



Royal
Ties

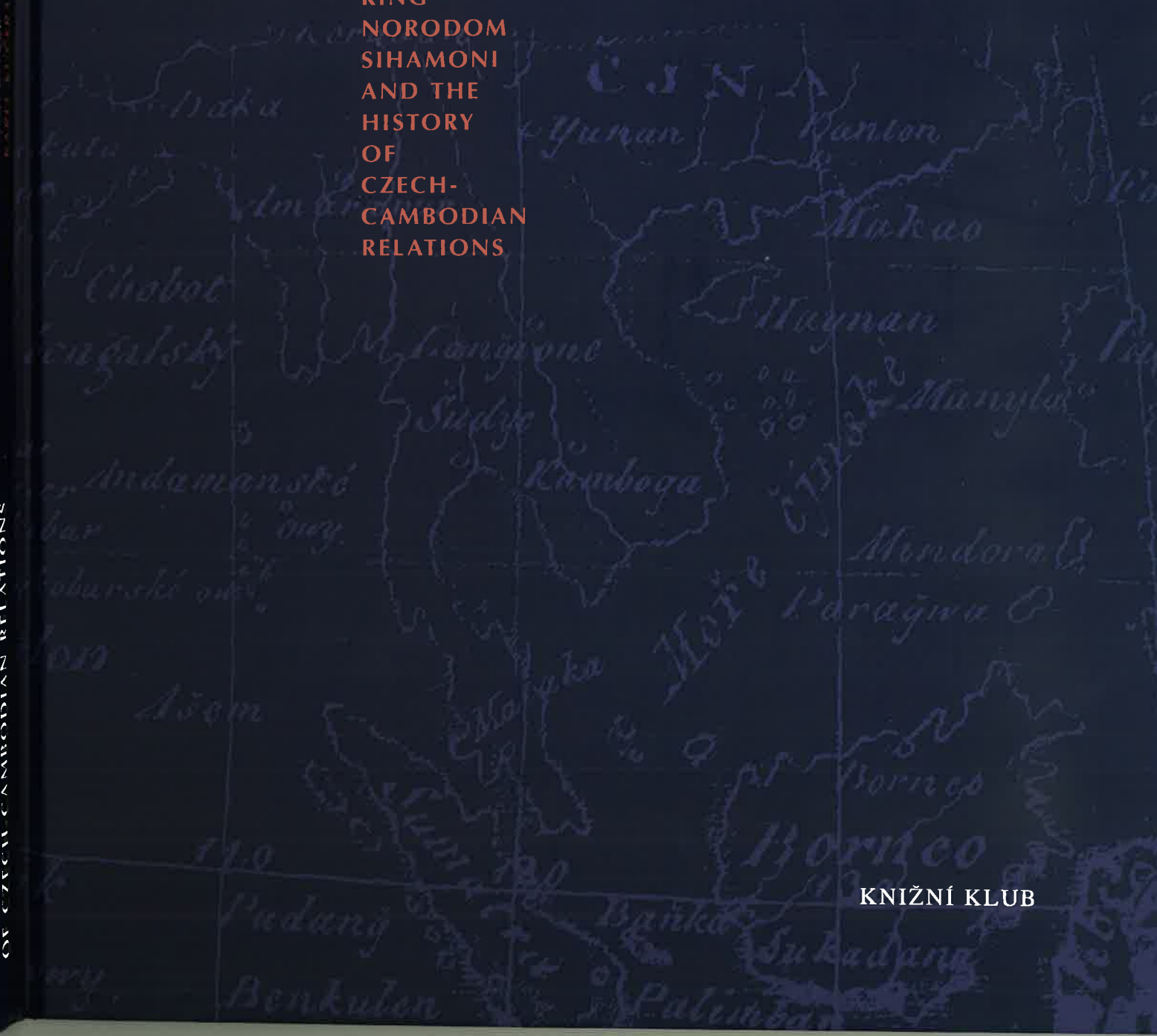
MIROSLAV NOŽINA
JIŘÍ ŠITLER

KING NORODOM SIHAMONI AND THE HISTORY
OF CZECH-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS

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KNIŽNÍ KLUB

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Coronation of King Norodon Sihamoni, 28. 10. 2004

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Hundreds of years have passed since the first accounts of the Kingdom of Cambodia were published in the Czech Lands, and it has been fifty years since my grandfather King Norodom Suramarit and my father Norodom Sihanouk, in his capacity as the Prime Minister of Cambodia, decided to establish diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia.

More than 30 years have passed since I graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. I cherish memories of my studies in this beautiful and magic city. This experience is shared by hundreds of my Cambodian compatriots, who also learned to love Czech people and culture during their student years. It fills me with deep happiness to know that this affection is reciprocated by our Czech friends, who took the time to compile this memorable and beautifully illustrated book about the history of the friendship between Czechs and Khmers, about the first reports of Czech missionaries in 17th - 18th century, globetrotters from the time of the Kings Sisowath and Monivong, about students and scholars, politicians and diplomats. I would like to thank my dear friend Ambassador Jiří Šitler, Dr. Miroslav Nožina, Mr. Karel Kučera and all others who contributed to this publication. Their work will be appreciated by both scholars and the general public. Thanks to them, people all over the world will learn more about my beloved motherland Cambodia, and about the ties that connect our two nations.

Norodon Sihamoni

FOREWORD

by His Majesty Preah
Bat Samdech Preah
Baromneath
Norodom Sihamoni,
King of Cambodia

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Angkor Thom, Bayon, Face of Bodhisattva

© Karel Kučera

Chapter 1

FROM THE
SCHOOLYARDS
OF PRAGUE TO
THE THRONE
OF CAMBODIA

Coronation of King
Norodom Sihamoni
in October 2004

On October 14, 2004, the world media spread the news that The Royal Council of the Throne had selected a new King of Cambodia, who would reign as His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Baromneath Norodom Sihamoni. His father, King Norodom Sihanouk had announced his retirement only a few days earlier, and the Council had to act quickly in order to fulfill its duty to select a new King from the members of the Royal Family within seven days after the throne became vacant. According to the Cambodian Constitution from 1993, any member of the Royal Family descending from the blood line of King Ang Duong (1796-1860) could be elected.¹

I hope that people in Prague are proud of me, of the Prague student who became a King, the King said jokingly in fluent Czech during a ball in the Preah Reach Damnak Seri Mongkol Hall of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh on October 30, 2004. Norodom Sihamoni spent his formative years in the Czech capital: he came to Prague when he was just nine years old, and he left when he was twenty two.

The dinner and ball given by the King's father Sihanouk and Queen Mother Monineath in honour of their son, the new King, concluded the three-day long series of coronation ceremonies and events.

The celebrations started on October 28 with a series of Buddhist and Brahmin religious ceremonies. *Tevodas*, the angels, blessed the new monarch. The next day, in the presence of Cambodian dignitaries and the diplomatic corps, the King was seated on the throne in front of the Great White Parasol in the Preah Tineang Tevea Vinichhay hall of the Royal Palace. Brahman priests provided well-wishing music with traditional instruments, and the King took his oath of allegiance. Beating of gongs and drums in the Royal Palace and in pagodas throughout the Kingdom, fireworks and nationwide live television and radio broadcasts announced the event to all Cambodians.

During the cocktail reception which followed in the Chanchhaya Pavilion, the Czech ambassador had the first opportunity to talk to Norodom Sihamoni. In the footage captured by Austrian director Alfred Deutsch it can be seen how the King's face lit up when he heard Czech spoken, and he said that the Czech Republic was his second home. But also the Danish ambassador, whose previous assignment was in Prague, greeted him in Czech. *Oh, you too?* the King rejoiced.



Coronation of King
Norodom Sihamoni,
28. 10. 2004, © Reuters



Handing over the documents and
photographs from the King's stay in Prague,
16. 11. 2004, © Royal Palace in Phnom
Penh



Coronation of King Norodom Sihamoni,
Phnom Penh, 28. 10. 2004, Archives of
Anna Huječková

The 28th October, the day when the ceremonies started, is, by coincidence, also the National Day of the Czech Republic, commemorating the end of the Hapsburg monarchy and the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. But this did not prevent the Czech Embassy from celebrating also the coronation of the Czech-speaking king. The last coronation of a King of Bohemia, Ferdinand V, whose Czech was much worse than that of King Sihamoni, took place in 1836.

Norodom Sihamoni's election immediately raised interest in the Czech Republic. On October 18, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement expressing its pleasure over the election: *We know him as a highly educated man with deep knowledge in the area of culture, and with a very positive relation to the Czech Republic. We wish His Majesty success and we are looking forward to further cooperation with the Kingdom of Cambodia.* President Václav Klaus invited the King, in his congratulatory letter, to the Czech Republic.

Shortly after the coronation, on November 16, during a private audience with the King, the Czech ambassador handed over to him not only the documents and photographs from the Czech Republic documenting his stay in Prague, but also informed him about the intention to publish a book on the history of our relations. The King was happy to see pictures from his school days - his personal archives had been burned by the Khmer Rouge. He asked for some videotapes of Czech theatre plays, and, most importantly, for a copy of his favourite book, *Babička* (The Grandmother) by Božena Němcová, a Czech classic from 1855. He had left his copy in his apartment in Paris, where he served until recently as Cambodia's ambassador to UNESCO, and, as a King, he could not just go there and pick it up.


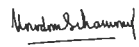
It is one of the paradoxes of globalization that a European country with rather egalitarian and republican traditions has formed and educated the future monarch of one of the most ancient Asian kingdoms. But how did this happen? The aim of this book is to describe the péripéties of the history leading to the fact that hundreds of Cambodian citizens can speak Czech, spent many years in our country, and today, they occupy many important positions in their homeland.

We do not try to write a history of Cambodia, this is the history of encounters between two nations. We let the primary sources speak for themselves with as little comment as possible, even when they contain distorted or one-sided information.

Mostly it is quite obvious - Czechoslovakia was a Communist country from 1948 to 1989, and a certain anti-Western (anti-French and anti-American) bias of the sources is to be expected. Sometimes it even seems that the Communist leadership happened to be on the right side of the conflict, when they, contrary to the politics of the Western powers, supported the government of the People's Republic of Cambodia which overthrew the bloody Khmer Rouge's regime after 1979. However, at the same time, Czechoslovak communists continued their hard-line policies back home, and they also showed a remarkable lack of generosity and kindness towards Prince Norodom Sihamoni, who tried and failed to obtain a visa to the Czechoslovakia he loved so dearly several times in the 1980s.

The authors would like to thank all who contributed to this book: the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Náprstek Museum in Prague; Ms. Margaret Bywater from the Hun Sen Library in Phnom Penh, who provided us with important documents and illustrations; Mr. David Jarkulisch and Mr. Michal Svoboda from the Czech Embassy in Bangkok and to Mr. Pierre Boussard, who helped to coordinate the edition of the book; Ambassador Julio Jeldres, official biographer to the King's father Norodom Sihanouk; Ms. Katharina von Schnurbein, who read the manuscript and gave us some important advice, and last but not least, the sponsors who supported this project.

Letter from King Norodom
Sihamoni to the Czech
President Václav Klaus,
31. 10. 2004


NORODOM SIHAMONI
Roi du Cambodge
À
Son Excellence Monsieur VÁCLAV KLAUS
Président de la République Tchèque
Monseigneur le Président de la République,
Les vœux que Vous avez bien voulu m'adresser à l'occasion de mon
élection au Trône du Cambodge m'ont vivement ému et je Vous en remercie
infiniment.
Je garde de mes années passées à Prague le souvenir d'un grand Peuple
sensible, courageux et accueillant auprès duquel j'ai beaucoup appris, j'admire
les progrès considérables que sous Votre Présidence, et en très peu d'années, il
a su accomplir dans le domaine du développement et de la paix.
Très touché par Votre généreuse invitation, je Vous en exprime, du fond
du cœur, toute ma reconnaissance. Je suis beaucoup trop attaché à Votre grand
et bon Pays pour ne pas souhaiter y retourner un jour, mais il me faudra
attendre pour cela que les devoirs de ma charge, actuellement très pressants,
me le permettent.
Croyez bien que j'ai fait mienne les principes de démocratie, de paix et
d'amitié entre les peuples que m'a inculqués Sa Majesté mon Père. Cette belle
et ancienne solidarité qui nous lie indéfectuellement au Peuple tchèque m'est
particulièrement chère et je ferai tout pour la développer encore à l'avenir.
Je Vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président de la République, avec ma
vive gratitude, l'expression de ma plus haute considération.

Phnom Penh, le 31 Octobre 2004

For centuries, it would seem an absurd idea that a Czech-speaking monarch could ever occupy the Cambodian throne. A Khmer motif created by the noteworthy Czech painter, František Kupka, published in 1905 in Paris, is titled *Les mondes lointains* (Faraway Worlds). Indeed, Cambodia then was a distant and mysterious country on which Czechs gleaned only sketchy information from geographic manuals, chance reports by Catholic missionaries, and encyclopedias. Yet while Czechs had at least perfunctory notions about Cambodia from such accounts, to the learned Cambodian, if he had ever heard of Bohemia, that country would remain, until the latter half of the 20th century, an imaginary land of Shakespeare's literary invention.²

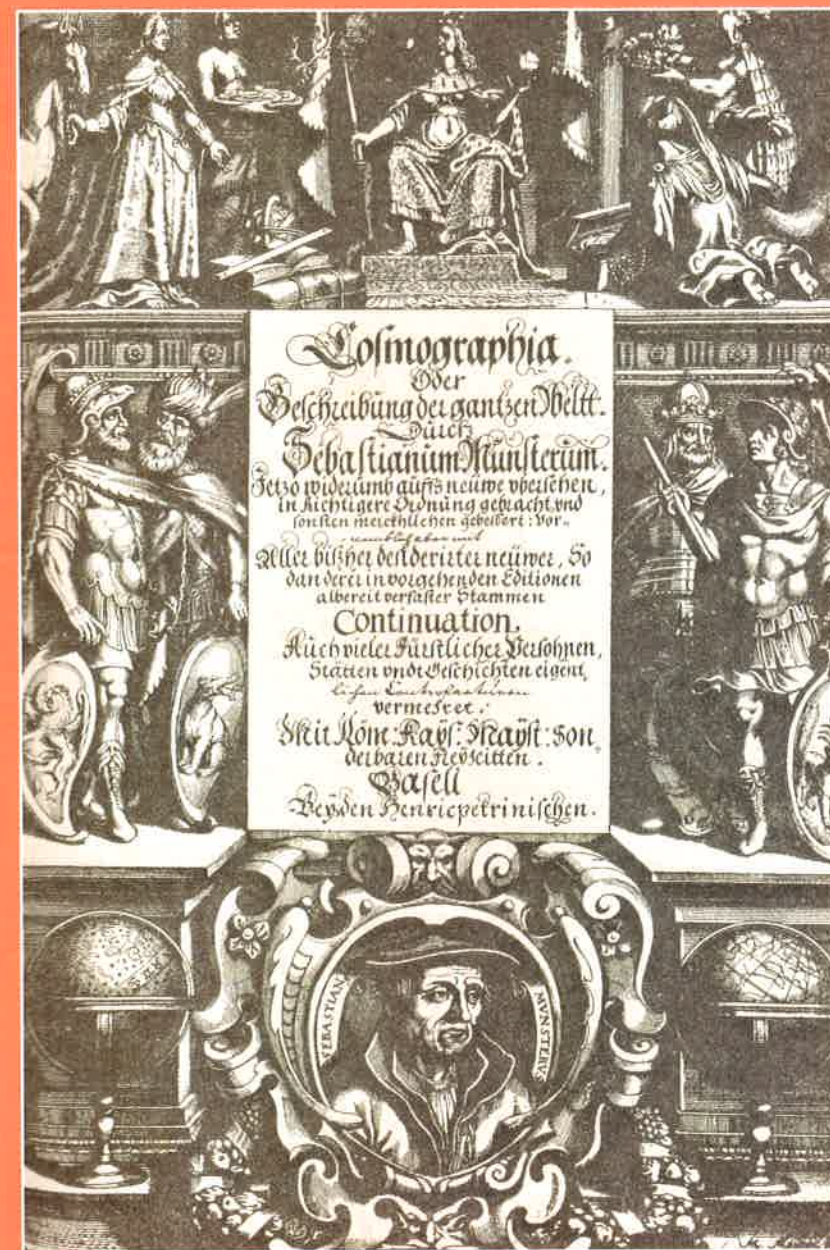
The Franciscan friar Odoricus Boemus from Pordenone in Italy, whose father hailed from Bohemia and whose treatises of 1331 were known and copied in Prague, did venture into the vicinity of Cambodia. However, he only mentioned the neighbouring kingdom of Champa, to the south of modern Vietnam.³

A concrete, if somewhat distorted account of the Kingdom of Cambodia can be found in the German geographic treatise, *Cosmographia* (1541-1628) by Sebastian Münster⁴, which was widely read in the Czech Lands. Cambodia is described as follows:

Camboya is the Capital of this Kingdom but Diem, which some call Odia, is its Royal Seat. Neighbouring on this country is the Kingdom of Cochinchina in the north, the Kingdom of Siam in the south, and the sea in the east. It is a vast and populous country full of elephants and rhinoceroses. The Cross is revered here. When the King dies all his wives are burned along with his body and his most noble men sacrifice themselves to the same fire.

This country yields plenty of liquorice called Calamba which, if found to be good, is paid its weight in silver and gold. The river Mecon flows through the country and into the sea, flooding the whole land in the summer. The uplands are inhabited by strong people called the Lajos; the Avas and the Branians live a little higher, and in the mountains live the Gneos - savage people who eat human flesh and brand their bodies with red-hot irons. The Laos or Lajos live in small huts and open boats at the springs of the river Mecon which spreads across 400 miles in the country towards the Tartar and Chinese borders. (...) These Lajos set out, in 1578, down the river with an army of 200,000 men, all of whom were either slaughtered or

*drowned or captured by the Camboyens. The King of Camboya also died on the battlefield, leaving behind his young son who became a vassal of the King of Siam. This Kingdom has big cities and many temples that have their bonzes or priests after the Japanese or Chinese fashion. The Lajos are very barbarian people yet they are rich in gold. In 1598, the King of Camboya summoned several Jesuits to teach the people..."*⁵



Title page, Münster, Sebastian, *Cosmographia*. This is the description of the whole world and its old monarchies, Basel 1628

Von dem Königreich Camboya. Cap. xcviii.



Die Hauptstadt dieses Königreichs ist Camboya / aber der Königliche Sitz ist zu Diam / welche von etlichen India geheissen wird. Diß Landt stoffet gegen Witternacht an Couchin China / gegen Mittag an das Königreich Siam / gegen Aufgang an das Meer. Es ist ein groß vnd volkreich Landt / voller Heilighen vnd Rhinoceroten. Alhie fahet man an das Crucif zu verehren. Wann der König stirbt / so werden seine Weiber mit ihm verbrennt / ja es opffern sich auch seine fürnehmsten Herren selber in diesem Feuer auff.

Diß Landt bringet das süsse Holz Calamba in großem oberfluß herfür / welches wann es gut ist / gegen Silber vnd Gold abgewogen wirdt. Durch diß Landt laufft der Fluß Mecon in das Meer / vnd ober schwemmet im Sommer das ganze Landt. Oben im Landt wohnen die Laos / ein starck Boldt / besser oben die Apas vnd Brantias / vnd auff den Bergen die Encoos / welche wilde Leuth sind / vnd Menschen Fleisch essen / auch ihren Leib allenthalben mit einem glühenden Eisen breißen. Jarre schreibt / die Laos oder Lajos / wohnen in kleinen Hüttenen vnd in offnen Nachen / bey dem Ursprung des Flusses Mecon / welcher sich auff die 400. Meilwegs in das Landt / an die Tartarijschen vnd Chinesischen Grenzen erstreckt.

Die Portugesen zeigen d. selbst einen Berg / vber welchen etwan ein groß vnd schwer beladen Schiff gefahren sein soll.

