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Dear Comrades!

It is, indeed, a great pleasure and an honor to be able to represent the People's Republic of Hungary at this meeting, the task of which is to survey the conditions in the South East Asian region on the one hand and to determine the tasks that derive from these conditions on the other. It gives me additional pleasure that a meeting such as this should take place for the first time in the capital of the brotherly Lao nation. I would like to use this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and deepest gratitude to our dear hosts for the thorough preparation and the good work in organizing this meeting, and in fact extend it to all three socialist countries of Indochina for suggesting this event in the first place.

In the present international situation, when we witness a setback in the previous political thaw and experience growing international tensions and even the return of the Cold War rhetoric, all in consequence to the heightened aggression of American imperialism and Chinese hegemonism, the exchange of views and the harmonization of plans seem especially important.

When it comes to worldwide class struggle, Asia is among the most important areas in the entire world: this region right now has the highest number of "live" conflicts. The main reason for this is that it is here that the interests of all the main imperialist powers and China directly collide with those of the socialist countries on the one hand and with the independence movement of the region's developing countries on the other. For reasons strategic, political, military and geographical alike, this especially applies to the case of South East Asia, where, following their historic defeats of 1975 and 1979, the leadership of the United States and China formed a partnership in an attempt to recover their former positions against the forces of social progress and socialism.

In South East Asia, the countries of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have escaped for good from both the gravitational field of imperialism and China's failed hegemonistic ambitions.

I.

Following the Indochinese fiasco, the United States essentially focused its foreign politics in South East Asia on consolidating its military presence in the row of islands running parallel with the continent, as well as on preventing the further spread of socialism and blocking the growing influence of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in the region. In this endeavor,

it made growing use of its allies in Europe and Japan under the slogan of "expanded Atlantism". In several instances, it actively aided the further increase of Chinese influence in the region.

The United States wishes to consolidate its positions, including its military presence on the Philippines, primarily by using economic and political means in the ASEAN countries. It makes considerable efforts to put this group in the service of its own goals, even to the extent of trying to turn it into a military alliance. In more than one respect, the political direction of the new American administration is still undeveloped. There are several indications that in South East Asia we can expect a return to the military/military-political options on the one hand and a simultaneous reduction in furthering Chinese interests on the other, along with a more active American role and, in consequence, an emergence of Chino-American conflicts of interests.

With regard to Indochina, the USA is doing its best to add to the already existing difficulties of the three Indochinese countries, above all to those of the united Vietnam. Besides declining to contribute to the healing of wartime damages, the US did everything in its power to foil the internal consolidation taking place in Indochina; it tries hard to hinder the efforts of post-war reconstruction and the achievements of socialism and people's democracy and to limit the relations between the Soviet Union and the socialist countries on the one hand, and between the countries of Indochina on the other.

Although with China's help it has been able to slow down the process of consolidation in the past few years, the US has nevertheless failed to undermine the positions of socialism in the region. On the contrary, we are pleased to see that the three Indochinese countries have developed even closer links both within themselves and with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Judging by the declarations of the new American administration, it is clear that the US does not wish to resume normal relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. Quite the opposite, it has increased its subversive activities against these countries by lending support to certain factions of the Khmer reactionary forces and by launching a full-blown political and diplomatic campaign against Vietnam and Cambodia.

Following the victory of the revolutionary forces in Indochina, the leadership of the People's Republic of China thought the time had come to come out and fight against Vietnam and the other countries of the region openly, making it clear that it considers them, along with the other countries of the region, as its primary zone of interests.

In this region, too, China's leadership regards the Soviet Union as its prime enemy, while considering Vietnam and the other two Indochinese countries as its number one direct targets. In the entire region, but especially in Indochina, the Chinese and American interests ran parallel, which makes joint or harmonized action possible on their part. This is evidenced, for example, in the fact that China supported American military presence in the Pacific region, while the USA did not oppose Chinese aggression against Vietnam.

