

State Department on Cambodia: 'neutrality' on genocide

Last month the government of the United States voted to seat the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary regime as the legitimate government of Kampuchea at the United Nations—despite the fact that it is known that the Pol Pot regime murdered 3 million Kampucheans in its three and a half years of power. The following are statements issued by the State Department regarding this decision of the Carter Administration.

State Department statement Sept. 27:

There can be no doubt that Pol Pot authorities are guilty of some of the most brutal violations of human rights in modern history. President Carter described that regime in 1978 as the worst violator of human rights in the world. Because of the extraordinarily tight controls exercised over the Kampuchean society by that totalitarian regime, it is not possible to know the number of Khmer actually executed by the Pol Pot government. In addition to the extensive executions, many Khmer died as a consequence of the Pol Pot government's attempts to restructure the society along the lines of a primitive communist state. Many Khmer died, for example, as a result of the forced evacuation of the urban areas shortly after the coming to power of the regime. Others perished of disease and the effects of having limited food in the rival communes he set up. In all, we believe that the population of Kampuchea declined by close to 2 million people from the time that the regime came to power in 1975, to the present. Many more face death today from the ravages of disease and starvation which have followed in the wake of four years of despotic rule and foreign invasion and occupation.

The following exchange between White House spokesman Jody Powell and EIR correspondent Laura Chasen took place on Sept. 27, at the noon White House press briefing:

EIR: *The President has been making a very big issue of his stand on human rights. And yet, this government voted to seat the Pol Pot government at the UN. We did not vote as the French did, not to seat any existing government. We voted to seat the Pol Pot government. Your human rights division says that that government is guilty of committing a holocaust. I would like to know why we voted to seat that government, and why we haven't attempted to get the Nuremberg tribunal reconvened to try Pol Pot, which is still possible under international law.*

Mr. Powell: I believe the question was related there to an alternative between the government and—

EIR: *No, you voted positively to seat Pol Pot.*

Mr. Powell: —and an attempt to seat what was essentially a Vietnamese government—

EIR: *No, that is not—*

Mr. Powell: —what was essentially a Vietnamese government imposed by means which we are all aware of. If you want further details, you will have to argue with the State Department.

EIR: *Excuse me. That is not the question. The French voted not to seat either of those governments. We didn't even do that. We voted to seat Pol Pot.*

Mr. Powell: I can't—I don't think there is any—I mean sometimes the French vote differently from what we do.

EIR: *What I am asking is why this government committed itself to the government that killed 2 to 3 million—*

Mr. Powell: I have given you the best response I can off the top of my head. If you want to pursue it further, harass Tom (Reston, Assistant State Dept. spokesman).

The following exchange between EIR correspondent Laura Chasen and a high State Department official who speaks for the administration took place on October 1:

EIR: *How does the administration justify voting to seat Pol Pot at the United Nations, when the State Department admits that regime was guilty of murdering close to 2 million people? France voted to leave the seat empty.*

Administration: Voting to leave the seat empty did not seem to be a useful or more palatable option. Those directly situated in the region felt that this approach was the best. They feel very strongly that the worst possible alternative is to reward aggression and to unseat a regime which simply ceases to be functioning because of invasion by Vietnam.

EIR: *Are you referring to the Peking regime?*

Administration: I am referring to ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations: Singapore, Thailand,

Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines) who were largely responsible for that stunning victory at the UN.

EIR: *So you no longer claim to be taking the international lead on human rights questions, but will simply follow what other states wish to do?*

Administration: No. I am saying that there was no, in fact, good alternative.

The following statements were issued by the State Department Sept. 28 in response to questions by EIR:

Q: *What is the strength of Pol Pot's armed forces?*

A: We estimate that there are between 20,000 and 30,000 armed Khmer fighting under Pol Pot's leadership.

Q: *Does the Department have any information concerning reports that the Chinese have mobilized as many as 500,000 troops on the Vietnam border?*

A: There are in excess of 100,000 Chinese troops along the Vietnam border, but we have no evidence to confirm a substantial buildup.

The following exchange between EIR correspondent Laura Chasen and State Department spokesman Hodding Carter III took place on October 3. This is an unofficial transcript.

Q: *If the PRC undertakes another aggression against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam or Laos, will the Department of State state in advance that you will not only disassociate our government from that action, but will condemn and work to end such aggression? I ask this in light of the belligerent statements made by the PRC to the (U.S.) Vice President (Walter Mondale), and would further like to know if the Department thinks in view of*

these statements that China is a threat to the peace and stability in the area?

A: Oh, you know what our position is on the earlier aggression—er, I mean conflict ... I am not aware of any feelings to the effect that China is a threat to peace and stability.

Q: *Can you tell me how you justify placing in the same moral category the Heng Samrin government and the Pol Pot regime? By your own admission Pol Pot is guilty of genocide. Do you have evidence to support equating Heng Samrin with such a regime?*

A: They haven't had time yet.

The State Department issued these answers on Oct. 3 to questions submitted by EIR the previous day:

Q: *How many Chinese advisers were in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime, 1975-1979?*

A: We have no information on that which we are able to provide. The question is more properly put to the embassy of the PRC.

Q: *Did any other country have a significant number of advisers there at that time?*

A: We have no information of this that we are able to provide.

Q: *Did the Chinese at any time indicate to us what was happening in Cambodia under Pol Pot?*

A: No comment. It is not our custom to disclose our diplomatic conversations with other governments.

Q: *Why are the Chinese not culpable under the "position to know" ("knew or should have known"—ed.) provisions of the Nuremberg decisions concerning genocide?*

A: No comment.