Diese Laos sind im Jar 1578. mit einer Armaden von 200000. den Fluß herab gezogen / welche alle von den Camboyen theils erschlagen / theils ertränckt / theils gefangen worden: In welchen streit auch der König auff Camboya auff dem platz geblieben: Er ließ aber einen jungen Sohn hinter sich / welcher dem König von Siam Zinßbar worden. Diß Königreich hat große Stätt / vnd viel Tempel / welche ihre Bonzios oder Priester haben / nach der Japoner oder Chineser manier. Die Laos sind ein grob barbarisch Boldt / aber reich an Gold. Anno 1598. hat der König von Camboya etliche Jesuiten beschicket / sein Volk zu vnderweisen.

Couchin China / ist auch ein Indisch Königreich / hat gegen Witternacht die Provinz Canton / gegen Mittag aber / das Königreich Camboya: Es ist in drey Provinzen abgetheilt / deren jede

Probably the first preserved report on the Kingdom of Cambodia compiled by a Czech was dispatched to the Czech Lands by the Jesuit missionary Matyáš Kukulín (Matthias Cuculinus), in 1679. Hailing from the Moravian town of Mohelnice, this missionary (*1641 or 1645) was selected along with another six friars from the Bohemian Province of the Society of Jesus for missionary work in Spain's overseas possessions in Mexico and the Philippines. The circumstances under which his report on the state of missions in Indo-China originated are a remarkable case of coincidence, as is the fact that his letter has come down to us. Kukulín's Jesuit mission party missed the departure of a Spanish flotilla to Mexico because bad winds had slowed down their voyage outside Gibraltar. Upon their arrival in Cadiz, the first Czech missionaries ordered to serve overseas could only see the sails of the departing Mexican expedition. While waiting for the next flotilla to set sail they were transferred to a Jesuit college in Seville where, in addition to the routine activities of their religious order, they also spent time gathering intelligence on overseas missions, copying and processing it, and forwarding it to their home base – the Bohemian Province. Their accounts of Christianity's advance in various parts of the world partly satiated a thirst for authentic information from faraway regions and their inhabitants as well as serving as inducements in the recruitment of new missionaries. These reports were therefore filed in Jesuit archives and some of them have been preserved to this day.

Kukulín's report from Seville, dated 7 November 1697, is a typical example of such communication: it was compiled in Latin from several sources its author accessed in the course of his stay at the Seville college. After a brief description of the state of Christianity on the Canary Islands, Kukulín copied from an anonymous source well-versed in the conditions in Indo-China, four summary reports on state entities there, namely Tonkin (*Relatio continens quaedam de statu Christianitatis in Regno Tunquin*), Cochin China (*De Cochinchina*), Siam (*De Regno Siam*) and Cambodia (*De Camboya*). The autograph of his report on Cambodia, reflecting the views of a Jesuit missionary, is kept in the Moravian Regional Archive in Brno.⁶

COSMOGRAPHIA,

Das ist:

Beschreibung der ganzen Welt

Vorreden

Aller Monarchien

Keyserthumen / Königreichen / Für-

stenthumen / Graff vnd Herrschafft / Länderen / Stätten vnd Gemeinden / wie auch aller Heilighen Stifften / Bisthumen / Abteyen / Klöster / Vrsprung / Regiment / Reichthum / Gewalt vnd Macht / Verrückung / Auf vnd Abnehmen / zu Haus vnd Kriegeszeiten / samt aller andern Beschröbungen.

Alle deren / beyder Ständen / Regenten / Keysern / Königen / Bischoffen / Bisthöfften / it. Leben / Succession / Genealogien vnd Stammbäume.

Alle Völker in gemein Religion / Gesetz / Sitten / Nahrung / Kleidung vnd Thun / wie auch aller Länder sonderbare Thier / Vögel / Fisch / Gewässer / Mineral / vnd was dergleichen mehr bey einem jeden Landt in acht genommen / in guter Ordnung zusammengetragen.

Mit schönen Landtskaffen / auch der fürnehmsten Stätten vnd Städten derganzen Welt / sampt etlicher Christlicher vnd Weltlicher Regenten vnd anderer vornehmten Personen / wie nicht weniger aller schwarzen Thieren vnd Menschen eigentlicher Characteren gleichsam abgemahlet vnd vnder Augen gestellt.

Aus Antrich vnd Versehen vieler hohen Decretator / Fürsten vnd Edlen durch den fürnehmlichen vnd weishesten Herrn

SEBASTIANVM MVNSTERYM

an dem Tag gegeben:

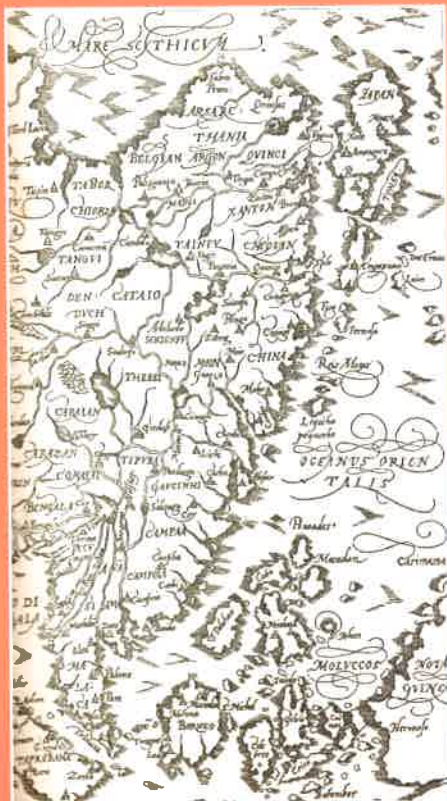
Auff das neue vbersehen vnd mit vielerley nöthwendigen Sachen

hübschen Landtskaffen / Figuren vnd Bildern

Wiederum vber

Wiederum vber

Wiederum vber



This Kingdom has been rocked by ceaseless war storms for several years now as two Princes of Royal Blood have been fighting for power. One of them holds the inland kingdom and forests, which he uses as fences against the power of the other Prince who rules the coastal areas and enjoys the support of the Ruler of Cochinchina.

Prior to the ravages of war that turned all our causes there into nothing, this Kingdom was a safe haven for foreign Christians who frequently sought asylum here when expelled from their countries. Therefore, when the Dutch seized Macassar⁷ and drove out all Catholics, most of them fled to Cambodia, including their Malaccan Vicar⁸ until he did make it back to Goa.

The Christians whose churches were looted, chalices stolen and homes plundered during these wars are being taken good care of, in this Kingdom, by Father Andreas Gomez of Portugal. However, general chaos and the arrogance of soldiers-gone-berserk are so severe that most of these Christians have escaped violence by fleeing to the woods where they are exposed to many trials and tribulations. All these misfortunes are made worse for vast food shortages in the whole Kingdom and the plague, which is spreading so fast, it is extremely difficult, in this situation of general distress, to come to help the scattered flock and strengthen their souls.

Most natives worship idols but many of them have fallen for the Mohammedan sect – and no plague is worse for the spread of True Faith. This is also why so few people in this Kingdom partake of Holy Communion and no Eastern mission is more miserable and fruitless. However, we have hope that when calm and peace have been restored the toil sacrificed to these pagans will, by the grace of the Almighty, bring out better fruits in season.

In the middle of the 18th Century, there were seven missionaries from the Bohemian Jesuit Province active in neighbouring Vietnam. One of them, Father Jan Köffler (1711–1780), wrote:

An urgent message has reached us from our borderland mandarins of the neighbouring empire of Cambodia, which pays taxes to our King, that the Cambodians have crossed the border, invaded their neighbours – inhabitants of Cochinchina – and destroyed many villages by fire and sword, and blood was spilled. His Royal Majesty dispatched a sufficient number of troops under the command of a Christian Colonel, Xaverius, to force the rebellious Cambodians to subdue.

However, the King of Cambodia sent an unarmed Prince Royal to meet the Christian commander so as to vindicate his subjects and demonstrate that they had been licentiously and wantonly attacked by a few neighbouring Cochin Chinese and, their undisputable property rights being threatened, they had taken to arms as they had to defend themselves against their enemies. So it came to pass that in the course of this incident, which was not an all-out war but a clan feud, blood was inadvertently spilled on both sides.

Having investigated and settled the case, Xaverius conveyed a more encouraging message to the Court. However, he was smeared by the borderland mandarins who would not admit their original indictment was wrong, and was falsely accused of accepting a bribe from the Cambodians.

Convinced of the correctness of his actions, the Christian commander has asked His Majesty to have him face a court martial that would most rigorously judge his moves. We are eagerly awaiting the outcome of this. Certainly, the outcome must be positive for our Christian hero.

Much less certain is the behaviour of the Chinese in the southern regions of the Empire. They stand accused of aiding and abetting the cruel assassination of a learned mandarin, the brother of the First Minister of the Court, who was killed by a member of their nation who wanted to take hold of his property. It is said that His Majesty is resolved to expel all Chinese from all of the Empire except for those who settled here a long time ago. Also, it is said that these unworthy people could befriend someone at the Court who would help them get away with murder.

God grant that we, the Christians, could also always reach persons of power in this Empire whose status and influence could stop the armed fist of the King and the thunderbolt before it struck! This is also the loftiest reward for my modest piety with which I commend our hard-trying Mission to your hands.

Your Eminence's humblest servant in Christ,

Jan Köffler SJ, Missionary⁹

Cambodia gets mentioned also in Karel Šádek's *General Geography or Geografia* of 1824.¹⁰ He describes Cambodia's most significant city as Luwek, the Capital of Menam Kom¹¹

Wšeobecný zeměpis [General Geography] by Karel Vladislav Zap from 1850 adds that over the Majkung,¹² or Cambodia River there is Cambodia, a very dilapidated former capital with a once-beautiful palace.¹³

Rieger's Encyclopedic Dictionary from 1865 notes on Cambodia: The southeastern province of Annam ... borders Laos in the north, Cochinchina and Champa in the west, Siam in the east, and the Sea of China in the south. It is a vast plateau along both banks of the river of the same name, very fertile especially in grain and fruits of all kinds; farming is assisted by frequent floods on the Cambodia. The climate is fairly moderate but the rainy months of May and October are quite hot. The population numbering over one million lives mostly on the banks of the river Cambodia and is predominantly Buddhist. The main cities today are Saigong¹⁴ and Panomping¹⁵, formerly Cambodia on an islet on the Cambodia River where the Dutch operated trading stores until 1634. Cambodia was an independent empire until about mid-18th century when it fell under the Empire of Annam. It regained independence during the Siamese and Annam wars in 1835. The Cambodia or Majkung, the biggest river in Indochina, originates in the Yunnan

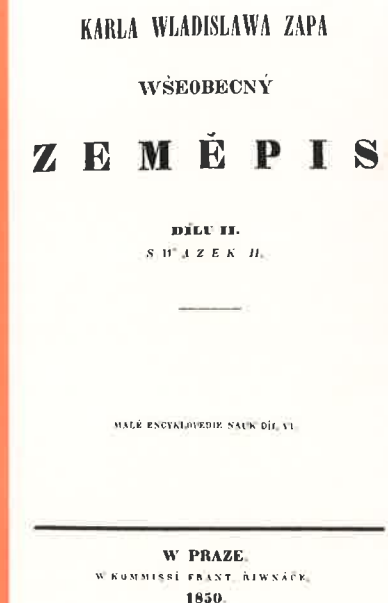
Mountains, runs southwards across Cambodia and dovetails into many branches before emptying into the Sea of China, forming numerous islands and lagoons at its estuary. It is called Za-Chu at its origins and is known as Lasn-Can-Kiang further downstream; the name Cambodia applies to its estuary section. Its banks are low and sandy; the Cambodia often swells its banks and floods adjacent areas, causing both fertile floods and harmful sand dunes.¹⁶

France's Cambodia

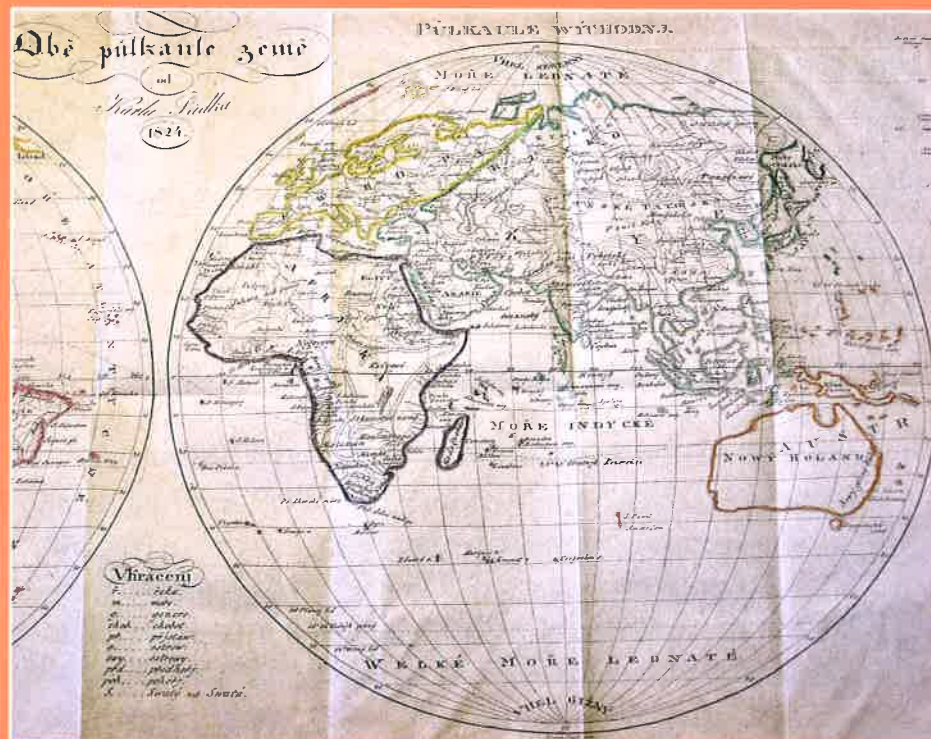
On 12 June 1884, King Norodom I signed a treaty with France under which Cambodia became a *de facto* French protectorate. The French era lasted until 1953. Otto's Encyclopedic Dictionary describes the growing influence of France as follows: [France's] relations with the Empire date from the occupation of Cochinchina which made King Norodom sign a pact with Siam. However, due to the actions of Doudart de Lagrée,¹⁷ France signed a treaty of friendship and commerce with this ruler on 11 August 1863, under which a French protectorate was established, a French Resident to the King was appointed, etc. Yet due to influences from Siam, this treaty only came into effect in 1867 when the Cambodian provinces of Battambang, Angkor and Laos up to the Mekong were ceded to the Empire. Two rebellions by the King's brother, Si-Woth, were crushed



Map of Asia – part of a map of Cambodia, coloured copperplate engraving, Karel Šádek, *General Geography*, Volume III, Hradec Králové, 1824



Front Page, Karel Vladislav Zap, *Popular Geography, Part II, Volume II*, Prague, 1850



Map of Asia, coloured
copperplate engraving,
Karel Šádek, General Geography,
Volume III, Hradec Králové, 1824

Zádný Indoch.

Meze a velikost. Všeobecný přehled země
dostaně mezí a velikosti s Evrope a Asie; a
západu se západním přehledem, na ostatních
částech s mořem indickým. Povrch vyúsť 38.000
mil.

Voda. Hlavní řeky jsou Indus a
Ganges, Pegu, Siam, Menam a
Menam - Kom.

Povaha země. Dlouhé pobřeží se
stejnou vzdáleností rameny se táhne
oceanu. Zde je půda velmi úrodná, má
mnoho lesů, v celé bahně a píseku. Podnebí
je studené, a jeho horlé. Plodiny jsou
indické, zvláště je tu mnoho
pšenice, kukuřice, dovozu dřeviny a
sádky, velmi dobrý čaj, nejlepší
borůvka, a mnoho
borůvka.

Obyvatele a jejich náboženství.
Počet obyvatelů je 30 milionů: Birmanové,
Siamové, Anamité a t. d. Hlavní
náboženství jsou buddhismus,
brahmanismus a maoismus.

Poděle. Tento přehled se dělí
na tři části: birmanští (se
stejnou vzdáleností s
Siamem a Indem); a
Siamští a Indští.

Chapter on Indo-China,
Karel Šádek, General
Geography, Volume III,
Hradec Králové, 1824

and today's relationship between the Kingdom and the French Republic was established in 1884. During the 1893 dispute between France and Siam, the Cambodians attempted to regain the territories lost to Siam but their desires only came to fruition when the Anglo-French treaty of 1896 settled border disputes between the English, Siamese and French territories.¹⁸

Cambodia itself is described in this encyclopedia as a land of mountains and plateaux, with very fertile alluvial flatlands along rivers, of which the most important is the eastern Mekong plain which, however, has poor mineral reserves. The main crops are rice, cotton, tobacco, beans, indigo, cardamom, areca nuts and nutmeg. However, rice must be imported from Lower Cochinchina. Strong ponies of Siamese stock are bred in the country and silkworm farms are also widely spread. Of a total population of 1,500,000 to 1,800,000, seventy-five percent goes to Cambodians of Khmer stock, and there are 11% of each Annamites and Chinese, 2.5 % of Malays, whereas the aboriginal inhabitants, pushed out to the mountains and gone savage (Khui, Khamen, Peunong, Sui etc.) barely account for 0.5 percent.

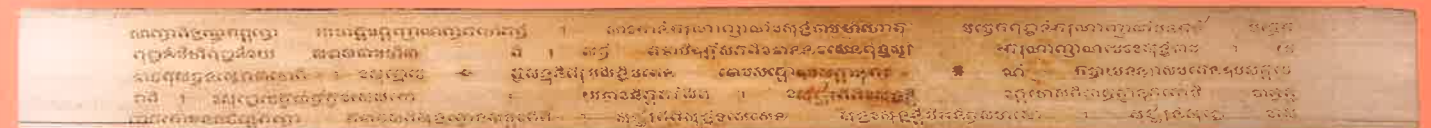
The social system is described as follows: The native population is divided into five strictly segregated classes - the vestige of the former Brahmin-introduced castes. The extremely ramified Royal Family holds the highest place in society, followed by the descendants of former kings or Tra-Vong; descendants of Brahmin clans and Buddhist priests known as the baker (baku); the fourth class are free commoners from whose ranks clerks are selected, and the lowest-ranked are the descendants of savage aboriginal inhabitants who basically have slave status today. (...) The country's dominant religion is Buddhism blended with the more ancient Brahmanism and reduced to a mixture of miscellaneous superstitions and rituals of a superficial nature. In addition to the cult of the Brahmin deities, the worship of ancient spirits of the aboriginal Cambodian animist faith is widespread together with magic, talismans, etc. Christian missions have scored meager results to date. (...) Except for the Buddhist temples where boys learn to read and write, there are no schools in Cambodia.¹⁹



Angkor stood out as an undisputedly exceptional cultural value in all Czech accounts at the time. Otto's Encyclopedic Dictionary marvelled at its attractions in 1889: *The Angkor, Ongkor, a splendid set of ruins in Indo-China near the Siamese-Cambodian border, north of Lake Tulesab. In the middle of a forest, belted by a 3550-metre wall, there tower the ruins of a magnificent Buddhist temple (Nakhon Vat) and other sacred edifices with exquisite ornamentations and bas-reliefs as well as a multitude of ancient inscriptions, all testifying to the uncommon state of advancement of the ancient Cambodian empire.*²⁰

During the course of the 19th century, many Czech travellers traversed Burma, Malaya and Siam, and although they failed to venture out to Cambodia, some of them did mention her in their writings and brought back home some Khmer artifacts. The renowned globetrotter and photographer Enrique Stanko Vráz, sponsored by the equally famous fund provider Vojta Náprstek, did visit Siam in 1879.²¹

He was going to go over to Cambodia but then wrote home that *the one letter from Europe that told me no money can be raised on my behalf has rendered all my resolutions worthless*. Yet Khmer history and monuments received a lot of press coverage and public admiration: *It is Cambodia where the Siamese have borrowed much of their culture from the ancient languages of Pali and Khmer, and Buddhism. Cambodia has shrunk by now to a speck of land where France and Siam share supreme rule*. On his visit to Beijing, Vráz bought a Cambodian manuscript to be found in the Náprstek Museum in Prague.²² However, it was not until after World War I that Czechs began to really discover the distant world of Cambodia.