At the same time, the Peking leadership tries to exploit the conflicts between the Soviet Union and the United States to their own, selfish ends, such as the widening of China's sphere of interest. One such attempt was aiding the Pol Pot leadership to seize power; also, they had certain successes in Burma and Bangladesh, and also – following the Cambodian fiasco – in Thailand and Singapore.

All this indicates that in the interest of accomplishing its goals, Peking wants to divide the region's countries and turn them against each other. Showing no hesitation to use armed force in the interest of achieving its hegemonistic ambitions, China supplemented the economic/political pressure with the military option in Indochina. In relation to the ASEAN countries, however, it prefers to choose the option of a dialogue in order to exert "peaceful" political and economic pressure. It is worth noting, however, that China does not exclude the military option even in relation to the ASEAN countries; nevertheless, it wishes to implement this option via the local insurgents, most notably the Hoa Hao movement and the parties having close ties with Peking.

Although China has been unable to achieve its goals in the region (in the sense that it has been able to subjugate neither Indochina nor any other major states here), it has done considerable damage to the forces of socialism by provoking a permanent crisis not only in Cambodia but also in the relations between the socialist countries of Indochina on the one hand and the ASEAN countries on the other. At the moment, it strives to sustain this crisis. It places the emphasis on making the military threat permanent, as well as on creating international political pressure and keeping the so-called Cambodian question on the agenda.

II.

The only realistic way of bringing peace and security to the regions of Indochina and South East Asia would be to develop good neighborly relations and cooperation and settle the disputes through negotiations, as proposed by the foreign ministers of Indochina in Ho Chi Minh City. The revolutionary

changes in Cambodia are irreversible. The sooner the countries in and outside the region recognize this, the quicker peace and stability will be restored in South East Asia.

Our country has condemned the political and diplomatic campaign against Cambodia, along with all kinds of interventions in Cambodia's internal affairs. The international conference held in consequence of the resolution related to the so-called Cambodian question, which was passed under the aegis of the UN, has done nothing to ease the burning problems of the region.

The concoctors and organizers of the "international Cambodian conference" have strived to procure further international support for the failed Pol Pot regime; for example, they were the ones who pushed through the recommendatory resolutions of the 36th session of the UN General Assembly.

The real purpose behind the attempts to form a so-called "united front" from Cambodia's reactionary emigrants was to hide the Pol Pot supporters behind the façade of some kind of a "moderate" movement. Yielding to the misleading Chinese and American propaganda, some countries have actually assisted to the formation of the reactionary emigrant movement.

All the efforts, which called for finding a political solution to the "Cambodian problem" without the recognition and active participation of the Cambodian People's Republic, are without a basis as they do not take into account the realities and constitute an intervention in the internal affairs of the sovereign state of Cambodia.

We have been pleased to recognize the fact that the constructive proposals made in Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh, along with the seven-point proposition by the Lao People's Republic, in other words the regional efforts made by our kind host and the two other brotherly countries from Indochina, which were supplemented by the diplomatic initiatives of the other socialist countries, most notably the Soviet Union, have not been without a response; on the contrary, they have led to the first constructive manifestation of regional dialogue.

Our country supports all the initiatives that the Indochinese countries have made in the interest of preserving the region's peace and security, strengthening the mutual trust and establishing good neighborly relations.

III.

Dear Comrades,

In connection with the problems of South East Asia, please allow me to speak at some length about the visits that I have recently made in the ASEAN countries. We have already provided a detailed account of this topic through the Budapest ambassadors of the brotherly countries represented here. Therefore, I would like to apologize to those of you who have already received this information.

Between 22 and 26 October I carried out an official consultation with deputy foreign minister Gonzales on the Philippines; between 26 and 28 October with Foreign Minister Dhanabalan in Singapore; between 29 October and 4 November with deputized chief political director Kadri and Foreign Minister Mochtar in Indonesia; and between 4 and 6 November with foreign undersecretary Zakaria Ali in Malaysia. During an unofficial visit between 7 and 9 November I conducted talks with deputy foreign minister Arun and Foreign Ministry general secretary Kasemsri in Thailand. During my visit, I was received by Prime Minister Rono of the Phillipines, as well as by the Indonesian Vice President Malik and several economic ministers and deputy ministers.

