—a humble citizen, not the Comte de Paris." Besides, the Prince also sensed a cooling of Western enthusiasm toward him. France and Belgium rejected his plans to establish a government on their soil and then-Vice President Walter Mondale declined to confer with him when he visited Beijing. At the time, Sihanouk refused to work with Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, which China tried to entice him to do. He later relented, causing some to criticize him, but again I think they were not cognizant of his wiser strategy of temporary compromise to enable him to move more swiftly toward his goal while he could later extricate himself and return to his original position under some reasonable pretext, achieving what was in Cambodia's long-term interest. The problem is that critics have tended generally to view but the narrow details of his positions, not at the grand scheme which lies behind, and have proved him time and again to be such a skillful survivor.

In my two-day talks with him I was able to gauge his canny, yet always totally candid behavior, so refreshing for one in politics.

Whenever I was with the Prince I was also treated to exquisite 'three star' French lunch or dinner, whether in Pyongyang, Beijing or Tokyo. At his homes in Beijing or Pyongyang, he supervised the menus and preparation himself, having trained the Chinese or North Korean chefs who could easily qualify now to work in the best of the Lyons restaurants.

Over one lunch as his Pyongyang palace, where we were served *pate de foie* as well as kimchi, the Prince's voice rose in anger as he declared that he would "never, never, never" cooperate with Pol Pot. During his last visit to Beijing, in early 1979, the Chinese had set up a meeting with the widow of former Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai. According to the Prince, he asked her about the fate of his relatives who had remained in Cambodia and she replied: "Forget, forget your personal suffering."

Prince Sihanouk understood that "indirectly, she confessed that the Khmer Rouge killed all my children and grandchildren."

Of course Sihanouk and China have since come to terms. Sihanouk understood the wisdom of forming a coalition that included the Khmer Rouge but in the back of his mind was the goal of getting the Vietnamese out as the first step; then he could maneuver a way, as he has since done, to reestablish his rightful position in Cambodia and minimize the power of the Khmer Rouge.

An indication of his candidness was this disclosure to me, in 1979, of his differences then with China's Deng Xiaoping, who wanted Sihanouk to collaborate with the Khmer Rouge.

"Deng is very cold and brutal," Prince Sihanouk revealed. "I told him before I left: 'You give me a banquet, but let's not discuss the situation of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge or we will throw glasses and dishes at each other.' With Deng you must take such precautions. We talked about football."

He was equally candid in describing Kim Il Sung's more subtle approach: "He makes believe he supports me," he told me, "but in fact he is with China and Pol Pot. He is for a Communist Cambodia. My program certainly can't please him; it's a very reactionary program, because I know my people don't want Communism or socialism."

I found that Kim Il Sung, despite his official recognition of the Pol Pot regime (which maintains an Embassy in Pyongyang), treated Sihanouk in royal style. This showed Kim Il Sung's strong Confucian influence of never forgetting a favor and consequently, his loyalty to a tested friend. In the early Sixties when North Korea (and China) were the pariah of the Western non-Communist world, it was Sihanouk (and also Sukarno) who were among the first independent governments to recognize their regimes as opposed to South Korea and Taiwan. In that sense, Sihanouk has not only always tried to exert his independence (and often, good sense) but has much of the time, also been far ahead of his time. In those days recognition by a small nation like Cambodia in the face of U.S. pressure and threats, amounted to an act of great courage. Kim Il Sung (and Chou En-lai) apparently never forgot this act and politics or ideology aside, have since shown their generosity to Sihanouk at a time when he now needed them. If and when Prince Sihanouk returns to Cambodia, Kim Il Sung, in no small measure deserves considerable credit for remaining the Princes "best friend" during these trying years when, initially, he had very few friends or supporters.

I noted in my report from Pyongyang that: Kim Il Sung treats Sihanouk in royal style. His army built the Prince a palatial guest house "in a matter of months," Prince Sihanouk told me. And the Prince eats like a king; the dinner he gave me included fish, steak, two kinds of caviar and wines from both France and Korea. At night the Prince and his family would usually watch a movie in the palace. Kim Il Sung and his son and heir apparent, Kim Jong Il, are movie buffs and import the latest films from abroad which they enjoy, lend to the Prince and then become part of the official film collection of the movie studios. The Prince, in turn, gave Kim Il Sung a showing of his "Rose of Bokor," a World War II story about an amiable Japanese colonel (played by Sihanouk) who falls in love with a Cambo-

dian beauty (Princess Monineath). "Kim congratulated me," boasted the Prince. "It's not the North Korean line, but Kim has large ideas."

After Pyongyang I returned to Tokyo but within a few months I found myself back in Beijing where I spent a few days again with the Prince in his former French Embassy quarters. I helped organize a lunch, hosted by Sihanouk, for more than a dozen of my colleagues, a group of Beijing-based American, French and Japanese correspondents who had been trying to meet the Prince. It was a sumptuous five-course French meal with two wines and after dessert liqueurs. The reporters had hidden their notebooks and some hadn't even brought tape recorders, assuming the Prince wanted the meeting to be informal. At one point, after the hors d'oeuvres, one of the journalists looked at me and asked: "What are the ground rules?" I looked at the Prince and knowing him so well, replied instinctively and knowledgeably: "This meeting is completely on the record. You should take out your notebooks and pens and take notes. Nothing, absolutely nothing the Prince ever says is 'off the record.'"

The Prince nodded in agreement and for the next hour and a half gave eloquent and detailed, often too candid, responses to all the questions. Everyone left with a very good story. It was perfect for the Prince, too, to be wound up again. I learned as long as I have known him, it was always very difficult to discuss almost any subject with the Prince—though he is knowledgeable about almost everything and charming on any subject—without his turning it soon into a discussion of Cambodia. The Prince lives and sleeps with "Cambodia" 24 hours a day. It is near-impossible to steer him away from it.

In 1984, on the Prince's first official visit to Japan, at the invitation of the Foreign Ministry, he made several speeches to government officials and members of the Diet (Parliament) where he exposed his plans for a future Cambodia, which includes a *laissez-faire* capitalist system, strong on foreign investments with a liberal foreign investment law, a John Stuart Mill/Rousseau/Montesquieu-inspired democracy and a totally free press. He seemed convinced from all he had seen and experienced, that with all its potential flaws, such a system would best serve Cambodia's interests and secure its future prosperity and independence.

The Prince returned to Tokyo once again in 1988, this time as the guest of Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita and attained the warm and full support of the Japanese government. He invited me and the Tokyo diplomatic corps, during his stay, to a showing of his latest movie, about a charming romance revolving around a Cambodian princess, filmed in Pyongyang, with North Korean actors, English subtitles and passionate love scenes! Everything is possible with Sihanouk.

I think the whole world has come a long way in recognizing, and at a very costly price, that Prince Sihanouk now, as always, is the only Cambodian smart enough to keep his country independent and no regime there could ever hope to gain legitimacy without his major involvement. The next year will be a crucial one, but also an exciting one for Cambodia.

Unlike the other chapters in this book, this one is not closed. As with those old serial adventure movies, "come back next week for the next exciting installment..."



**PREAH KARUNA PREAH BAT SAMDECH
PREAH NORODOM SIHANOUK**

(CAMBODIA'S HEROIC KING AND FATHER OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND UNITY)

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