A manuscript page on a palm leaf, A12 847,
Náprstek Museum, Prague

**STEREOSCOPIC
SLIDES**

The following pictures are copies of stereoscopic slides dating from the late nineteenth century and hailing from the collections of the Technical Museum in Brno. Stereo slides are basically two seemingly identical images with a 65-millimetre axial shift between them, this corresponding to the average span of the human eyes. This shift makes it possible for the viewer to perceive three-dimensional projections of objects. However, a spatial perception is only possible when pairs of pictures are seen with both eyes simultaneously, much like when observing reality. Stereoscopic photography enjoyed its heyday in the 1860s and 1870s when whole sets of stereo slides were commercially available. Images were initially stored on glass plates and, from the early 20th century, also on roll films. Simple viewers were used by individuals while more sophisticated optical devices, intended for up to 25 spectators, were in fact precursors of early cinemas. Technical Museum keeps one of few functional specimens of group stereoscopic slide viewers.

PhDr. Naďa Urbánková, curator of photograph collection, Technical Museum in Brno



Cambodia, Angkor Wat, entrance to 3rd enclosure



Cambodia, Angkor Wat, cruciform gallery



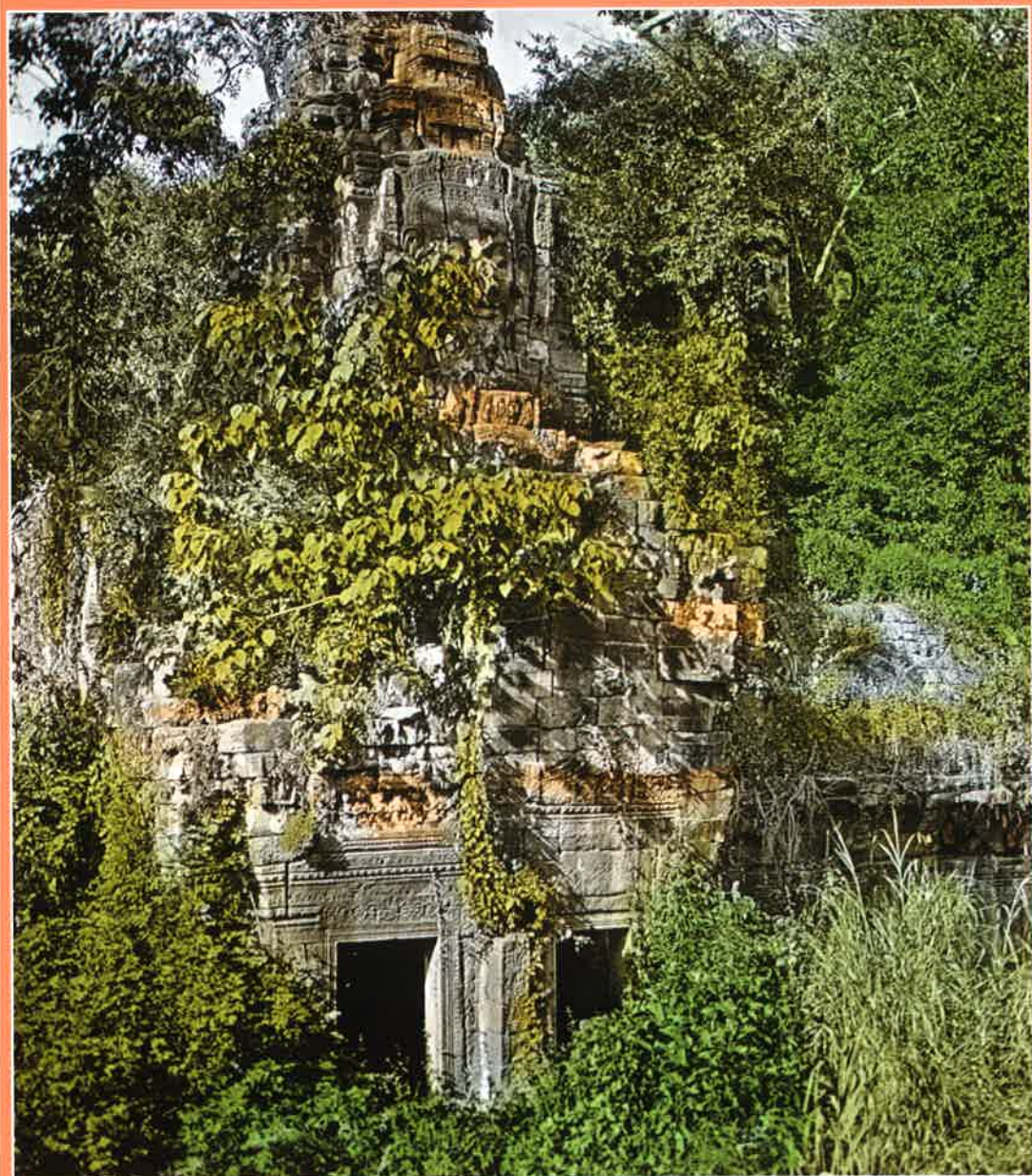
Cambodia, Angkor Wat, staircase in second courtyard



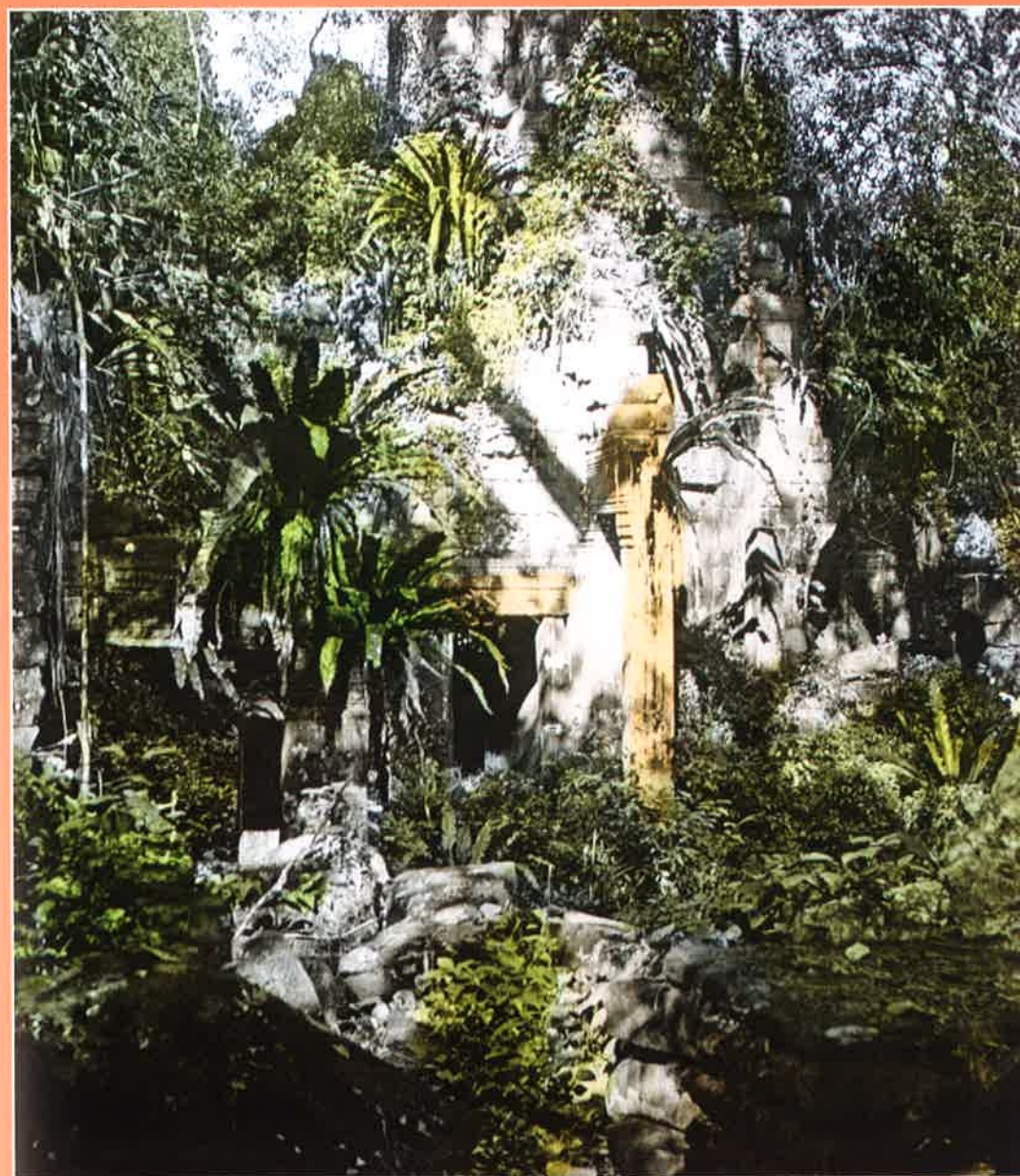
Cambodia, Angkor Wat, corner of outer temple gallery



*Cambodia, Angkor Wat, inner
corner of temple gallery in second
courtyard*



Cambodia, Angkor Thom, Bayon



Cambodia, Angkor Thom, ruins of a temple

The 1920 Czech translation of Pierre Loti's *Poutník angkorský* (The Pilgrim of Angkor)²³ aroused the interest of Czech readers in Khmer culture and inspired the prominent Czech globetrotters and writers, Jan Havlasa and Jaroslav Spirhanzl-Duriš, to visit Angkor.

Diplomat and writer Jan Havlasa (1883–1964)²⁴ travelled to Cambodia from the neighbouring Siam as a member of the League of Nations Opium Investigating Commission. On his arrival in Battambang, on December 15, 1929, he just took pen and paper to write an excellent but hitherto unpublished article entitled *Kouzlo buvolů* (The Magic of Buffalo). In it, he gave an account of his delegation's fortunes from the Thai border post of Aranyaprathet to Cambodia's Angkor – the trek routinely negotiated today by many European tourists including Czech backpackers (who no longer need French diplomatic escorts or roundabout journeys via Battambang):

Words slip like oysters and the stronger they sound the better they are avoided, if that makes you well. The same and more goes for cheap and lucklustre lame and overused comparisons. There are words that give you a rainbow much like the coral reefs on the bottom of a clean lagoon, but once you fish them their splendour will give way to slimy gray. The loftiest attributes to our concepts and impressions will wear off as easily as the glimmering wings of tropical butterflies. Fairytale and fairylike have always counted towards my pretty words. Where I could I managed to defy this deafly-impressionable expression. However, we reached our hotel so late I barely slept three hours before we were woken up to catch a train to the Siam-Cambodia border, the result of which my moral faculties were so feeble. I previously had to conjure up something to title this chapter with, which was "A Journey into a Fairytale", but fate had mercy on me and water buffaloes made such an impression on my itinerary, from there to Battambang, that I elected them to be headlined.

Otherwise, there were indeed some stately palm trees out there, lined up precisely, doubtless they were areca palms, but they were too far and between, supplanted by others that the speed of the train and the lack of my botanical prowess made it impossible for me to distinguish, and the lowland undulating somewhat towards the horizon, decorated with copious puddles lining the railway, made me wonder why rice is not grown here, or at least babies, but the lack of both surely must have deeper reasons. My main preoccupation was to savour the wisdom of my decision

to reject a title as stupid as 'A Journey into a Fairytale', although it should be noted that the famous Angkor is patently splendid and truly it deserves more to be called a fairytale, by virtue and by implication, than most of the oft-publicized wonders of the world, as the notion that it indeed does exist in the secrecy of jungles teeming with the tiger and primeval forests where the wild elephant roams had survived eons of time until the wild place was discovered, less than seventy years ago, by a French natural scientist. Indeed, by Jove, this is a journey into fairytale, or tomorrow will prove itself quite suited to bear this poetic demarcation, not least because of tomorrow's possibilities we can survive the buffaloes and monotony today, as we know it is perfectly assured that this time tomorrow we will be approaching the mystical ruins of a mystical past, built once upon a time by a mystical people whose origins modern science cannot tell and whose history is Greek to the modern historian, just like the answer to where they came from and why. For, who has ever heard of a nation that has packed up and left the capital of a mighty kingdom, leaving the jungle to take its toll? And leaving wild beasts to appreciate the beauty that so enchanted a fourteenth-century Chinese pilgrim or envoy or what? Then I became ashamed of my vacillations and decided not to give a worn-out title to my narrations of tomorrow. Some journey into a fairytale! The train is taking us through the Land of Siam to the land of the Khmer, of mystical ancestry, but do we proud Czechs know where we came from, in the entourage of our mythological Forefather? White Croatia, they say, but where that was and from where had we come there? Yes, our train will dislodge us today near the village called Aranya Pradesa, which sounds exotic but will look just like anything we have seen from our hurtling express train, which is not hurtling so much, anyway. Having been disgorged after nine hours of bumpy ride, I was in a position to state I had had less blue Mondays before. We were not exactly prepared to jump for joy, and the best thing I can say for Aranya Pradesa is the undisputed fact that the Indochina government, or rather France, did not mix one thing with another and, in the right place on the right day, we were greeted by three automobiles, one truck to take our luggage, and two nice French colonial clerks who had set up everything for us and said they would pay our bills. Oh yes, indeed, this was fairytale enough.

I should have known by teatime we had just stepped into a fairytale and taken our seats there. But we are so pampered by all the favours lavished on us by the colonial and independent governments of Asia far away, and if a sympathetic administration, here and there, provides us with a special train or the governor's yacht, we do not

ŠIRÝM SVĚTEM

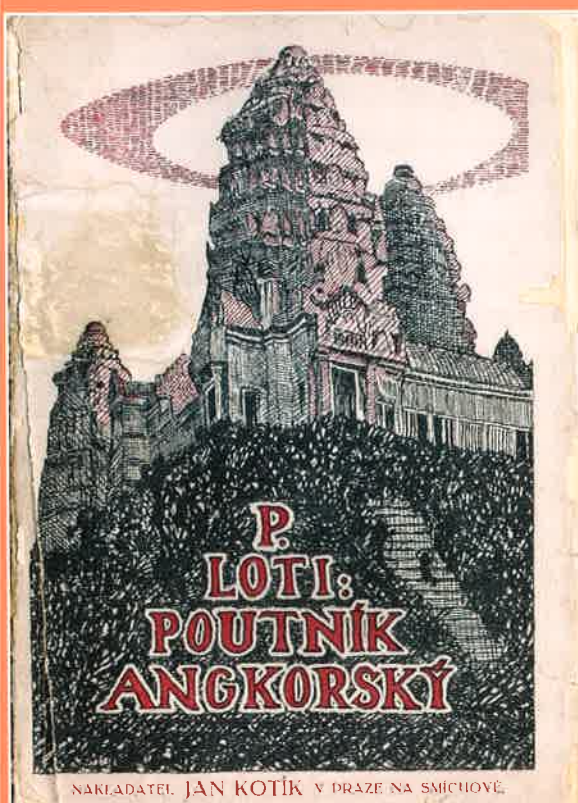
ZEMĚPISEK ČTYNÁCTIDENÍK ŘÍDÍ DR. STANISLAV NIKOLAU
ROČNÍK XVII • ČÍSLO PO K 5 - V PŘEDPLACENÍ PO K 2 50 16-17



Indochina:
Cambodian rotund
huts, Jan Havlasa,
The Country of the
Pagodas, Prague,
1932



Portrait of Jan
Havlasa, second
half of 1940s,
Museum of Czech
Literature



The Staircases of Angkor Wat, Jan Havlasa,
Širým světem XVI, part 16-17, Prague, 1940



One of the courtyards where buildings
resist the onslaught of the jungle, Jan
Havlasa, The Angkor Mystery, Širým
světem XV, part 1, Prague, 1937

give much thought to the fairytale arrangements prepared for us on our pilgrimage to the Far East.

Think of the three of us as the mythical Three Magi, who only had camels to travel and bow deep before the mythical new-born baby, and you will know I am not kidding. Having crossed the border of the Land of the Khmer in an automobile, I weighed fairytale against the fact that Siamese postage stamps could be held valid there as everything, save our two French escorts, looked just like the stretch of land from Bangkok to Aranya Pradesa and the fun of it is that this land could still be Siam if it had not been for the French. The Siamese once took from the Khmer this whole Battambang Province, with the jungles in which the Angkor dwelt, and imposed their protectorate on it. War made Siam give booty back to Khmer. Initially the plain was awesome, there were again those same palm-trees and rain pools, the same buffaloes and herons, and as dusk made way to dark, the natives could not be told from the Siamese.

After dark, we drove through a village called Sisophon and heard a gramophone playing, which is not a silly joke but a fact. We smelled villages and bushes and reached Battambang well before eight pm, there being no evening stroll as the two French escorts had ordered an opulent dinner and we barely had time to make ourselves presentable. We also learned we would have to wake up at five in the morning to endure a day long boat voyage, likely to take us into the late evening, before we board cars to take us to Angkor. Having consulted the map, we thought this was strange but we were then told we'd stop for a banquet, around lunchtime, which, it was advised, should not be skipped so as not to offend the local dignitary who had been instructed to lay it out. I undressed as soon as I could but sleepy as I was, I wrote "The Magic of Buffalos". Some might think I am a buffalo, too, but I say I am an almost fairytale being. Good night and I have a letter for my sweetheart, which I'd better post at Angkor.²⁵

No way telling what exactly Havlasa wrote in that letter to his sweetheart but we do know that in his later article on the monumental edifices of Angkor, he traded *The Magic of the Buffalo* for *The Mysteries of Angkor* and *The Fairytale of Angkor*.²⁶

Another Czech globetrotter, A. V. Novák notes: *Not even the best photographs and films will capture the graceful beauty of the mysterious gray-and-blue edifices standing*

out as the ghosts of long-gone eras above the deathly silence of a dark and gloomy primeval forest.²⁷ But nothing beats the Angkor impressions of poet and novelist Jaroslav Spirhanzl-Duriš's essay *Ang-Kor-Vat*²⁸, written in 1931, in Paris:

Over the granite tablets of the broad 'Holy Road', silver light is shimmering. Rich ornaments on the balustrades seem to be dotted by giant pearls, an endless succession of stone carvings is modelled by light and shadow, and on the spikes of the balustrade shine ample fans of 'najas' (nagas – Author's note) seven-headed sacred dragons whose symbolism is so ancient that people have long forgotten its true meaning. Into the shadow runs this bright belt of a wide road and at the end of the journey, out of the blue night, there arises a glistening bronze mirage, so enormous and lofty, so mighty and so brittle. There rises and soars Ang-Kor-Vat.

In the depth of the woods of Siam, I saw the Evening Star rise over the magnificent ruins of Angkor... I am standing here, physically devoid, in the garden of dreams on the threshold of the Holy Road, casting my eyes and all my inner vision to the phantasm growing out of the blue night, whispering the insinuating words that once so bewitched the Pilgrim of Angkor, Pierre Loti, that he set out in pursuit of the fairytale his youth had narrated to him. What magic power is it that can arrest your thoughts and desires so as to make you escape the hustle and bustle of life and the grayness of your days so that you can reach your arms above your head and cradle your heart as a joyful offering to the mystery of Beauty that you perceive with all your senses and all your soul? You forget that your feet are bound to earth with heavy shackles, and just keep looking up to the endless heights of heaven into which there soars and sparkles that shining mirage, the vision, the seat of God. How many times has the Evening Star risen over the ruins of the grand city of the Khmer Empire, the intricate maze of Ang-Kor-Thom (Great Angkor) where the world's grandest and most bizarre shrines attempted to pierce the skies? Today you, the new Pilgrim of Angkor, stand speechless in the shade of palm trees and your restless eyes again wander over the contours of the colossus above the golden spires of which the brightest star of the evening has begun to shimmer. Like a recluse, you have crawled into your shell; silence has sealed your lips, and only your hungry eyes watch the wondrous spectacle while your soul obediently weaves together thoughts that are born within your heart, alone, fragile and gentle. You would like to reach out your hands and touch the shining beauty but your courage has abandoned you, overwhelmed by the fear of all this disappearing like a dream. Ang-Kor-Vat...