Therefore, in addition to providing an opportunity to review our existing bilateral relations with the various countries and to explore possible ways of improving them, this visit also allowed us to form a comprehensive picture of the ASEAN countries' views regarding the important issues of international politics, with special regard to the situation in South East Asia. I would like to sum up the views shared by the ASEAN countries' leaders; I would also like to underline the specific elements and discrepancies, which might have importance from the viewpoint of our diplomatic work with them.

In assessing the international situation as a whole, the leaders of the ASEAN countries clearly understand that the negative changes taking place in international politics in the past years, such as the latest phase of the cold war atmosphere and the arms race and the increasing cooperation between China and the United States, are contrary to their interest and can hinder the realization of their national goals. They have issued a joint statement in support of the politics of peaceful coexistence, the renewal of the dialogue between the Soviet Union and the United States, the continuation of the disarmament talks, and the settlement of the conflicts through negotiations. Their respective assessments differ, however, in assigning the blame for the deterioration of the situation. In sharp contrast with the fiercely anti-Soviet Singapore foreign minister Dhanabalan's position, who traced everything back to "the discontinuation of the Helsinki spirit," President Malik unequivocally declared that "the tension grew after the political direction of the new American administration had become clear," adding that the people of Indonesia understood the employment of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Most importantly, almost all of my partners across the negotiating table noted that the developments of the recent months, especially in Western Europe, indicated that "Reagan would now be forced to retreat."

In general, it can be said that the increasing cooperation between China and the United States is watched with suspicion and concern. In addressing the Parliament on 9 November, Mochtar officially voiced his opposition to the US arms sales to China.

Due to their geographical situation, the ASEAN countries naturally focus on the problems of South East Asia. As I was touring the region, I had debates on this topic in every capital I visited.

From the statements they have made, it became clear that every country of the region wanted South East Asia to be able to escape the rivalry of outside superpowers. However, the old dispute they were having about the way to achieve this goal has continued to color their concrete plans: Indonesia and Malaysia want to keep all external influences at the minimum, or completely barred, if possible; by contrast, the other three countries think that, since the presence of the superpowers cannot be prevented, the way forward would be to exploit their economic/political conflicts by letting them compete against each other and counterbalance each other.

They continue to view the internal situation of the Chinese People's Republic to be fragile. The popular illusion whereby "China was preoccupied with its internal development and, for the present and the immediate future, has no resources for expansive foreign politics" seems to have lost some of its appeal.

Quite clearly, this view is also shared by Malaysia. It is hardly a coincidence that the newly elected Prime Minister Mahathir's first visit led to Jakarta, where he pointed out – and later repeated on several occasions – that in the given situation they regarded China, rather than either the Soviet Union or Vietnam, as the main source of danger threatening the region. This openly rejects the American position that Haig tried to propagate during his talks in Manila in June and a number of leading American foreign politicians hoped to get accepted by the ASEAN countries subsequently, whereby the region was threatened by the Soviet Union through the mediation of Vietnam. Therefore, a united front should be formed against them. Our information is that this view was also rejected by President Marcos and according to some press reports Lee Kuan Yew himself was against selling arms to China. In sharp contrast with the earlier situation, when the main source of anxiety in connection with the improving Sino-American relations concerned the possible consequences in finance and development, now there are growing fears that the USA would subjugate the interests of the ASEAN countries to US interests in China: blinded by their anti-Soviet and anti-Indochina feelings, they might even encourage Chinese expansion, rather than procuring guarantees against them.

Similar anxieties have been generated by US foreign policy of putting pressure on Japan to rearm: the speeches made at the latest ASEAN – Japan seminar held in Jakarta in September have clearly confirmed the existence of these anxieties.