In the green depths of Indo-China, there, where the natives' boats start their journey in the Mekong Delta from the ports of Saigon and Mytha way up north to greet the Royal Seat of Phnom Penh, there where they penetrate into the mystical Cambodia on the rivers, there where tropical rains inundate plains green with a multitude of plants, there where rivers branch and flow into marshlands with myriad birds nesting on the shores, there where steaming heat conjures up the splendor of tropical flowers above which there towers the golden cone of a pagoda and the natives' huts fashioned of grass and palm leaves squat along the banks, there where the woods come alive with gangs of monkeys and green parrots scream, the scenery awoke from its pre-dawn slumbers, there, somewhere beyond the small town of Siem-Reap, a green plain covered with lush rain forest has spread – an emerald sea of palm-trees and lianas.

Then, too, the plateau was overwhelmed by the intoxicating scent of blossoms and spices. Then, too, sixteen hundred years ago, on one morning like this, after a long journey from the mystical India, the enigmatic Aryan people of Khmer stock found an abode to their liking. They were a huge and talented people that found it easy to subdue a few fearful natives who worshipped a sacred snake.



Ang-Kor-Vat,
Jaroslav Spirhanzl-Đuriš,
Širým světem IX, part 2,
Prague, 1932

Ang-Kor-Vat,
Jaroslav Spirhanzl-Đuriš,
Širým světem IX, part 2,
Prague, 1932



Paříž 1931.

Nad žulovými deskami široké „Svaté cesty“ se tetelí stříbrné světlo. Bohaté ornamenty balustrad jsou jakoby posety ohromnými perlami, nekonečný pás kamenných řezb se modeluje světlem a stínem a na výstupcích zábradlí zarážily vějíře „najas“, sedmihlavých posvátných hadů, jejichž symbolika je tak stará, že lidstvo zapomnělo její pravý význam.

Do šera běží tento jasný pruh široké cesty a na jejím konci z modré noci vyrůstá leskle bronzová vidina, tak nesmírná a velebná, tak mohutná a křehká. Tam se zdvihá a vznáší Ang-Kor-Vat.

„V hloubi lesů siamských jsem viděl vo-
žerů vycházet nad velikými zříceninami
Anghory...“

Stojím odtěsněn v zahrádce snů na prahu Svaté cesty, upíraje oko a celé zření své duše k přeludu rostoucímu z modré noci, septám si sugestivní slova, jež přede mnohými lety okouzila angkor-

k obloze chrá-
my na světě nej-
větší a nejbizarnější. A dnes,
ty nově poutníče angkorský,
stojíš zamlklý v stínu palm
a tvé neklidné oči bloudí zase
po obrysech kolosa, nad jehož
zlatými věžemi se počíná třepo-
tati nejjasnější hvězda večerní.

Jako asketa schouil ses do své
skořápky, mlčení zavřelo tvé rty,
a jen dychtivě oči sledují zá-
račnou podívanou a duše poslušně snuje
myšlenky, které se rodí v její hloubi samy,
křehké a něžné. Vztáhl bys ruce, aby ses
mohl dotýkat: té zářivé krásy, ale tvá
odvaha tě opustila, jsi přemožena oba-
vou, aby všechno nezmizelo jako sen.

Ang-Kor-Vat...
V zelené hloubi Indočíny, tam, kam od
přístavu v Saigonu a v Mytha se vydávají
deltou Mekongu na sever domorodé džun-
ky, aby pozdravily královské sídlo Phnom-
Penh, tam, kde po řekách pronikají do

The Khmers brought along their Brahman faith and honoured their gods by erecting many temples in their new city, among which the Bayon and the Ang-Kor-Vat were the most grandiose and splendid. Nowhere in the world had more stones been heaped, more sculptures and sandstone engravings collected, and a more beautiful stone eulogy in praise of gods created than in Ang-Kor-Thom – a Khmer city of a million people in the midst of the rain forests of Indo-China.

Having brought along a wealth of legends, the myths of Ramayana, and using their divine talents, these mysterious immigrants conjured up shrines in their settlements to which we bow today, in humble awe.

A whole mountain of granite blocks rose under their diligent hands; thousands of pairs of hands chiseled, laid and jointed in order to lay the foundations to a giant shrine that in its rectangular enormity descended upon the marshy plain. Terraces and galleries lined this ground-floor section to allow the construction of a higher floor, twice the height of the base floor, and a third article of the construction effort, again twice the height of its precursor, rises lined with terraces. What a strange architectural law was observed, how expertly the illusion of infinite loftiness was achieved as the profoundly devout, humble pilgrim ascends to the first terrace, having negotiated countless steep steps, to see above himself the stone lacework of a yet higher floor, and having climbed up there, to discern how the next section of the temple, the Shrine of all Shrines, is escaping him still higher up to the skies – the seat of gods! Like a huge pyramid built on a 250-metre base, the Ang-Kor-Vat reaches high by steps interrupted by three terraces. At the end of the Holy Road, the stone bridge over marshes and water, there ascends the first staircase guarded by sneering lions, hissing seven-headed cobras, and sculptured demons and dancers. Underneath the vaulted gallery encircling the temple, the legend of Ramayana unravels in a sandstone bas-relief. Thousands of blossoms, branches and lianas intertwine in the handiwork of Khmer stone-artists and the motif of beating the sea (according to Ramayana) occupies fifty metres of this colossal profile. And watch those hundreds and thousands of images of delightful, divine ‘apsara’ danseuses out from the Hindu religious legends, and ‘tevadasi’ – bayaderes with their spectacular crowns! Enigmatic smiles are in the mouth-corners of the apsaras and their attire abounds in jewels and rare stones. They are graced by gold bracelets and strings of pearls, their head are crowned with tall helmets and plume crests. Their bodies have been smoothed and polished by the uncounted touches of superstitious pilgrims as one such touch promises to turn a barren woman into a woman with child.

Savour the love with which the artists engraved these inimitable configurations of young and tender female bodies, exquisite limbs, smooth and gracious necks and perfect forms, the stubbornness with which were carved scenes from cruel battles and struggles, horrific exposures, columns of battle chariots, disfigured faces of warriors, and hosts of elephants, wild beasts, monsters and demons! Amassed in a thousand-metre sandstone profile, there are so many episodes the likes of which have never been created before. The corners of each terrace are guarded by elaborate towers. Again, they consist of innumerable sculptures of lions, female dancers and demons, and the tips of these sculptures lash out like flames up the cones of the towers which resemble flaming tiaras from afar.

On the highest terrace, thirty metres above ground, the galleries come together to form a cross-like junction. There, in the middle, is hidden the Shrine of All Shrines, crowned by the enormous main tower of the temple. Notes taken by a Chinese scholar testify that the summit of this tower was once graced with such a big lotus blossom of pure gold that its radiance was visible from all the settlements of the Khmer.

There used to be a place of worship at the foot of the tower. There, in the mystical shade, I saw the terrifying image of Brahma – the supreme deity. Brahma is hidden from inquisitive stares. He and his cult slipped into oblivion when a major disaster made the Khmer people forget the bequest of their forefathers, lost their old religion and, having succumbed to Buddhism, merged with adjacent nations only to lose their character and be swept off the face of the earth.

Maybe Brahma is still hiding today in the mystical centre of the temple, but his shrine is walled up and all the four converging galleries outside the place of worship are guarded by good-natured statues of Buddha, squatting on their crossed legs, with their eyes half-closed and their grins saying much without saying so much. Their smiles betray calm certainty and the victory of the infallible, and these smiles rule the whole of endless Asia...

The yellow lamas expelled Brahma from his shrines, walled up the cruel conqueror, and led the Khmer people into a different light, towards love and mercy. The Khmer Empire blossomed and Ang-Kor-Thom, the city of a million souls, reached the pinnacle of its fame and glory – only to be humbled by the collapse of the empire so incomprehensible no records yield enough information. “More than five

hundred years ago, the Empire of the Khmers died down in the calm of trees and mosses," Loti wrote. And it is only modern Cambodia that has preserved the last vestiges of the mythical nation whose demise history fails to explain. Where have gone the artists that turned stone to poem? Where have withered the exquisite bodies of the apsaras, the divine danseuses that inspired the murals of Ang-Kor-Vat? Fallen are the kings, fallen is the culture that took a millennium and a half to create works unparalleled in the world...

The muddy Mekong, whose waters swell with annual floods, has muddied the Grand Angkor area. The ruins of the city and the terraces of its temples are the abode of wild bushes and trees, and torrential tropical rains complete the work of destruction, lashing and washing away the exquisite sculptures, crumbling the statues of hellish monsters, lions, elephants and demons. Lush green foliage gnaws on the window-sill latticework, tree roots tear building blocks apart, and bats and monkeys foul the quarters where the gods once dwelled.

Crumbling and decaying are the famous spires with four faces outside the Bayon – the oldest of the Angkor shrines. In silent resignation, the giant faces stiffly smile from the tall towers – faces of superhuman proportions, with flattened noses, fat lips and stares that are freezing. Ferns, bushes and trees bear hug these towers, roots hanging from them and dripping water eroding stones that cannot defend themselves. Is Earth weeping over the transient nature of human endeavour?

An open space is in front of us, marshes inundated by weed and lotus. And, further on beyond the still waters, we see tiara-shaped towers of grey stone, miraculously dead spires reflected in the sky by pale light... Loti describes the first revelation of the Angkor.

And standing in a shady corner of the Holy Road above which silver lights were shimmering, and having just seen the bright evening star glimmer, I sold my soul completely to fairytale... I was oblivious of the life bustling around me, forgetting that the blazing pylons nearby sported the tricolors of conquerors while the bronze phantasm of Ang-Kor-Vat had only risen as a beautiful delusion here, amidst the greenery of the Vincennes Forest. And when a beam of electric light lashed out into the blue of the night sky from behind the tallest tower once crowned with the golden lotus blossom, out there in the rain forest, my dream collapsed and a feeling of frustration was all that remained of the sweet fairytale. Life is an

unfair mischief. Maybe in defence against its antics, I have hidden a morsel of beautiful desire and hope in my heart – but where, I will not tell.

Glamour and glitter of the court of King Sisowath

Similarly as by the Angkor, Czech travellers were attracted also by the glamour and glitter of the exotic royal court. However, their accounts were frequently based on superficial and distorted second-hand information. Their vivid narratives published in the Czech press are a curious blend of true facts and European fantasies about the life of Oriental monarchs. Yet they do provide sufficient input on how Cambodia was perceived by the Czech public at the time. The Czech globetrotter and writer A. V. Novák visited Cambodia in 1927, six months before the death of King Sisowath, who was enthroned after the death of his brother Norodom, in 1904:

Behind the museum, there are the edifices of the royal palace, cordoned off, after the Indian fashion, by a castellated wall. Although looking fairly recent, they were built in the local Siamese-Cambodian style and add much grace to the country.

Entry is via a beautiful gate guarded by a Cambodian soldier in a khaki uniform, and beyond there glitters an ornate palace richly ornamented by carvings, gold and colourful varnishes. Most impressing, though, are the inimitable stepped roofs with slick turrets, covered by glazed yellow, red and green pantiles with gold-plated, smartly erect tips decorated by images of shining sun and opulent wood carvings in the gables. Now, sitting in my home and trying to describe this magnificent exotic palace, I stare at the photograph the grayness of which can hardly conjure the splendid interplay of gold and colours fabulously reflected by the lush tropical greenery of areca palm-trees and turquoise skies. Oh yes, it was a truly captivating Oriental tale, a palace worthy of a native satrap...

From outside, one cannot overlook the splendid, wide-open audience hall, elevated above the ramparts and providing a panoramic view of the whole spacious square and gardens sprawling outside the palace down to the river Mekong. On festive days, the king sits on his throne, surrounded by his court, to show himself to his subjects once in a blue moon.

The incumbent ruler of Cambodia, King Sisowath, has gained the reputation as a joie-de-vivre monarch who takes little care of his subjects but prefers plush life, merry entertainment and pretty women. In this respect, his court has gained global notoriety. The splendour, opulence and originality of the entertainment offered by his court beats the revelries of the Kings of India, and the beautiful women he surrounded himself with beat the harems of Ottoman sovereigns by their number and quality. Sisowath has more than three hundred wives of all nationalities and colours of skin - stout Cambodians, willowy Annamites, bright-eyed Indians, gentle Japanese, beautiful Arabs, dark-skinned Negresses as well as white European beauties ... They don't derive much pleasure from being with him for King Sisowath is almost ninety... But as befits an Oriental potentate, he has, in addition to his wives and concubines, also numerous choruses of danseuses and musicians, and considerable herds of elephants. He has all the fun he could ask for...

Magnificent festivities were once held amidst the royal gardens at which the ruler, who had a penchant for the pleasures of life, selected his concubines and mistresses from the dance troupes - and sometimes they were really very young girls. Champagne flowed in the lavishly illuminated gardens and ended up in orgies so

the king and his courtiers, as well as French officials, had a good time. He took little care of his subjects and small wonder he was more than eager to delegate his duties as a ruler to the French and happily engage in royal merriment... Today, however, Sisowath is too old to indulge in ladies and danseuses. The gardens have grown silent and the dancers are bored...

The Phnom Penh palace savoured its one last shining hour when Marshal Foch visited there. The old monarch ordered splendid celebrations crowned by the file-past of dozens of richly clad elephants. In the gala procession, the king on a golden sedan chair was carried by noblemen whose ancestry lines dated from the Khmer epoch. The old king lavished truly Oriental glamour and glitter on the great winner. In the evening, the wondrous gardens shone, water fountains came to life, and music was heard to which female dancers produced some their finest gyrations. The king sat on his throne right next to the generalissimo, and at his feet nestled his youngest wife and mistress, the sixteen-year-old Cambodian beauty, Moha Saka.

It was the swan song. The palace has gone completely silent since then. The king is too old and too ill. He has seen and lived through a lot, and does not care for more. The dancers sit there idling; the courtiers and senior officials for the French

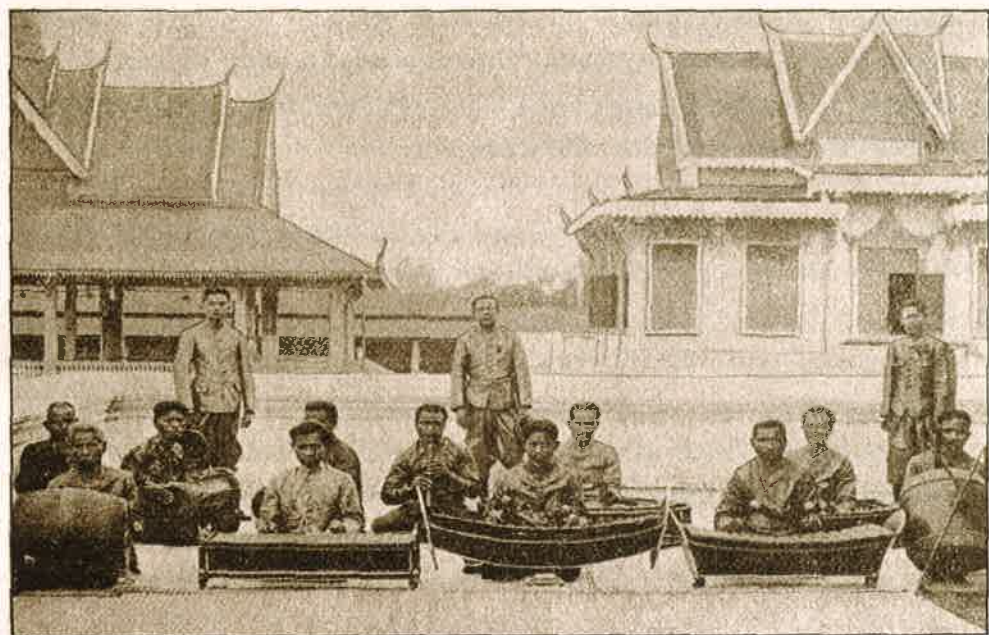


Čistěný pohled na Bayon, chrám obřů.



Příbytky bohatších Kambodžanů.

Mansions of richer Cambodians, A.V. Novák, In the Country of Yellows, Prague, 1932



Orchestr krále Sisovatha



Taneční sbor a ženy kambodžského krále

The dancing troupe and wives of the King of Cambodia, A.V. Novák, In the Country of Yellows, Prague, 1932

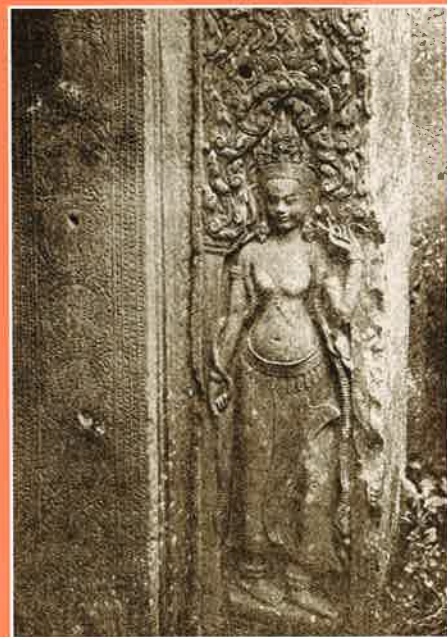


Hlavní třída Pnom Penhu



Arkády Angkor Vathu

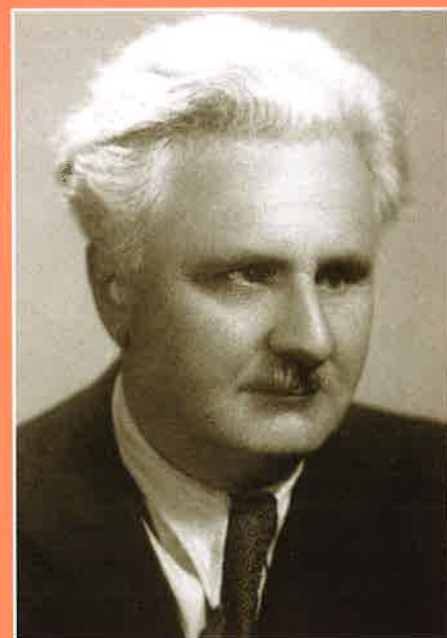
The Arcades of Angkor Wat, A.V. Novák, In the Country of Yellows, Prague, 1932



You will always find new ruins...
A.V. Novák, *In the Country of Yellows*,
Prague, 1932



A.V. NOVÁK :
V ZEMI ŽLUTÝCH
BIRMA • ANNAM • KAMBODŽA • ČÍNA



A photo of A.V. Novák,
Náprstek Museum, Prague

*Resident are tending to the bored consorts... Everything will end, even the lush life of the merry king of natives in a far-off Oriental country.*²⁹

Angkor and its Dancers

A substantially better contemporary scientific insight into the Khmer culture is provided by the prominent Czech expert on the esthetics of dance, critic and publicist Emanuel Siblík (1886–1941). Professor Siblík was a leading Czech proponent of the dance science between the two world wars. He studied aesthetics at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague, acquiring his doctorate in 1912. Also, he was a professor of Czech and French and devoted himself to the theory and critique of dance. During World War I he was associated with the Czech resistance movement and was an advisor, after 1918, to the French General J. Pellé; and in 1925–38 he was Czechoslovakia's delegate at the League of Nations' International Institute for Intellectual Work in Paris.³⁰ During his visit to Cambodia he gleaned considerable inputs on the original dance culture of Cambodia. His book *Angkor and its Dancers* was published in 1929 in Prague³¹. Professor Siblík dedicated his book to *the exquisite Yth, the first ballerina of the King Sisowath, whose gestures revealed the artistic genius of the Khmer people to me*.

The first part of his study is devoted to the dance scenes represented on the walls of the Angkor temples. He writes: *The danseuses are the most exquisite motif of Cambodian architectural embellishment. Their pliable bodies captured in the rush of motion cover the terraces of the king's palaces, the pediments of towers and columns, sometimes isolated and sometimes united by the sameness of rhythm... In terms of decorativeness, it would be very difficult to invent a more graceful motif than that offered by the girl's body in the wholeness of its rhythmic beauty transferred into and reviewed in its plastic expression.*³²

The main body of Siblík's publication is devoted to traditional dance and the danseuses in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. The author provides a detailed account of the dancers' attire, lifestyle and education; the organization of their dance performances, the music accompaniments, and the analysis and aesthetic of Khmer dance. He provides a vivid description of the ambient atmosphere:

EMANUEL SIBLÍK

ANGKOR
A
JEHO TANEČNICE



AVENTINUM PRAHA



Tanečnice před chrámem

Dancer outside the main paved road leading to the main entrance, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929

Dr. Emanuel Siblík,



A photo of Emanuel Siblík, Cut of the graduation photograph desk, Archives of the Museum of Czech Literature

Dusk was about to descend. A bright light suspended from the trees like a red lantern about to die, slowly dwindling. All sights converge, amidst the darkening gardens, on the well-illuminated dancing hall. The mandarins give their last-minute orders. Through all the palace gates there calmly proceed the people of Cambodia to marvel at the beautiful spectacle which makes them forget mundane hardships and relish their ideal - the spectacle that is the only living remembrance of local sculptors, goldsmiths and musicians kept alive by the kingdom's most beautiful daughters. On the straw mats there sit and lie wrinkled old women with shaved heads and old-fashioned long ear pendants, side by side with young women wearing Siamese haircuts, their bodies lush, heavy with jewels and clad in many-coloured robes, and maid servants who have served betel boxes to them; young girls wearing sampots of heavy glistening fabric, and naked children straddling the hips of their mothers. Beyond them there stand young and old men, villagers and city dwellers. The motley crowd is full of anticipation only alleviated by the fragrant scents of night.

Any moment now, the King may enter the scene, because the pages have bedecked his grandstand and armchair with a roundtable on which they placed the jasmine-decorated royal sword, the origin of which harks to the mists of Cambodian history, and an equally ancient finely chased halberd - the distinctions of royal power.



Ex libris of Emanuel Siblík, Wood cut, Archives of the Museum of Czech Literature

At long last he enters, shaded by a seven-layer white canopy, wearing a splendid national costume and accompanied by court ministers and guests. Heads bow deep, the guardsmen pay their honours and the big punkah mechanical fans above the royal grandstand are set in motion.

Out of the solemn silence, the pip-hat orchestra starts playing, the musicians seated on rugs facing the audience. Readily, we recognize some instruments from the bas-reliefs of the Angkor (tom-toms, tiny violas, flutes); others (xylophones and small wood pianos) are new to us. The grand harp that frequently accompanied the dances of the Angkor has disappeared completely and there is no way to establish when its broken strings fell silent for all times...³³

The pip-hat orchestra is alternated and supplemented by a twenty-member chorus of women sitting on the floor, with their legs slanted sideways. Most of them are former dancers and musicians who were too old to dance but stayed in the palace in the capacity of matrons to the young danseuses. One of them, the reader, follows the manuscript on a low pulpit to take note of the gradually evolving dance phases and, with a loud voice, introduces prompts to change a cadence or scene. She is a kind of prompter but she does not whisper, she yells. The first songstress by her side will intone the strophes that are then mechanically reproduced by other vocalists and scansioned by the claps of wooden boards.³⁴



Kambodžská malba domorodých tanečnic

Cambodian painting of native dancers impersonating a princess and a prince, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



Skupina tanečnic s Yth

A group of Royal Dancers with Yth acting as Commander (extreme right) and Trasoth as the Prince (second to the left of Yth). Dancers between them acting princesses, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



Tanečnice ve svatyni Angkor Vatu

Dancers in the sanctuary of Angkor Wat acting as princes, princesses, the king of apes and the king of giants. In the background – divine nymphs, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



YTH

Ballerina Yth impersonating a Prince, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



Kambodžská soška tanečnice

Cambodian bronze sculpture of a dancer impersonating a prince, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



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painting
h artist
Kupka,
n 1905

The danseuses follow behind the princess, the first dancer, as solemnly as priestesses, their faces strangely unmoved and, their eyes fixed into unearthly horizons, their hands full of golden and silver blossoms, circle the hall and stand in the middle. They get to their knees and descend on their heels, their bodies upright, and slightly twitch to the rhythms of the incidental music ... Three times reverently, the head bows - followed by three hardly perceived bows of the body, three bows in which hands move upwards in a slow and eminently graceful gesture, and clasped hands point towards the humble forehead and towards the supreme deities, towards the King and his people...

... The sinuous movements of Cambodian dance consist of very many brief postures that change with every handclap of the female chorus without ever changing its character. However, the movements of the Cambodian dancers represent more than the evolution and succession of ideas they symbolize: they are completely synchronized and arranged in time. One arm performs a movement and the other arm must make a plastically adequate motion. Furthermore, the movements of the arms are in a certain plastic relation to the movements of the legs. This correlation is governed by extremely subtle and timeless rules. A thousand-year old experience underscored by fine psychologies and refined artistic opinions interacted in the creation of the hierarchic nature of the rhythmical and plastic symbols of

Cambodian dance... The meaning of these symbols almost completely escapes the thinking of the European who considers this dance monotonous if his eye is not trained to the alertness that only comes with the choreographer's business. The European is put back by the fact that facial treats remain unchanging in all situations, being confined to a kind of mask from the beginning till the end of performance, the dancers' eyes ostensibly staring into a divine eternity in which anything earthly and human keeps dissolving...³⁵

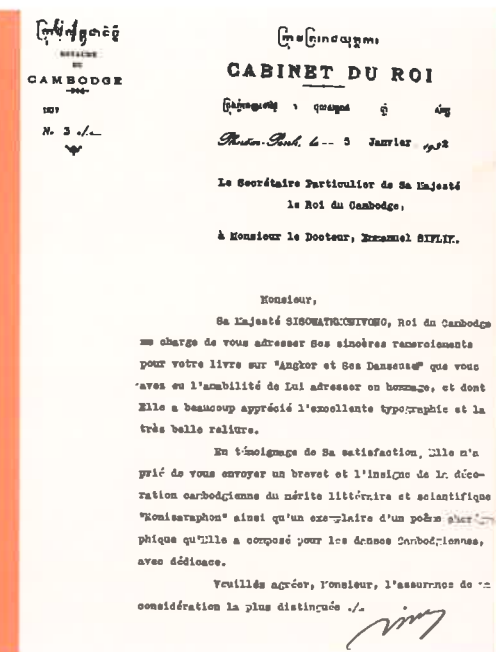
Siblík was particularly captivated by the dance performance narrating the love story of Prince Prea Somut and Princess Vinean Chan (Princess Butsomali? - Author's note): I saw every performance because the Prince Prea Somut's part was performed by the First Dancer, Miss Yth, a genuine artist that combined a young girl's grace with the grace of her every gesture, being a worthy follower of the tradition of Angkor's dancing ladies. A no less prominent dancer, Trasoth, played the Princess Vinean Chan.³⁶ Siblík especially notes the transposition of everyday realities into the realm of rhythmic-plastic symbols in the erotic scenes:

The Princess is seated on a flat low throne, surrounded by her chambermaids; the Prince approaches her reverently, takes a seat beside her and, like her, he folds his legs sideways, so that the two of them resemble the deities on the altar. In this Scene, the Prince desires to gain the one virtue that keeps escaping him: the

after the
or Wat,
and its
e, 1929



Letter from the Royal Palace
to Emanuel Siblík, 5. 1. 1932,
Archives of the Museum
of Czech Literature



Předehra kambodžských tanců.



77

to Cambodian
Angkor and its
Dancers, Prague, 1929



Královský mužský orchestr piphat.

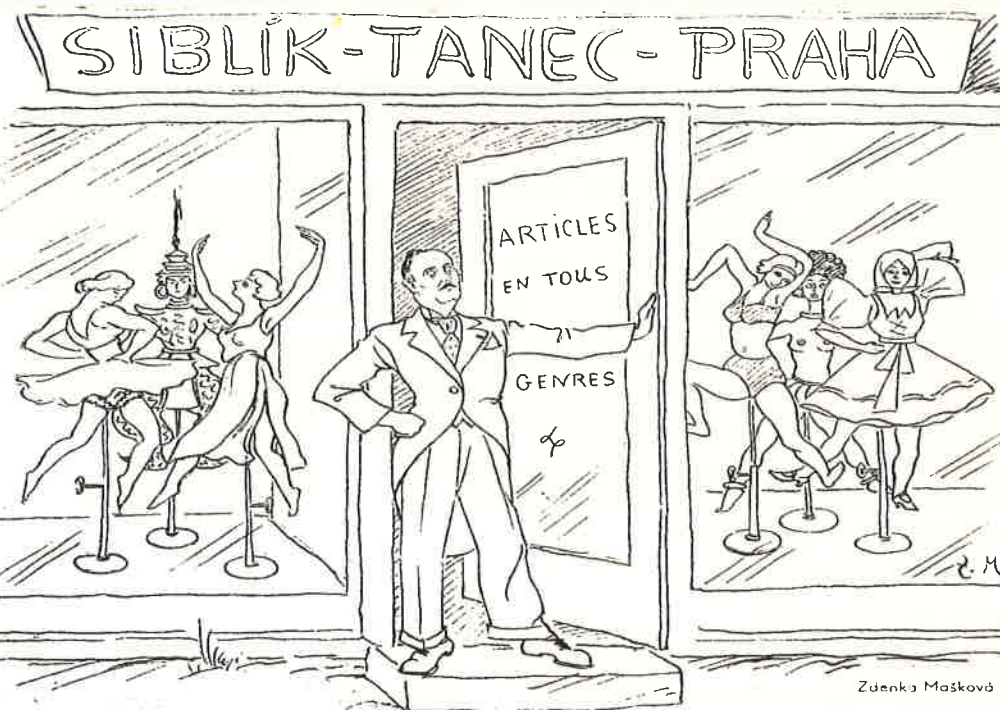
Royal orchestra piphat, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



78



79



New Year's greeting, a segment of Siblík's New Year's greeting card, figurine of a Khmer dancer on the left, Archives of the Museum of Czech Literature



Horská vila kenarej 60

A nymph, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



Vůz basabok

The wagon basabok on which Princess Boseba is dancing; next to her - her chamber-maid, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929

*two lovers scarcely eye each other, as though being side by side would suffice. Not once will the loving arm embrace the object of desire in a passionate union; not once will the lips become united with a kiss; fingers will only lightly touch the waist. In this amorous struggle, sensuality is always balanced with the loftiness of highly advanced humanity while realism is only so much hinted. The surging arms caress so gently they will not even touch, they respond in a rhythm into which fall the twitches of body stepping up to the occasional outburst. For the whole duration of this passionate scene, the faces of the two lovers remain motionless in their moonlike whiteness, their eyes lucidly lost in a dream.*³⁷

In recognition of his contribution to the research and promotion of Cambodian culture, Professor Emanuel Siblik was made, in 1932, a Knight of the Royal Cambodian Order of Monisaraphon.³⁸ He was decorated by King Monivong, who ascended to the throne after the death of his father, Sisowath, in 1927. Monivong was a great sponsor of classic Khmer arts in general, and the Royal Ballet Company in particular.³⁹

Coronation of King Monivong

In 1929, the world public was attracted by the spectacular coronation of King Monivong. The Czech press devoted a few articles to this event. A particularly colourful account was published in the popular geographic magazine, *Širým světem* (The Wide World).⁴⁰

Days before the coronation of the King of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, his palace was opened to his subjects. Flags were flown everywhere and high masts carried nine-deck parasols, the symbols of royal power. Everywhere there were brightly-painted miniature houses on piles to which fruits and flowers were sacrificed to make the evil spirits of earth and air revert their ill intents from the palace and its inhabitants.

The astrologists set 22 July as the most suitable coronation day, and in the morning of that day, accompanied by the thunderous roar of gun salutes and the strains of the Cambodian National Anthem and the Marseillaise – for Cambodia is a French protectorate – the rites were commenced.

The Governor General of Indochina, the Resident to the Court of Cambodia, the Governor of Cochinchina, and a great number of French and Native dignitaries were present. Troops lined the streets.

The King, a man in his prime, dark-skinned and of a pleasant face, shrouded in a white and yellow robe and escorted by his courtiers, each carrying a wonderful ceremonial parasol whose colour and size differed according to the position of its carrier, departed from the Throne Hall and walked across the bridge to the grandstand to assume their place under a gold-covered canopy. There, His Majesty was sprinkled with 'holy water' by specially appointed dignitaries, chief among whom was the French Governor General. Eight Brahmin priests in white robes with wide golden hems performed the rites, and towards the end of the ceremony, the chief of the Cambodian Buddhists, a frail old man wearing a humble yellow robe of monk, made of wool, was led stumbling to give his blessings to the King.

Wide flat parasols opened again – the widest, made of gold and silver fabric lightly interwoven with purple and with low pendants of frays of the same material belonging to the King, and others of many colours. Having received the 'Sacraments of the Bath' the King retreated to his palace to don his ceremonial robes. One hour after, the coronation ceremony took place in the Grand Throne Hall.

When all the company was assembled, the King entered the hall and seated himself in a gold-plated chair beneath a tall grandstand on which was suspended the throne.

Above the scene, there were nine parasols hung from the ceiling, one above the other, made of white silk with chaffs, the higher the smaller. The free space before the throne was filled with high dignitaries and courtiers, all of them wearing ornate costumes. The King was clad in golden brocade. His attire, clasped at the shoulders to resemble a bird's wings, was tightly fitting whereas the 'sampot' – a skirt pulled forward between the legs and fastened in the front, flowed almost to his ankles. This King's shoes of orange silk with tips turned upwards shone with their interwoven gold and silver threads.

Eight Brahmin priests entered the scene; the King rose and seated himself in a low chair right in front of the throne podium. The eight priests approached the King and got down on their knees around him. One by one, they recited traditional prayers for



Královští sloni v Kambodži (k čl. Korunovace v Kambodži).



Letní palác kambodžského krále v Phnom-Penh.

Summer Palace of the King of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, The coronation of the King in Cambodia, Širým světem IV, part 4, Prague, 1928



Některé symbolické pohyby tance prince
93

Symbolic moves of the dance of the Prince:
1, 2, 3, 6, 7; The Prince walks;
4 The Prince enters the stage;
5 The Prince is prone and waiting;
8 the Prince is sitting and waiting



Ruins of the Angkor Wat, Facade, view from the inner road, J. Sion, Geography of the World, volume 9, the Monsoon Asia, part II, Prague, 1931



Některé symbolické pohyby tance princezny
92

Symbolic moves of the dance of the Princess: 1. Princess proceeds to the bath, 2. Coming out of the bath, 3. Dressing up, 4. Leaving, 5. Talking to her chamber, 6. Donning her jewellery, 7. Flying, so to say, 8. Walking, Emanuel Siblík, Angkor and its Dancers, Prague, 1929



Chrám Ta-Phrom, zarostlý pralesem.

Ta Phrom, overgrown with forest, A.V. Novák, In the Country of Yellows, Prague, 1932

the King and His Majesty turned his chair alternately to each praying man. During the ceremony, the King, although a Buddhist himself held in his hands the statuettes of Vishnu and Shiva, the “guardians of Cambodia” and deeply ingrained symbols of Vedic traditions. Hymns were sung while the King was climbing steep stairs to his throne. As soon as he was seated, the Governor of French Indochina and the French Resident to the Cambodian Throne approached him; the former placing a crown on his head and the latter handing him a sacred sword. The shrill sound of a sacred conch was heard together with the rattle of strange wooden instruments; and salvos from gunboats on the river announced to the congregation inside and the subjects outside the palace that Sisowath Monivong had been crowned the King of Cambodia.

After the banquet, the King invited his guests to a performance of famous palace dancers in the Hall of Festivals. It was a fabulous spectacle as His Majesty had lavished a lot of money on the restoration of traditional ancient costumes and the youthful dancers shone and glittered like jewel boxes. How enigmatic yet captivating and graceful their gestures were! Their faces were covered with white powder, devoid of expression, and only the expressive and yet refined movements of their slender bodies and limbs amply narrated the story of their ballet dance.

On the next day, the King walked solemnly through his capital city and performed prescribed rites at the prescribed site. He left his palace carried in a gold-plated palanquin. Having proceeded with the first part of his procession, he sat down on a throne positioned on a golden carriage drawn by horses. On the next stop he mounted a richly embellished stallion and arrived at his palace in a splendid seat arranged on the back of one of the many State-owned elephants that took part in the procession parade. And what a strange company it was, that procession with all its flags and banners, ornately attired ministers sitting cross-legged in their sedan chairs and carrying many-coloured wide parasols, ancient small cannon hauled manually, elephants (including sacred white specimens), silk-saddled horses, courtiers and servants, and bands playing on all conceivable instruments!

There is one fancy report on King Monivong, dating from 1941:⁴¹

Emperor shops for his milk

The Ruler of the Empire of Cambodia in Indochina is a benign and pleasant, albeit quite rotund gentleman, who favours a good cup of coffee over all things. The

traveller, unaccustomed to local conditions is quite surprised to see the Emperor walk across a street, in the capital city of Phnom Penh, carrying a canister for milk. Those unable to resist being curious will learn the following: There is a fine sweets shop right opposite the Imperial palace and the ruler, in the privacy of his rooms, can always admire the tempting confectionary artifacts displayed in the shop window.

If he craves cake and coffee, which reportedly happens quite often, he will just go and fetch home what he likes. He walks alone because his palace is so filled with junior and senior clerks who shift chores on each other and if he waited for his milk, his coffee would turn cold. Anyway, this ruler has few chores to worry about. At a recent parade, his subjects could admire him sitting happily on an elephant's back. His left hand benignly beckoning the audience, he was busy manipulating a small film camera with his right hand. Unfazed by the fanfares and blaring trumpets, he played emperor and film expert with all his heart. It seems to be wonderful to be an emperor in Cambodia.

The End of the Colonial Era

In the 1930s and 40s, in the context of the budding anti-colonial movement, reports by Czech journalists began to appear in the press. They had been to Indochina and were very critical of the French colonial presence there.

For example, Czech journalist Bohumil Pospíšil provided the following account of conditions in French Indochina, in 1935: *The French are loath to talk about unrest in their colonies. They do not put on kid gloves when dealing with rebels and any insurgency is ruthlessly nipped in the bud (...) France uses Foreign Legion troops to deal with problems. (...) In theory, natives and their press in Indochina enjoy the freedom of critical speech. In fact, criticisms can only be mumbled through a muzzle. Therefore, foreign-press reports on unrest are rare and the traveller in Indochina is only served crumbs of the hot pie (...). (The French – Author's note) are in for a heavy fight against the growing revolutionary movement. The Foreign Legion troopers will have a lot of work to do.*⁴²

Czech journalist J. Lukáš wrote in 1940:⁴³ *The French are poor colonizers. They are loath to leave their beloved France and be clerks or entrepreneurs in the colonies; that is why fairly high local offices there go to inept and rather unreliable natives or*

people of mixed race (...). The agricultural principles were just as failed. No foreigner apart from the French and Chinese settled in Indochina were to be granted licences to run plantations. However, there were not many planters coming from France, and those who arrived were mostly incompetent people craving lush lives. Usually they delegated the running of their plantations to the Chinese for half the proceeds. French planting is known to have been an example not to follow in the tropics till the outbreak of the world war."⁴³ But on Cambodian culture he had this to say: *Anyone who can spend a few days travelling to Cambodia will be richly rewarded. We encounter ancient Indian arts hardly to come across in India proper.*⁴⁴

This takes us to World War II that significantly weakened the French government's position in Indochina. The local authorities were loyal to the collaborationist administration at Vichy and had to live with the presence of Japanese troops in Cambodia.

The distant and exotic world of Cambodia suddenly confronted the Czechs after 1945 when a wind of change swept Indochina. Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk, who at the age of 19 took over the throne from his maternal grandfather Monivong, had embarked on a major political battle he called *the Royal crusade for independence* from France. Having moved cautiously in 1953 and 1954 he did succeed in his quest to win independence for Cambodia. Sihanouk was the King of Cambodia until 1955 when he loosened his hands by abdicating (his throne being assumed by his father, Norodom Suramarit) and becoming prime minister. After his father's death in 1960, Sihanouk proposed a constitutional amendment on the strength of which the royal throne remained unoccupied (though Sihanouk's mother, Queen Kossamak, the widow of Suramarit, continued to perform certain ceremonial functions). The executive powers were transferred to the new "head of state", which was Sihanouk. King or premier or head of state notwithstanding, the truth is that Sihanouk was the uncontested ruler of Cambodia till 1970.