The ASEAN countries are completely united in despising and condemning Pol Pot and in opposing his return to power. This is one of the points, perhaps the most important one, on which China and the ASEAN countries differ.

There are also some new developments in the assessment of the military assistance lent to Cambodia. On Indonesia's part, this was expressed as follows: although they are opposed to it both in principle and in general, in certain practical instances they understand the use of military force. They nevertheless insisted that "the troops be withdrawn after the elimination of the immediate cause, similarly to the Indian example in Bangladesh's case." In connection with this, Mochtar pointed out that, unlike in 1979-1980 when the ASEAN countries officially demanded "immediate and complete" withdrawal of the troops, now they have only been talking of the necessity of a withdrawal, the conditions and precise terms of which should be clarified in the course of future discussions.

There has been complete agreement in that the so-called Cambodian problem should be resolved through political rather than military means; in other words, the settlement should not be reached through the victory of the armed rebels, the Khmer reactionary forces.

According to the position held by Malaysia, the political line of neither of the superpowers should be followed: they should take care not to be caught up in either the American-Soviet or the Chinese-Soviet conflict. The first step towards a settlement could be the – at least partial and symbolic – withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. This could clear the way towards the convergence of the respective positions of Indochina and the ASEAN countries. The international aspects of the settlement would not change – should not necessarily change – Cambodia's internal situation. Once assured that the Indochinese countries would react appropriately, Indonesia might consider the recognition of the Cambodian government, Foreign Minister Mochtar declared. According to lower ranking foreign political leaders, however, the recognition of the Cambodian government could only be envisaged following a joint decision of the ASEAN countries, and this is still not on the cards. But posing the question in the first place indicates that the willingness to recognize and accept the realities has been increasing, along with the possibility of a settlement based on these realities.

It appears that the plan of settlement based on the so-called "Kuantana formula" is Malaysia's choice, too; this is the reason why, in sharp contrast with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia consider the realization of the ZOPFAN concept still desirable, and in fact assign to it even greater importance than they had done previously. In addition to describing the official position of the ASEAN countries, they emphasized that only a neutral Cambodia would be acceptable to them. At the same time, in view of the signals received from diplomats, they study the possibilities of a particular "settlement", according to which the four Cambodia "faction" (Pol Pot's, Son Sann, Sihanouk and the lawfully installed government) would send representatives to the coalition; to facilitate this, they first want to promote the coalition of the three "oppositional groups", within which the Pol Pot supporters no longer play a leading part.

According to the position taken by Singapore, the most urgent task would be to prevent the further increase of the superpowers' influence; at the moment, the influence of the Soviet Union and Vietnam has increased in South East Asia, which in turn prompted the increase of Chinese influence in Thailand, an equally unwelcome development. From my talks with him, it appears that Dhanabalan would be willing to carry out direct negotiations, at least when it comes to a dialogue with Vietnam. As he pointed out, the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops was crucial for him for the recognition of any government; nevertheless, they understand that this would only happen, if Cambodia did not resume a hostile attitude towards Vietnam. For this reason, a gradual withdrawal of troops would be acceptable to them. He pointed out that the return of the Pol Pot regime was not in Singapore's interests, and nor would be the weakening of Vietnam. At the same time, he felt that a merely regional settlement would not be feasible because of China's role and influence; China should inevitably play a part in any possible settlement.

The position of the government of Philippines is that the Soviet-American confrontation dominates the region, although India, Japan and China all have a high level of activity here. The latter means no direct danger for Manila, although in Cambodia's case China has the principal interest. When it came to the "Cambodian question", they only repeated the official ASEAN position; they reiterated their hope that the

Vietnamese Socialist Republic would be willing to comprise and the good cooperation between the two countries would continue.

My Thailand partners avoided making unequivocal statements about the political future of the region. The combined efforts of China and the United States to apply pressure on Bangkok, along with their concerted propaganda campaign, has proved sufficient to ensure that Vietnam is regarded the main source of tension and danger in the region. Besides the confirmation of the joint ASEAN position, they made one remarkable statement. According to Arun, the fate of the remnants of Pol Pot's armed forces would constitute a serious problem to them in the event of any settlement. Their own forces would be insufficient to eliminate these forces. Among others, they refused the idea of a demilitarized zone along the border for this reason.