The renowned journalist and Associated Press's Bangkok Bureau Chief Dennis D. Gray, who was born Zdeněk Mečíř in the Czech city of Plzeň (Pilsen), wrote of Sihanouk: *One of the hottest battlefields of the Cold War, Indochina, put his small, impoverished country on the world map. But so did this larger-than-life character - lovable and detested, greatly gifted and deeply flawed - who wrested Cambodian independence from France, survived wars and the Khmer Rouge holocaust and for a time juggled the superpowers to secure peace for his country.*⁴⁵

Historians and those who remember him give wildly varying accounts of the character and method of rule of Sihanouk ranging from stern condemnation (such as the former Australian diplomat Milton Osborne)⁴⁶ and positive reading of his epoch (historian and Sihanouk's official biographer, Julio A. Jeldres). Whatever the story, the flamboyant and charismatic Sihanouk belongs to the pantheon of Asia's 20th century and he had a major impact on the development of relations between Czechoslovakia and Cambodia.

Sihanouk pledged neutrality in his foreign policy. In 1956 he attended a Non-Aligned Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew aptly described Sihanouk's activities as *have as many friends and as few enemies as possible*. Sihanouk found friends in the Soviet Bloc countries, China and also France, but he gradually lost the United States and its closest allies.

Chapter IV

VIVE L'AMITIÉ KHMÉRO- TCHÉCOSLOVAQUE!

Alliance between
Prince Norodom
Sihanouk
and Socialist
Czechoslovakia
(1956–1970)

From our vantage point, it is good to note that establishing diplomatic relations between Cambodia and communist Czechoslovakia was one of the outcomes of Sihanouk's Khmer dancing between East and West, and between the French, Americans, Thais, Chinese and Soviets. This was more than a formal step, triggering as it did an avalanche of mutual learning and encounters, fortunately not orchestrated solely by the Communist *nomenklatura* of the day but involving the public as well, including experts, scholars specializing in Oriental studies, and artists; and countless Cambodian delegations, art ensembles, and above all, students who earned Czechoslovak scholarships and lived in the country whose language they learned to speak well.

Cambodia established diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia as early as 18 May 1956 and it was soon announced that its prime minister, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, would pay a visit to Prague in the summer.

Prince Sihanouk visits Czechoslovakia in 1956

Shortly before noon on Wednesday, 11 July 1956, Prague's Ruzyně Airport was a busy place. Numerous Czechoslovak government officials, members of the Prague diplomatic corps, and officials of various institutions and organizations gathered there to greet prominent guests from Cambodia – Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Prime Minister Khim Tit, Cambodia's High Commissioner to France, Prince Sisowath Monipong, Chairman of Cambodia's National Assembly Oum Cheang Sun, Member of the Supreme Royal Council Leng Ngeth, Chief of Staff of the Cambodian Royal Air Force, Col. Ngo Hou, and General Secretary of the High Commission in Paris, Poc Thieu. The top-level Cambodian delegation would arrive in Czechoslovakia at the invitation of the government.

At 12:05 Central European Time, a silver DC-3 with Cambodian registration marks, and an escort plane, appeared over the airport. At 12:10, both aircraft landed in Prague. At the stairs, the Prince was welcomed by Deputy Prime Minister V. Kopecký, National Assembly Speaker Z. Fierlinger, Foreign Minister V. David, Foreign Trade Minister V. Dvořák, Education and Culture Minister F. Kahuda, and Chief of General Staff V. Kratochvíl. The National Anthems of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Czechoslovak Republic were played. Prince Sihanouk, accompanied by Lt.-Gen. V. Kratochvíl, inspected a parade of the Guard of

Prince Norodom Sihanouk was greeted in a traditional Czech way with bread and salt while visiting the Mayor of Prague, Mr. Adolf Svoboda (centre), © Czech News Agency ČTK, 11. 7. 1956



Prince Norodom Sihanouk visits the Slapy Dam with his entourage, © Czech News Agency ČTK, 14. 7. 1956



Prince Norodom Sihanouk visits Karlovy Vary, © Czech News Agency ČTK, 16. 7. 1956



Prince Norodom Sihanouk decorates Czechoslovak President Antonín Zápotocký with the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Cambodia. © Czech News Agency ČTK, 15. 7. 1956

Honour from the Prague Army Garrison whom he greeted *Nazdar!* in Czech, and then greeted all the other members of the Czechoslovak government, Prague's Lord Mayor A. Svoboda, and other prominent figures. The Guard of Honour then gave a file-past to honour Prince Sihanouk and other Cambodian guests. After speeches, Deputy Prime Minister Václav Kopecký and Prince Norodom Sihanouk⁴⁷ boarded a convertible car outside the airport terminal. On his ride to his Prague residence, the prince was cordially greeted by crowds of Prague citizens.

The official visit programme was fairly standard: On Wednesday afternoon, the Prince of Cambodia was received by the President of the Republic, Antonín Zápotocký, at Prague Castle. At 17:00 the same day, Prince Sihanouk and his entourage laid a wreath at the Unknown Soldier's Tomb. From Vítkov Hill, the site of the memorial, the Prince departed, in the company of Prague's Lord Mayor A. Svoboda, for a sightseeing tour of the city and a visit to the Prague City Hall.⁴⁸ On Friday, 13 July at noon, Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Prime Minister Khim Tit called on Prime Minister Viliam Široký at the Hrzán Palace, in Prague. For his part, the Chairman of the National Assembly, Zdeněk Fierlinger, received the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Oum Chheang Sun. In the afternoon, the Černín Palace – the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the venue for negotiations between the Czechoslovak and Cambodian delegations. The Czechoslovak delegation was led, during the talks, by Prime Minister Viliam Široký. On the agenda were issues pertaining to the further development of mutual relations and close cooperation between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Czechoslovak Republic. V. Široký also organized dinner in the representative premises of the Černín Palace in honour of Prince Sihanouk, with senior Czechoslovak government figures and VIPs attending, in the course of which the two dignitaries raised formal toasts.⁴⁹

On Saturday afternoon at Prague Castle, Norodom Sihanouk decorated the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Antonín Zápotocký, with a Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Cambodia, conferred on him by His Royal Majesty Norodom Suramarit, the King of Cambodia. The Prince also presented A. Zápotocký with a message from the King of Cambodia: *My dearest and greatest friend, (...) we have ample confidence in the competence, dedication and loyalty of His Royal Highness, the Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and should like to ask Your Excellency to kindly accord his full trust to everything he has to say on our behalf as well as*

*on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, especially if he conveys the best wishes of wellbeing to Your Excellency personally, and happiness to the Czechoslovak Republic, from the King of Cambodia and his people...*⁵⁰ Thereafter, the President of the Republic decorated His Royal Majesty, the King Norodom Suramarit, with the Order of the White Lion, First Class, bestowing it to the hands of the Prince of Cambodia. At the same time he conferred the same order upon His Royal Highness, the Prince Norodom Sihanouk.⁵¹ In the evening of the day, the President gave a formal banquet in the representative premises of Prague Castle, in honour of the Prince of Cambodia.

In the evening of Saturday, in the Černín Palace, a Joint Statement of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the High Emissary of His Majesty the King of Cambodia and the Cambodian People, His Royal Highness Prince Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Upayuvareach was signed. In it, the Czechoslovak Republic and the Kingdom of Cambodia confirmed that their relations were and would continue to be based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, specifically on the principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference into each other's internal affairs, equality, mutual advantage, and peaceful coexistence. Both sides declared that the United Nations should be a universal organization and all states meeting the conditions set by the United Nations Charter should be its members (notably the People's Republic of China, Japan and other sovereign states). Nuclear energy should only be used for peaceful purposes. Developed countries should grant economic, financial and technical assistance to less developed countries and the nations availing themselves of such aid without any conditions whatsoever.

The Czechoslovak side noted that Cambodia was in compliance with the provisions of the Geneva Agreements which were an important instrument of strengthening peace in the countries of Indochina. The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic fully respected and supported the neutrality of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Both sides declared that they would respect international treaties, and notably, the Geneva Agreements of 1954. They had also decided to exchange diplomatic representatives in the near future.

Economic and cultural cooperation was discussed at length. The decision was made that the Czechoslovak Government would in the near future send a delegation to Cambodia to conclude a trade agreement and an agreement on scientific

cooperation. The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic offered scientific and technological assistance to Cambodia in the fields that Cambodia considered crucial for the development of its economy. This assistance would be granted without any political, economic or other conditions that would infringe upon the sovereignty of Cambodia.

The two sides also noted that they were interested, in the field of cultural relations, in mutual cultural exchanges such as the mutual organization of exhibitions, and exchanges of cultural delegations, art ensembles, scientists and students.

This document was signed by Prime Minister Viliam Široký on behalf of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, and His Royal Highness, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, on behalf of the King and Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia.⁵²

At the close of his visit to Czechoslovakia, Prince Sihanouk and his entourage paid a call to the internationally renowned spa town of Karlovy Vary. He inspected an exhibition of Czechoslovak glass art, which he found quite interesting; tasted mineral water on his stroll in the spa quarter, and visited Deer Leap View. A connoisseur of film art and a film-maker in his own right, the Prince expressed lively interest in the Karlovy Vary Film Festival and Czechoslovak cinematography. He spent the rest of his Sunday afternoon in the projection hall, watching popular-science, animated and cartoon films of Czechoslovak provenience.⁵³

On Monday, 16 July, having been accorded high state honours, Sihanouk and the members of the Cambodian government delegation departed for Paris on board two special planes.⁵⁴

Further development of mutual relations 1956–1960

In February 1957, Cambodia's first envoy to Czechoslovakia, Leng Ngeth, who simultaneously served in the Soviet Union and Poland, presented his credentials in Prague.⁵⁵

The Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh opened in May 1957 when the first Czechoslovak envoy to Cambodia, Zdeněk Hradec presented his credentials.

Czechoslovak Prime Minister Viliam Široký visited Cambodia in January 1958.

During their talks, both government delegations confirmed their allegiance to the five principles of peaceful coexistence as the basis of Czechoslovak-Cambodian relations. A joint government declaration was signed in support of Cambodia's neutrality, also calling for an international treaty on general disarmament.

In July-August 1958, a Cambodian National Assembly delegation led by Sam Nhean, visited Czechoslovakia.⁵⁶

In March 1959, the diplomatic representations of Cambodia and Czechoslovakia were bilaterally promoted to *Embassies*. First Deputy Prime Minister Nhiek Tioulong was appointed Cambodia's Ambassador to Czechoslovakia (non-resident). The mission was led by Mr. Wongsanith in his capacity of chargé d'affaires a.i.

Prior to the promotion of Czechoslovak-Cambodian relations, Nhiek Tioulong was envoy to Czechoslovakia with a permanent residence in Moscow. He was one of the close associates of Sihanouk. In addition to being First Deputy Prime Minister he was also the Minister for Planning. He had a very good rapport with Czechoslovakia and promoted this association in Cambodia. He put his authority

Czechoslovak
Ambassador
Zdeněk Hradec
presents his
credentials to King
Norodom Suramarit,
29. 5. 1957, right:
Prince Norodom
Sihanouk, Archives
of the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs



behind all major Czechoslovak projects in Cambodia and was instrumental in promoting economic and trade cooperation. His series of articles, *Notes on Czechoslovakia*, written for the leading bi-weekly, *Réalités Cambodgiennes*, aroused general interest. He worked so as to see a Cambodian diplomatic mission in Prague established before its sister offices in Cairo, Belgrade and Vienna. Czechoslovakia therefore sincerely welcomed his appointment.

In December 1959, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Son Sann visited Czechoslovakia and in early 1960, a Czechoslovak National Assembly delegation paid a visit to Cambodia. When about 500 families were left homeless after a fire in Phnom Penh in 1958, the Czechoslovak Red Cross provided financial assistance through the Czechoslovak Embassy.⁵⁷

Prince Sihanouk's Visit to Czechoslovakia in 1960

Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný's invitation for Prince Sihanouk to visit Czechoslovakia was made during their encounter at the Fifteenth United Nations General Assembly Session. Prince Sihanouk accepted the invitation and began an eight-day visit to Czechoslovakia on 21 November 1960. This visit was already based upon four years of experience in mutual political and economic contacts. Therefore the negotiations were appreciably more specific than during his first visit in 1956. As noted in a Czechoslovak diplomatic mission's note from Phnom Penh from the late 1950s, *Sihanouk is very friendly towards the Czechoslovak Republic and highly rates our economic achievements, high living standards and excellent health institutions. Czechoslovakia is quite popular in Cambodia and enjoys nationwide sympathies here. The Czechoslovak Republic has many options in Cambodia. To a degree, we are the model of a prosperous nation surrounded by stronger neighbours. Cambodia is in the same situation and the histories of both countries are remarkably similar. A prosperous Czechoslovak Republic would set an example for Cambodia to follow, and Sihanouk would be happy to borrow very many of our institutions and establish very close cooperation with us.*⁵⁸

In addition to his wife Monique and Princess Sorya Roeungsey, Prince Norodom Sihanouk was accompanied, on his visit to Czechoslovakia, also by Vice Chairman of the Supreme Throne Council Samdech Penn Nouth, Prime Minister

Pho Proeung, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Planning and Cambodia's Ambassador to the Czechoslovak Republic Nhiek Tiouloung, and other senior officials of the Cambodian state. Sihanouk was personally welcomed at the airport by the President of the Republic, Antonín Novotný with his spouse, the Prime Minister Viliam Široký, and National Assembly Speaker Zdeněk Fierlinger. Also present were other members of government, numerous public figures, and members of the Prague Diplomatic Corps. Sihanouk's TU-104A special flight from Paris was escorted by a guard of honour of four Czechoslovak jet fighters, from the national border. The Prince's motorcade was greeted by crowds of citizens on its progress through the streets of Prague. Prince Sihanouk declared at Prague-Ruzyně airport: *The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is one of the countries with which we maintain the closest and most fraternal relations. These relations have developed, since my visit to Czechoslovakia in 1956, in the most favourable conditions, in an atmosphere of exceptional confidence, and without a hint of shadow that is manifested even in relations between friendly nations.*⁵⁹

A standard program of an official visit followed: a reception by the President of the Republic at Prague Castle, a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a visit to the Old Prague Town Hall, and a gala evening at Prague Castle.

In the night hours, the guests boarded a special train to Slovakia.⁶⁰ Prince Sihanouk spent his first day in Slovakia's capital Bratislava visiting the Slovak National Council where he was greeted by its Chairman, Rudolf Strechaj; also visiting the Soviet Army Memorial at Bratislava's Slavín Cemetery, and went sightseeing in the city. He showed keen interest in the prefabricated housing estates in Bratislava's peripheries, built in order to resolve a chronic housing shortage (having fortunately failed to attempt to have such horrible communist edifices replicated in Cambodia). After lunch he paid a call to a successful farming enterprise – the United Cooperative Farm at Senec. After returning to Bratislava, he saw the best of the Slovak Folk Art Collective's programme offer at Bratislava's New Stage Theatre. In a short programme, the Cambodian ensemble that accompanied Prince Sihanouk appeared on stage. Prince Sihanouk received a gift of a traditional Slovak shepherd's stick, his wife was presented with traditional embroideries, and Princess Sorya Roeungsey was given two dolls dressed in Slovak national costumes. R. Strechaj organized a formal evening to



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*Signing a treaty of friendship, 27. 11. 1960,
Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic*



*Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný
welcomes Prince Norodom Sihanouk at
Prague airport, 21. 11. 1960, © Jiří Rublič,
Czech News Agency ČTK*



*Prince Norodom
Sihanouk visits
a sugar mill in
Kostelec nad Labem,
25. 11. 1960,
Archives of the Office
of the President
of the Republic*



*Prince Norodom Sihanouk visiting the
sugar mill in Kostelec nad Labem,
25. 11. 1960, © Jiří Rublič,
Czech News Agency ČTK*



*Prince Norodom Sihanouk visits a cattle
breeding unit in Slovakia, 22. 11. 1960,
© Jiří Rublič, Czech News Agency ČTK*



*Prince Norodom Sihanouk visits a sugar mill in
Kostelec nad Labem, 25. 11. 1960, Archives of
the Office of the President of the Republic*

honour the Cambodian guests, at the Hotel Carlton.⁶¹ Sihanouk's further travels took him through the South Slovak Lowlands from the town of Nitra to Žiar nad Hronom where a new aluminium plant had been built. The Prince visited also Kremnička, where the Nazis murdered 747 inhabitants in 1944, during World War II, and the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising in Banská Bystrica.⁶² The Prince then boarded a special train to Ostrava, to be shown round the shops of a giant metallurgical enterprise – the Klement Gottwald New Foundry.⁶³ Upon his return to Bohemia, Sihanouk and President A. Novotný paid a joint visit to a sugar refinery in Ústí nad Labem, the Spolana chemical plant at Neratovice, and Czechoslovakia's largest waterwork – the Orlik Dam. Over and above his official itinerary, the Prince also visited an army garrison at Milovice, which passed without a mention in the official daily press.⁶⁴ Sihanouk's wife and daughter visited a creche in Prague's Third District. In the evening, the Czechoslovak Government organized a gala performance of the opera, *The Bartered Bride*, by Czech composer Bedřich Smetana at Prague's National Theatre, in honour of Prince Sihanouk.⁶⁵

At the end of the visit, Norodom Sihanouk and Antonín Novotný formally signed, at the Presidential Chateau in Lány, a *Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Cambodia*. Pho Proeung and Viliam Široký also signed an *Agreement on Cultural Cooperation*. President Novotný decorated Norodom Sihanouk with a chain of the Order of White Lion, First Class, which the Prince had received during his previous visit to Czechoslovakia.⁶⁶ Sihanouk decorated Antonín Novotný with the Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Cambodia. An official communiqué was released from this visit.⁶⁷ In the morning hours of 28 November, Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his entourage left Prague on board a special flight to the Soviet Union where they were greeted by Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport.⁶⁸

Sihanouk was obviously interested, during his tour, in the possibility of building industrial enterprises and infrastructure “on the green lawn” – i.e. in conditions resembling those in underdeveloped Cambodia. In Czechoslovakia he saw a suitable partner in implementing his plans for industrialization and maintaining the neutral political direction of his country. Rather than official statements, communiqués and front-page news in the Czechoslovak press, one will retrieve better-quality information from until recently classified

documents of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs relating to the Prince's visit.

Prince Sihanouk did not make it secret, during his talks with President Novotný, that Cambodia's relations with South Vietnam and Thailand were quite tense. He intended to create a nuclear-free neutral zone in Cambodia and Laos, whilst the neutrality of these two countries would be recognized and guaranteed by states of both political blocs. This neutral zone was intended as a buffer zone to prevent direct contact and possible confrontation between the East and the West. Sihanouk requested an official Czechoslovak position and said he had authorization from the Laotian government of Prince Souvanna Phouma to probe Czechoslovak views on this issue. A. Novotný expressed the conviction that the Czechoslovak government would be positively inclined to accept such a proposition.

Characteristically, Sihanouk wanted to know all the details of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations during his conversations with the president.

In addition to his official addresses, Sihanouk made a series of improvised speeches and toasts during which a few interesting circumstances came to light. For example, he said that while Cambodia was a kingdom, it did not have a king at its head but a head of state elected by parliament and therefore it was a virtual republic and he was its virtual president. Hence the Throne was merely a symbol behind which the whole nation rallied similarly as all the Christians rally behind the Holy Cross.

He also said that Cambodia was building socialism, wanted all its citizens to enjoy equal rights and face equal duties, whereas there were no privileges and exemptions in store for the Royal family. In spite of the different systems in communist Czechoslovakia and Cambodia, and the specific nature of Cambodia's journey into socialism, his country was going to continue to draw experience from the socialist construction in Czechoslovakia, and especially Slovakia, whose economic structure, he said, once used to be the same as Cambodia's. An unidentified Czechoslovak official obviously thought Sihanouk's attitude was not Marxist enough and noted in his report: *The Cambodian leaders manifested very original views on socialism. They are building some new industrial enterprises and believe they are building socialism.*⁶⁹

By then, Sihanouk had become acutely aware of Cambodia's dependence on international aid and the aid-related pressures exerted chiefly by the United States. He declared that Cambodia would not bow to the pressure and would so shape its economy as to do without foreign aid in future. The Cambodian economy had achieved a level where it will not be destroyed by halting foreign aid. Cambodia would be poor but would survive even without such assistance.⁷⁰

In the case of the Treaty of Friendship and the Cultural Agreement, the Cambodian party accepted all Czechoslovak proposals except for a few wording modifications. The Czechoslovak side was quite happy with the Cultural Agreement as Cambodia had until then rejected all proposals for talks on cultural cooperation, fearing possible influences of Czechoslovak Communists on its internal affairs.

By contrast, there were lengthy discussions concerning the wording of the final communiqué. Cambodia preferred a less committal *communiqué* to a more binding *joint statement*. In the event, however, its contents exceeded the confines of a standard communiqué, which would merely sum up the proceedings and identify their participants, this document also stated identical positions on key international-policy principles and actually assumed the form of a joint statement. Cambodia offered its most relevant comment on the paragraph concerning the issue of disarmament. In line with its neutralist policy, Cambodia considered the originally proposed wording, expressing all-out support for Soviet proposals on general and complete disarmament, too one-sided and suggested a far more cautious formulation, expressing support to all constructive proposals aimed at general and complete disarmament, and offering its opinion that *Soviet proposals should be taken into account*. The Czechoslovak Communists rejected that and proposed instead that *the Soviet proposals constitute a sound basis for negotiations*. The Cambodian side accepted this language.⁷¹

In the paragraph on colonialism, the Cambodians proposed that the original categorical demand for the immediate elimination of colonialism be replaced by the wish for eliminating colonialism once and for all. In an effort to maintain a neutral position, they refused to accept any mentions of *imperialist interference in Congo and Cuba*.



Prince Sihanouk, President Novotný and Prince Sihamoni in a ballet costume at the National Theatre, Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic, 25. 11. 1960



Reception given by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Černín Palace, © Jiří Rublić, Czech News Agency ČTK, 28.11.1960



Prince Norodom Sihanouk at the National Theatre during a performance of the opera "The Bartered Bride" by Bedřich Smetana, © Jiří Rublić, Czech News Agency ČTK, 25.11.1960



DANSES KHMERES

EXECUTEES PAR LE CORPS DE BALLET ROYAL



OFFERTES LE 19 JANVIER 1963

A ANGKOR WAT

en l'honneur de Son Excellence Monsieur
le Président de la République Socialiste Tchécoslovaque
et de Madame ANTONIN NOVOTNÝ.



KHMÉRSKÉ TANCE

V PODÁNÍ SOUDORU KRÁLOVSKÉHO DLAETU



UMĚLECKÝ VEČER

POŘÁDANÝ 19. LEDNA 1963

V ANGKOR WATU

na počest Jeho Excelence pana
presidenta Československé Socialistické Republiky
a paní NOVOTNÉ.



Interestingly, instead of the original formulation on the need of general abidance by the Geneva Agreements, proposed by Czechoslovakia mainly in regard of the danger of interference in Cambodia's internal Affairs, the Cambodians requested that this wording be narrowed to emphasize the need for observing these agreements as far as an equitable solution to the Vietnam problem was concerned.⁷²

On the occasion of the Cambodian state visit, talks on economic cooperation were held. This issue was not on the original agenda and the Cambodians requested such talks one day before their departure – probably because they were impressed by Czechoslovak industries. Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister and Ambassador to Czechoslovakia Nhiek Tioulong, and Czechoslovak Foreign Trade Minister Krajčír conducted the talks. They centred on the possibility of the delivery of machines, industrial technologies and whole-built industrial units. Mr. Nhiek Tioulong expressed his country's preference for turnkey projects supplied by Czechoslovakia the value of which would thus reach into hundreds of millions of crowns. Therefore, Cambodia would apply for a loan. Minister Krajčír replied that such a serious proposal, which completely surpassed all standard conditions, must be carefully considered and presented to his government. The Cambodians were rather annoyed by Czechoslovakia's failure to immediately accept a draft loan contract they had put forward earlier in the day without preliminary negotiations. Finally it was decided that a Czechoslovak delegation would visit Phnom Penh to discuss that particular issue as well as other topics of economic cooperation.⁷³ The agreement was finally signed in 1961.

Mutual relations continued to develop on a higher level after Norodom Sihanouk's visit to Czechoslovakia in 1960. A Czechoslovak government delegation visited Cambodia in February 1962. Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný paid a visit to Cambodia during his Asian tour in January 1963. In a joint communiqué, Czechoslovakia expressed support for Cambodia's proposal for convening an international conference on guarantees of its neutrality, and agreement with the policy of easing international tensions as well as with providing assistance to developing countries without any economic and military conditions attached.

The two countries exchanged parliamentary delegations and many study groups, experts and youth organization officials. A *National Committee for Cambodian-Czechoslovak Friendship* was established, and the secretary general of the



slovenská socialistická republika neustále prohlubuje politické, kulturní a hospo-
dy s řadou zemí jihovýchodní Asie. President ČSSR Antonín Novotný při státní
v Kambodži na začátku roku 1963 byl srdečně vítán tisíci Kambodžany v průběhu
n závodů airon na Mekongu v městě Kompong-Cham.

President Antonín Novotný visits traditional
boat races on the river Mekong in Kompong-
Cham City in 1963, Vladimír Matoušek,
Jihovýchodní Asie, Prague, 1965

Front page of the programme of the ballet
performance held in Angkor Wat in honour
of the Czechoslovak President Antonín
Novotny and his spouse, 19. 1. 1963

ular Socialist Community, Cambodia's leading political
Yun was appointed its chairman.

Defence Minister and Chief of General Staff, General Lon Nol was
with treatment in Czechoslovakia. His invitation by the
government was initiated by the Cambodian party through
Kek Tioulong (a close friend of Lon Nol). This visit never took
and notified the Cambodian Embassy in Paris that he was unable
as France had already arranged treatment for him.⁷⁴ However,
and from confidential sources that Lon Nol's stay in France, from
proposed to travel to Czechoslovakia, coincided with a report,
exile Radio Khmer Serei, that Lon Nol was planning a coup
k. In such a delicate situation, he did not dare to fly to
According to confidential reports, he was received with trust,
by the Queen and the Chairman of the Supreme Council to the
Monireth, but was given cold reception by Sihanouk. Lon Nol
dly spent a time resting in Kep and returned to his ministry ten

ique, said during her conversation with the wife of the
ambassador in Phnom Penh that *Sihanouk is always getting the*
*Czechoslovakia. There, he always feels free and content.*⁷⁶
d to visit Czechoslovakia on several occasions but his visit was
l times.

practical level were marked by a measure of ambiguity ensuing
at their shared economic and political interests and, on the other
different social systems. A classified foreign ministry document
the following on the overall political approach to Cambodia:
Czechoslovakia's foreign policy in relation to Cambodia to help
Cambodian policy of neutrality and to bring Cambodia to our side.
introduce Cambodia's population to life in our country and its
promote the advantages of the socialist system, and thus assist

ambiguous approach to communist Czechoslovakia, similar to
ards China or the Soviet Union: he appreciated their help but did

not try to hide his aversion to Communism. This was especially evident on the
home scene. A 1964 report by the Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh notes:
In spite of his patent dislike of Communism, Sihanouk had to acknowledge
a flawless economic cooperation with the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, our
preparedness to help the Cambodian army, the support of our press for his
political endeavour, which has lost none of its progressive hallmarks in the given
situation, as well as our support in discussing the Cambodian complaint at the
*Security Council.*⁷⁸

In his public statements, Sihanouk openly declared his sympathy for Czechoslovakia.
There, as well as throughout the Soviet Bloc (but also in France), he could find
sympathy and support for his anti-American positions. In a farewell speech
during a reception for Ambassador Zdeněk Hradec, whom he befriended just like
President Novotný, he spoke about *exceptional harmony of relations between two*
*countries which barely knew each other, less than ten years ago.*⁷⁹ He saw, in the
Czechs and Slovaks, small nations with a history similar to Cambodia's and also
encircled by powerful neighbours. *Czechoslovakia... knows what foreign*
domination and partitioning of the national territory mean, after tough
*Austrian-Hungarian rule and especially savage Hitlerite oppression,*⁸⁰ Sihanouk
said and he noted on another occasion: *The understanding we are receiving in*
Czechoslovakia is nourished by its own experience that is still alive in all
recollections. We know that when we declare we will not give up an inch of our
*territory, our Czechoslovak friends will remember Munich and its consequences.*⁸¹
Protection of Cambodia's territorial integrity in the ambiguity of the delimitation
of the colonial-era borders and maps, and the sense of being threatened by
territorial claims of neighbouring Vietnam and Thailand, have always been the
prime concerns of Cambodian policy in general and of Sihanouk in particular.

And he did find the support he had been seeking: When the Republic of Vietnam violated
Cambodian territory back in 1958; the Czechoslovak government expressed its
support for Cambodia's complaint, both internationally and in the United Nations.
Czechoslovakia was among the first countries, in 1967, to release a statement on the
recognition of Cambodia's current borders. In subsequent years, the Czechoslovak
government repeatedly acted in support of Cambodia's territorial inviolability.⁸²

Sihanouk's visits to Prague also brought results in the field of economic cooperation. As agreed during his first visit, a Czechoslovak government delegation flew to Cambodia in August 1956, in order to prepare individual agreements which were then signed on 5 October 1956 in Phnom Penh. Specifically, a trade and payments agreement, and an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation were signed. In 1961, as a follow-up to Sihanouk's state visit to Czechoslovakia in 1960, an Agreement on Economic Cooperation was signed in Phnom Penh, under which a long-term loan of 100 million crowns was granted to Cambodia.

Czechoslovakia granted free economic assistance to Cambodia in the form of two diesel-electric generators and a packaged power plant. The bulk of Czechoslovak exports to Cambodia consisted of engineering products such as road-building and construction technologies, garbage vans, diesel engines, motorcycles etc. Textiles and sugar were main consumer exports, followed by glass products and small consumer goods. Jawa motorcycles were arguably the best commercial success for Czechoslovakia on the Cambodian market. They were appreciated for their good quality and low price. A trade report from December 1958 noted: *Few Cambodians know Czechoslovakia but everybody knows that the Jawas hail from Czechoslovakia.*⁸³

Czechoslovakia imported spices and rice from Cambodia. Otherwise, balance-of-payments issues were solved by re-exporting Cambodian produce, especially rice and rice bran, and maize, to Asian countries neighbouring on Cambodia.⁸⁴ Against a favourable long-term loan of 55 million crowns, Czechoslovakia supplied Cambodia with five turnkey industrial plants – a sugar factory, a tire factory, a tractor assembly plant, a 36 MW power station, and an ammunition plant. Czechoslovak technicians assembled and launched these plants in 1964–1970. Their initial operation was supervised by Czechoslovak experts under a technical assistance project. In addition, Czechoslovakia supplied Cambodia with certain amounts of school and health care equipment. Negotiations were held also concerning Czechoslovak assistance in the construction of a dam on the river Mekong.⁸⁵ In the late 1960s, five Czechoslovak experts from Hydroprojekt Bratislava worked on the UNESCO-commissioned project of hydro-laboratory on the river Mekong.⁸⁶ Czechoslovak-Cambodian trade turnover amounted up to 150 million riels a year.⁸⁷

The Chak Angré electric utility power station in Phnom Penh, built with Czechoslovak assistance, was a very successful project. Inaugurated on 28 June 1960 in the presence of Prince Sihanouk,⁸⁸ it is still in operation today, following a major overhaul.

Although generally successful, economic cooperation between the two countries was not always smooth and straightforward. Both France and the United States, for obvious reasons, did not see the activities of the communist Czechoslovakia favorably. France in particular was perceived as a major opponent of allowing Czechoslovak competitors to enter the market. The Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh complained, in a report from the second half of the 1950s, that *France... exerts every effort to distance Cambodia from the Czechoslovak Republic. [France] will use any means available. Notably, French experts are obstructing implementation of the Czechoslovak-Cambodian Trade Agreement. They are deliberately hampering Czechoslovak assistance to Cambodia. In 1957, two diesel power sets received by Sihanouk as a present during his visit to Czechoslovakia were still awaiting installation. French experts at the Ministry for Planning have assigned them to provinces to facilitate industrial construction. However, these projects will only be commenced within one year's time if all goes well, and their transportation will be very problematic if not completely impossible. The same applies to the thermal power plant whose construction is being hampered by the French. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that production and distribution of electric power is in the hands of a French utilities company which has signed an exclusive contract with Cambodia, due to expire at the end of 1960. French experts are preventing Cambodian students from enrolling in Czechoslovak universities and are trying to prevent Cambodians from visiting the Czechoslovak Republic. However, in spite of all these difficulties, the position of the Czechoslovak Republic is very good and establishing close cooperation is merely a matter of time. Once Cambodia gets rid of the influence of French experts and their absolute influence on its state apparatus, favourable conditions will be set for closer and more intensive Czechoslovak-Cambodian cooperation.*⁸⁹

When construction of a Zetor tractor assembly plant in Sihanoukville commenced in 1963, the representatives of the Ferguson Company launched a massive advertising campaign questioning the quality of Czechoslovak tractors. The Phnom Penh embassy's report further noted: *The management of this construction project is extremely poor. Director Mang Lon is not fully committed to its success and is in poor health; Mr. Chuop Saron is absolutely incompetent*

and ignorant of his assignment. Therefore, Comrade Bárek (a Czechoslovak expert – Author's note) must double his duties and correct his frequent mistakes...⁹⁰ There were problems to be solved with water supply whereby the original plan, outlined without a thorough preliminary survey, called for the use of city water mains, which it turned out did not exist, and with electricity, as the local power plant refused to supply energy. It was necessary to procure power distribution materials from miscellaneous local warehouses and to design a diesel-powered electricity-generating station.⁹¹

Problems associated with the construction of a sugar factory almost led to a diplomatic rift. The analysis of sugarcane samples were based on standard-quality raw sugar as presented to technicians whereas the samples provided were of optimal, almost excellent quality, and not standard quality. Nor were the other aspects of sugar production (collection and thickening of juices, procurement of juice-thickening wood, shipment to the plant) sufficiently surveyed beforehand. This would result in low cost-effectiveness and problematic procurement of raw materials for the sugar factory being erected in Kompong Thom near Phnom Penh. The problem acquired acute proportions when, after rejecting U.S. aid,⁹² declaring that *Cambodia relies on self-help* and finding out that unlike privately-owned companies, the national enterprises were unable to become sufficiently cost-effective, Prince Sihanouk began to consider the sugar factory dilemma quite

crucial. In a personal letter of 7 November 1963, Sihanouk indicated to President Novotný that if the raw materials were not supplied, Cambodia would be left with an enterprise that failed to generate desirable economic profits, and his opponents would capitalize on this failure. Czechoslovak specialists managed to resolve the problem and the plant was put in operation in 1965. The tire-manufacturing plant in Takhmao launched its pilot operation on 13 December 1966.⁹³

Czechoslovak experts and their Cambodian colleagues were usually able to overcome problems associated with turnkey constructions and spare-part shortages. In the coming years, efficient operation of such units was usually hampered by political developments rather than technical problems. Cambodian officials and experts also repeatedly visited the engineering fair in Brno.

At the request of Prince Sihanouk, Czechoslovakia granted military aid to the Cambodian armed forces in 1964, to the tune of 1,100,000 crowns. It was fairly typical of the political tensions in Cambodia after the rejection of U.S. aid that Sihanouk asked for such assistance instead of the previously-contracted training for 20 specialists at Czechoslovak military schools and the delivery of tractor parts.⁹⁴ The Czechoslovak aid comprised the delivery of logistical support equipment and light firearms (400 Model 43/44 S carabines, 800 Model 41S submachine-guns, 80 Model 62 light machine guns,



S.E. Vladimír Knap présente au Chef de l'Etat le matériel agricole.

Kopie
z archivu MZV ČR
Kopie
z archivu
Ostatní údaje č. 267 261/2001 - OZU
Datum: 22.5.2001
Provozi

LA COOPERATION KHMERO-TCHÉCOSLOVAQUE



Remise du matériel offert par la Tchécoslovaquie

Accompagné par S.E. Vladimír Knap, le Chef de l'Etat inspecte le matériel tchécoslovaque.

Kopie
z archivu MZV ČR
Ostatní údaje č. 267 261/2001 - OZU
Datum: 22.5.2001
Provozi

Donated weapons
handed over,
Article about the
Czechoslovak
donation, 1964,
Archives of the
Ministry of Foreign
Affairs

and 1,440,000 rounds of ammunition).⁹⁵ This shipment was destined to arrive in the latter half of September. However, Prince Sihanouk asked President Novotný, at the end of July, to send small quantities of arms as soon as possible, preferably on board a Czechoslovak aircraft, so it would reach Cambodia before the end of August.⁹⁶ He explained that he was going to hand over weapons provided within the assistance framework by some friendly countries, such as the USSR, People's Republic of China, France and Yugoslavia, to the peasant and student militias, during August, and he would be pleased to present weapons from friendly Czechoslovakia during the event.⁹⁷ In the event, the Czechoslovak military aid was presented at a separate ceremony in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh on 19 October 1964.⁹⁸

Cultural and Sports Relations

Early cultural contacts between Czechoslovakia and Cambodia were quite modest but all projects implemented in this field were quite successful. Thus, Slovakia's SEUK folk dance ensemble received a Cambodian decoration after a successful performance attended by the King, in 1957.⁹⁹ The Czechoslovak puppet theatre ensemble Radost visited Cambodia in November 1958. They staged their successful performances for child audiences, *It Will Work out Fine*, *Chubby Face*, and *Songs and Puppets*.

However, even this early period yielded works of art of unquestionable relevance. In December 1958, two Czechoslovak film-makers – Vlado Kubenka and Ján Cifra – arrived in Cambodia. During their sojourn, extending to more than six months, they cut, in Siem Reap Province, a colour full screen film *Angkor Wat*, a black-and-white *Bayon*, a colour film *A Day in Phnom Penh*, in addition to eight inputs to documentary film and television productions.¹⁰⁰ To this day, their photographs of the Angkor serve as priceless documents about the appearance of this monument in the late 1950s. The noted Czech authority on Oriental studies, Miloslav Krása, assembled Cifra's photographs in his book, *The Temples of Angkor*.¹⁰¹

The mutual contacts in the field of culture intensified when both sides signed a cultural agreement, in 1960. Cooperation was broadened in the fields of schools, education and arts. Quite a few significant events took place, such as *Czechoslovak Film Days* in Cambodia. In 1961, Cambodian students started enrolling in Czechoslovak institutions of higher learning, as pioneers of a tradition continuing until today.

In June 1964, Prague admired the performance of seven members of the Royal Cambodian Ballet Ensemble in their classic scenes led by Princess Bupha Devi. All evenings at Prague's ABC Theatre were sold out. The Czechoslovak Ministry of Culture and Education, in conjunction with the Embassy of Cambodia organized the exhibition *Cambodia Today* in Prague's Náprstek Museum, in 1966.

In 1967, Vladimír Sís and Ladislav Smoček co-directed their movie, *Picnic*, about five American soldiers fighting in the jungle.¹⁰² Czechoslovakia repeatedly attended the *Phnom Penh International Film Festival*, and Cambodian films were screened in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰³ As a token of friendship, one of the main streets of Phnom Penh was renamed Czechoslovak Socialist Republic Avenue, in 1965.¹⁰⁴

The Czechoslovak Film Days project saw several annual editions. In the second half of 1962 alone, over 70,000 viewers saw Czechoslovak film productions.¹⁰⁵ The Cambodian government presented Prague's National Gallery with a set of Angkor relief artifacts.

In Phnom Penh, the exhibitions *Fifteen Years of Czechoslovak Physical Education and Sports* (1961) and *Czechoslovakia* (1962) were held. In February 1958, Red Star Footballers of Bratislava arrived in Cambodia. The Red Stars played three

Příloha k čj. 003534/P-62

Přísně tajné!
Výtisk 45/117!
Počet listů: 1

Tajnost zrušena podle
č. 35/6-12/1999 - 6262 - MO od 2/

Specifikace materiálu pro Kambodžu.