In summary, we can conclude that all five countries prefer a political solution reached via negotiations; they have begun to realize the unfeasibility of a military solution; also, they have come to recognize that the Chinese and American plans to prolong the conflict, along with the UN resolutions and the Cambodia conference, would not effectively contribute to a desirable settlement, the postponement of which would be contrary to their long-term interests. This would be a slow process, all the more so as the US has encouraged the ASEAN countries to stick to the politics of postponement – as evidenced from the visits Kissinger and Holdridge made in the region.

Their decision to publish a joint statement about the need to find a solution that would be acceptable to Vietnam (and, therefore, to the Indochinese countries), also, contributed another important factor. They declared that they had no intention either to weaken Vietnam or to bring about a situation in which Cambodia could, once again, be used against Vietnam. All the countries were united in wishing to preserve good relations and to extend cooperation with Vietnam.

At the same time, several elements of their joint position have apparently not been developed completely. This especially applies to specifying the kind of guarantees they would find plausible against any further attempts by the Pol Pot supporters, or in a broader picture by the Chinese, to seize power again.

Besides the Chinese and American pressure on the ASEAN countries, this is the factor, along with their internal difficulties to harmonize their position, which best explains why they prefer a broader, international conference also attended by the US, the Soviet Union and China to holding a regional conference, and also why they have been expecting further new initiatives and gestures from Vietnam and the Indochinese countries.

Finally, I would like to tell you that in every country I have visited the leaders have emphasized their willingness and eagerness to develop bilateral relations, especially regarding the economic sphere, and to continue political relations, including foreign political consultations such as these.

On the basis of all this, we believe that the aim of developing more intensive bilateral relations with the ASEAN countries and presenting further new initiatives in the interest of bringing about changes in the regional resolution is desirable, possible and worthwhile.

At the same time, I would like to make it clear to my comrades at this consultative meeting that the above described statements by the ASEAN countries may conceal the designs of the imperialist powers or even the hegemonist aspirations of China. Numerous questions had been left unanswered; we were really happy when Comrade Firiubin provided answers on the level of principles to most of them yesterday, correctly underlining the importance of utmost care and constant Communist vigilance in our joint and harmonized diplomatic activities of increasing vigor in South East Asia.

IV.

Dear Comrades,

The long-term, strategic interests of the community of socialist countries, Hungary included, demand that we protect and further develop the achievements of socialism in Indochina and that we foil the contrary efforts by the imperialist powers and China.

All this requires that, in the spirit of the peace initiatives of the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, our foreign political activities become more active and more initiative, effectively serving the cause of socialism, social progress and peace in the entire world, and also in Asia and South East Asia in specific.

In connection with this, we believe that the following steps would constitute an appropriate course of action for the future:

1) We must continue the political and diplomatic campaign on every international platform in order to have the revolutionary changes in Indochina accepted, the People's Republic of Cambodia recognized, and the imperialist and Chinese schemes unveiled. We must work towards winning the support of the non-aligned countries by increasing our influence on them.

2) We must help the work of the three Indochinese countries more actively and in a more versatile manner, both in the international organizations and at all the available international platforms.

3) We must increase our effectiveness in helping the Indochinese countries link up with the socialist countries' complex system of relations.

4) We must strengthen and broaden our bilateral political relations with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. We should spend more energy on transferring the experiences we have gained in building socialism to these three Indochinese countries.

5) In our foreign political relations with the ASEAN countries, we must show greater initiative in trying to find ways of exerting more influence on these countries and developing our economic relations in a way that is mutually beneficial.

6) Our country is ready to play a role as active as our circumstances allow in promoting the settlement of the problems in South East Asia through international efforts.

[Translated by Ervin Dunay, Central European University, Budapest]

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