Název	Počet kusů	Celková cena v
7,62 mm karabina 43/44 S	400	60 000
7,62 mm samopal vz.41 S	800	115 200
7,62 mm lehký kulomet vz.52	80	240 000
7,62 mm náboj okrajový do karabiny (v tis.ks)	288	120 960
7,62 mm náboj do samopalu (v tis.ks)	864	216 000

assistance donated Military Institute, ue, 1964

winning matches in Phnom Penh, scoring 11-0 against the Phnom Penh select team, 1-0 with an army select team, and 7-0 with a Phnom Penh team reinforced by army players. Price Sihanouk was so impressed by the Czechoslovak footballers that he asked, through the Czechoslovak ambassador, for two football coaches to come to Cambodia. From March 1958 to September 1959, the Czechoslovak instructor František Kolman trained in Phnom Penh the pupils of the *Institut National Pédagogique*, *École Nationale des Arts et Métiers* and the *Lycée Sisowath*. He also coached the Cambodian team for an international match against Laos, and in a one-month course he trained coaches and referees from among school physical-training instructors.¹⁰⁶

Many Czechoslovak athletes visited Cambodia in subsequent years, mainly Czech and Slovak League volleyball and football players. In 1961, the Spartak Prague Football Team played two winning matches in Cambodia, the last match with the Cambodian National Team being presided over by the Head of State, Prince Sihanouk.¹⁰⁷ Czechoslovak physical education expert Rudolf Volráb worked in Cambodia for one year, in the early 1960s. His task was to devise a system of training for physical education cadres. However, the mass physical education displays under his direction never took place.¹⁰⁸ Towards the end of 1963, another friendly soccer match took place in the Phnom Penh stadium. This time, Dukla Prague beat the Cambodian select team 5:0.¹⁰⁹

Yet another story unfolded against the background of stormy and momentous developments in the history of Cambodian and Czech history: the story of Sihanouk's son, Prince Sihamoni.

The prince was born on 14 May 1953. His father thought it was a good omen because his country gained independence under international agreements in that year. The boy went to a French school in Phnom Penh. But his father decided that Sihamoni should study abroad. In May 1962, Prince Norodom Sihanouk wrote letters to Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný and asked him to enable the education of his son, Norodom Sihamoni, in a Czechoslovak school:

Phnom Penh, 17 May 1962

Dear Mr. President,

The bonds of mutual friendship and ever-closer cooperation that unite our two countries make me ask friendly Czechoslovakia today to assume the task of educating my son, Norodom SIHAMONI, who is nine years old. I am convinced that the Czechoslovak school systems has no peers in terms of pedagogical, civil and moral attitudes, as far as preparation of young people for the tasks that await them. And that my child will be the pride of his teachers, family, and country.

I would especially like to see my boy, whose youngest brother has just been sent to study in Moscow, enroll in one of Prague's primary schools and prepare, in the same conditions as Czechoslovak children, to further his studies in the field in which he will manifest the best qualifications. This son, who is dear to me, will be accompanied by a boy of equal age, who has been selected as his classmate, and who is the son of my colleague, Kou Roun, a Member of the Supreme Council to the Throne.

May I ask you, Mr. President, to grant protection to the two children, who will reside at the Cambodian Embassy in Prague?

I have availed myself of this opportunity to express my great satisfaction with the friendship and cooperation of our two countries which are developing in an exceptional atmosphere of mutual confidence.





Ceremonial vow of Young Pioneers in the Majakovského Street Elementary School in Prague, fourth from right: Prince Sihamoni, 6. 5. 1963, © Oldřich Pícha, Czech News Agency ČTK



Prince Sihamoni at the Majakovského Primary School in Prague, 5. 11. 1962, © Josef Nosek, Czech News Agency ČTK



Prince Sihamoni attends his Czech language lesson at the Majakovského Primary School in Prague, 5. 11. 1962, © Josef Nosek, Czech News Agency ČTK



Prince Sihamoni flexes his muscles at the Majakovského Street Primary School in Prague, 5. 11. 1962, © Josef Nosek, Czech News Agency ČTK



Czechoslovak Young Pioneers take their solemn oath at the Majakovského Street Primary School in Prague, fifth from right: Prince Sihamoni, 6. 5. 1963, © Oldřich Pícha, Czech News Agency ČTK

Understanding and support from Czechoslovakia are a great encouragement for my country, which is living under a permanent threat of imperialism and its neighbours that enjoy powerful support and encouragement.

Let me express my sincere gratitude and ask you, Mr. President, to accept assurances of my undying respect and truest friendship.

Sihanouk (signed).¹¹⁰

In a second letter, to Prime Minister Viliam Široký, Norodom Sihanouk again insists: *Please be so kind to ensure that my child, who could enroll in one of Prague's primary schools, be treated on the principle of strict equality with other Czechoslovak children... At the same time he adds: My wife and I have discovered remarkable artistic inclinations in the child (Sihamoni). I would also like see his studies geared towards music and classical dance so that he is able, one day, to help his country include these forms of Western art in its cultural development. I am convinced that Czechoslovakia, whose world musical renown is beyond dispute, may be an initiator and teacher in this field... He also asked that his instruction in French be continued.¹¹¹*



*Cover page of the magazine
Život XIII, No. 24,
10.6.1963*

President A. Novotný replied: *Monseigneur, I was pleased to receive your letter, in which you announced your wish to send your son, Prince Norodom Sihamoni, to study in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and stated the reasons that led you to make this decision. I should like to thank you for your beautiful appraisal of youth education in our country, and to assure you that your son and his classmate will receive complete care in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak pedagogues will see to it that your son's education and training for life meet the criteria you mentioned in your letter, and yield results that will meet your expectations. I have instructed relevant Czechoslovak officials to ensure everything that is necessary for the education of both children and to create suitable conditions not only for their education but also their personal satisfaction with their stay in our country...¹¹²*

Prime Minister Široký added in a special letter: *Allow me to also most cordially thank Your Royal Majesty for your words of praise for the Czechoslovak socialist education system and for your confidence in it. Performing arts have attained a high level in Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak musical education enjoys a good reputation in the world. This, together with other educational care, is a guarantee that the young Prince will receive an education of quality.¹¹³*

Prince Sihamoni was granted a Czechoslovak governmental scholarship.

He was less than nine years old when he arrived in Czechoslovakia, in June 1962. *The sky was grey, the streets were grey, and he had a big heart. Two days ago he was careless, pampered by his parents in a city of light. To be a prince, the son of a head of state, to be privileged to savour life, and to be replanted into the heart of Europe, that's a cruel fate. The first weeks are not radiant for the young Sihamoni. He will have to know his primary school, a difficult language and his classmates. But he is coping without remorse, he is settling down... reported the Cambodian monthly Kambuja.¹¹⁴*

He spent July in the company of children of Foreign Ministry employees, in a Young Pioneers' camp at Bítov, Moravia, where also children from France, Morocco and Austria were spending their summer vacations. In August, he stayed with the family of Cambodia's Ambassador in Prague, Kim Tith, at his own request.



*Walk in a park,
prince Sihamoni
with Milada Novotná
and her daughter Eva
Martínková-Bednářová,
1963, Archives of
Svatopluk Novotný*



*Giant Mountains,
weekend house of Novotný family, winter 1968,
Archives of Svatopluk Novotný*

*Valašské Klobouky (Moravia), visiting
relatives of the Novotný family, 1964,
Archives of Svatopluk Novotný*

*Christmas in Prague, 1969,
Archives of Svatopluk Novotný*

*First Christmas in Prague, 1964,
Archives of Svatopluk Novotný*

In Prague, Sihamoni at first lived at the Cambodian embassy, in Na Zátorce Street. He enrolled in third grade of the nine-year primary school in Prague 6, Majakovského 15. The Ministry of Education also hired a tutor – the university teacher Karel Polák. His task was to coach Sihamoni for his classes, supervise his French lessons at the request of Prince Sihanouk, and escort him to cultural undertakings (theatre, films, walks etc.). Additional motion exercise (dance and rhythm elements) and physical education lessons were included in Sihamoni's teaching plans – a measure necessitated by bad kinetic coordination and rather feeble physical shape of the prince, who would later become an accomplished dancer.

Tutor Karel Polák reported on the first stages of Sihamoni's stay in Czechoslovakia in December 1962:

[Sihamoni] stays at school after classes from October (i.e. in the School Club – 8-9 hours every day in total) and shows demonstrable progress in spoken as well as written and printed Czech. The positive fact is that the head mistress, his form teacher and tutor have all earned his trust. His head mistress daily escorts him from home to school. Sihamoni talks with her about his impressions from home and from school.

The scope of his interests is widening proportionately to the improvement in his language skills. Initially, he was interested only in ballet, but now he has added film (as he begins to understand it) and opera to his favourites. Sometimes he invents various plots that he can even express in Czech, or by dance and music.

His extra-curricular education is jointly looked after, in an entertaining manner, by the head mistress, his tutor, and Comrade Durdilová from the Ministry of Education.¹¹⁵ The head mistress works with him on Sundays, too. His form teacher pays individual attention to him, assigning Czech language homework projects, which the Prince solves under the guidance of his tutor and which proved valuable especially during December as his spelling skills improved and his interest in reading and poetry increased.

However, ballet is still the strongest inspiration for him. He has natural feel for rhythm and melody. Initially, this was the only form of entertainment he could comprehend. Comrade Durdilová and his tutor have arranged for the Prince to attend Saturday



Prince Sihamoni (centre) in the ballet performance of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, 21. 12. 1964, © Jovan Dezort, Czech News Agency ČTK



Sihamoni with Milada Novotná and her daughter Eva Martínková-Bednářová in Prague, Archives of Cecilie Durdilová



Sihamoni on a trip with an employee of the Cambodian Embassy, Archives of Cecilie Durdilová



ballet performances in the National Theatre and the Estates' Theatre. This is closely associated with his interest in eurhythmics and hobby sports.

The boy is very clever, has good memory, and is alert and diligent in his classes (...). His interest in the world of fairytales and romantic stories is perhaps too lively. The school and his tutor have been trying to direct his attention to other, more realistic matters and to make him want to overcome difficulties, albeit with a limited degree of success.

It does seem, however, that the boy is changing also in this respect and the combined influence of his school, classmates, form teacher and head mistress have a positive influence on him...¹¹⁶

Another report, filed probably by a school teacher in January 1963, states the following:

We are in a position to say that apart from Czech, and National History and Geography, he is on a par with the good pupils and is ahead of his class in Mathematics.

His classroom conduct has been very good since the start of the school year: he is very concentrated, alert and meticulous. He keeps his exercise-books in good order but has little knack for calligraphy. His endeavour to work independently is most commendable. He is happy when he has results but does not take criticism lightly and highlighting his mistakes (...)

Interaction with children in an environment where he cannot use his French continues to be of paramount significance for his learning in Czech. He can make himself very well understood in the company of children and is capable of communicating his desires to adults as well. In the classroom, he now much better understands what teacher says, he likes to read and his written expressions are growing more accurate.

After classes, he is somewhat less keen to work hard. One explanation is that his attentiveness in the classroom, and a foreign language environment, totally saps his energy and therefore, we must look for other ways to motivate him for further endeavours.



Sihamoni with Ms. Durdilová visiting Irena Svobodová, the wife of the President Ludvík Svoboda, Archives of Cecilie Durdilová



Irena Svobodová, the spouse of President Ludvík Svoboda, receiving Prince Sihamoni, 16. 6. 1969, © Jiří Rublič, Czech News Agency ČTK

He likes to be with his classmates whom he has befriended. He likes to take part in all activities ensuing from the life of his class collective (in the classroom, in the dining room, in his school club, and in the children's organization). His dressing skills, which were virtually nil at the start of the school year, are very commendable.

*He is coping remarkably well with the harsh weather in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. He was happy to see the first snow. He began to skate and he likes to attend school outings...*¹¹⁷ Yet another report discloses that the Prince received a skiing outfit as a gift from Education and Culture Minister František Kahuda, which he enjoyed tremendously. He spent his mid-year holiday on a skiing trip to the Giant Mountains.¹¹⁸

That's what brief official reports say. But how does it feel, for a young boy, to find himself in a strange and exotic country? He was nine and did not speak a word of Czech. He was left without his parents and friends from Cambodia as Kou Roun's son eventually had not come along to Prague, and the Cambodian ambassador's children were studying abroad. What countless hardships had he to overcome? In October 1963, Karel Polák wrote a personal letter to Sihamoni's mother, Norodom Monineath Sihanouk. Polák acutely perceived the boy's loneliness and spent five or six hours a day with him (largely because of his scrupulousness). However, he had to resign as tutor due to other obligations and poor health.

Madame,

First of all, allow me to apologize for leaving your letter unanswered for such a long time. I have spent a long period receiving health treatment out of Prague.

I believe it is my duty to explain why I resigned as tutor to your son, Prince Sihamoni. I would like to assure you that I have always liked Sihamoni and felt very sad when he went home at the end of June and when it became clear that I will not be able to resume working with him after the summer holiday. My health condition worsened towards the end of the school year and my concurrent obligations towards the University of Agriculture gave little hope that I could fulfil these two responsible tasks simultaneously. Therefore, I have very reluctantly asked the Ministry of Education and Culture to relieve me of my post of tutor.

Madame, you have asked me in your letter to explain some circumstances that have to do with the character and conduct of Sihamoni. I will try to do it. However, it is necessary to go back to September 1962, when I began my work with him.

The first few weeks were very difficult for him. The boy had found himself in a foreign language environment. At first, the language problems were quite severe, attacking his sensitive nervous system. I made it easier for him by frequently speaking in French with him while at school, he mostly learned in natural situations with children in and after classes. We arrived at this formula in conjunction with his Head Mistress, and in time, our decision proved correct.

This initial period extended to about five months. In February, a telegram from the Monsieigneur arrived and I had the honour to accompany Sihamoni via Moscow to Beijing. In Moscow, I had the opportunity to meet Prince Narindrapong¹¹⁹. Naturally, I watched and compared the two boys. I saw differences between their interests, attitudes to sport for example, and in their physical endurance.

The trip to Beijing was an important milestone for Sihamoni. In my opinion, this was partly due to the fact that after a long time he could again see his parents – the Monseigneur and you, Madame, to whom he was looking forward so intensely. Upon his return to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Sihamoni was much more willing to speak Czech, while French as a means of easier communication took the back seat. It was evident that everyday lengthy exposure to a child collective was bringing out fruits in season.

It should be noted, in this context, that Sihamoni has established a good rapport with his friends, and was always prepared to perform all his school duties in the classroom as well as in the school club. I could watch him interact with other children e.g. on regular outings with his hiking group. He liked those hikes and looked forward to them. There was only one thing I resented. Sihamoni hated to be on the losing side in games. Whenever he failed to score, his interest quickly slackened. I tried to tell him that one cannot always win, that it is often necessary to accept defeat, and that games are about entertainment and exercise, and not about prestige. His fair play spirit, manifested by his sympathies for positive heroes of fairytales, helped him overcome these difficulties and it seems he has gradually evolved into a "buddy" who knows that victory sometimes belongs to the other side. I am citing this example only to show that educating the Prince was a rewarding mission.

There was also the aspect of his exceptionally strong fantasy, initially manifested by his narrow focus on fairytales. All of us admired his interest in ballet, music, theatre and films. I would later try to channel his fancy towards more tangible goals, technical toys, and the world around us. Sihamoni was not attracted by such things. This set him apart from, say, Mr. Ambassador's children, who sometimes ridiculed his interest in ballet. Sihamoni took a liking to his Head Mistress from the start. When staying in her home during the longer absence of Mrs. Khim Tit, he became so attached to her and her family that he did not want to return to the embassy, where he was alone most of the time as there were no other children around except for holidays. His stay in the family of his Head Mistress was useful for Sihamoni also in that he lived in a Czech environment and had to speak Czech whether he liked it or not.

Finally, Madame, I would like to say something about Prince Sihamoni's behaviour towards me. There were moments, in the process of his education, that signalled certain less positive features of his character. Chief among them, in my view, was his dislike for overcoming difficulties, especially in spheres in the periphery of his interest. On the other hand, I have always admired his natural intelligence, the meticulous care he devoted to his written papers, his tendency to work independently, and his gentle ways with friends. It is every educator's dream to cultivate good personal qualities in his pupil. Our pedagogy pursues pedagogical optimism. I have never been pessimistic, not even in Sihamoni's case. To tell the truth, Sihamoni was stubborn at times. But I don't think parents should be reported and complained to, on issues that, from the educator's point of view, will certainly be sorted out by further upbringing. Sihamoni's behaviour towards me is a case in point. He did not behave himself in a few instances. However, external circumstances were always a factor, for he had not invented them and could not tackle them. That was why he acted in haste. *Comprendre c'est pardonner*. Since I knew why he so acted in such situations, I really could not get angry with him. But I do not hide it that I criticized his behaviour.

Sihamoni saw me after his return from Cambodia. It occurred to me that he had made further progress during the two months of his absence; now he was more serious and calmer. I am told by his Head Mistress that he likes his new tutor and is doing well. I am happy to hear that and I wish you, Madame, and the Monseigneur, that you received only good reports about your son and that the results of his education met your expectations. I am sure that all those who work with Sihamoni are trying hard to achieve such results.

In conclusion, let me thank you for the courtesy accorded to me in the form of the gift you have sent to my wife.

With Best Regards,

K. Polák (signed)¹²⁰

At the same time, it was increasingly obvious that Sihamoni did not enjoy the Cambodian embassy environment where there was no family ambience while his rapport with the Ambassador's wife was rather poor.¹²¹ It was decided that Sihamoni could stay in a Czech family if Sihanouk agrees. The Czechoslovak education ministry's May 1963 report to the Czech embassy in Phnom Penh says: *"Sihamoni is not happy at the embassy and constantly asks to stay with the Czech family of his school head mistress. Madame Khim Tit (Ambassador's wife – Author's note) does not provide for him on Sundays and holidays. She always asks for him to be in our care. At this time, i.e. from 29 April to 12 May, he is staying with the Head Mistress. Such irregularities and his dislike for life at the Cambodian embassy have previously made us consider his transfer to a Czech family on a permanent basis. Your Report 31 was the final impulse and therefore, the possibility of transfer has been subject to preliminary discussions involving top officials of our State. On the basis of these negotiations we would like you to draw the attention of Sihamoni's parents to the*



Prince Norodom
Sihamoni in
Prague, 1966, © Archives
of Svatopluk Novotný

issue, in an opportune moment. If they should agree and request this solution, we believe that the boy's life would be much calmer and this step would be conducive to the overall improvement of his physical and psychical condition...¹²²

Mrs. Milada Novotná was Head Mistress of the school in Majakovského Street. The youthful Sihamoni liked her very much. He would frequently see her in her study and later also visit her at home. Mrs. Novotná explained many of the circumstances that had led to the suggestion that he stays in her family in her reply to a personal letter from Madame Norodom Monineath Sihanouk:

Chère Madame Sihanouk!

Thank you for your lovely letter. Since you have expressed your confidence in me, this is a welcome opportunity to provide you with the full explanation of all circumstances around Sihamoni, and why the plea was made for him to stay with my family.

Our family eagerly expected the arrival of Sihamoni to whom we were looking forward. We waited for him at the airport together with Mr. Ambassador's family and were happy to see Sihamoni gladly return to Czechoslovakia.

He spent the first few days with his brother and cousin at the embassy. After the start of the school year (2 September), Mme Kim Thit asked me through Comrade Durdilová from the Ministry of Education to have Sihamoni over for about one week starting 4 September, since she and Mr. Ambassador were to travel abroad. I was happy to oblige because I like the boy and because, as you know, he has regularly stayed with us on all free days and when Mme Kim Thit was out of Prague, she always asked me to take care of him.

After Mme Kim Thit's return to Prague (around 10 September), Sihamoni asked us if he could stay on until the arrival of a new ambassador. Since Mme Kim Thit informed us, immediately after Sihamoni's arrival, that he could only visit us on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, pending your approval, I was not sure what to do. Sihamoni helped me by calling Mme Kim Thit to ask for permission to stay with me. Although he has obtained such permission, I deemed it necessary, following consultations with the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Office of President Novotný, for Sihamoni to seek your consent as we had no wish to act contrary to your original decision.



Sihamoni at the Durdils' place on Christmas Eve, Archives of Cecilie Durdilová



Sihamoni at the Durdils' place on Christmas Eve, Archives of Cecilie Durdilová



Sihamoni in the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše) Archives of Cecilie Durdilová

Furthermore, I should like to answer your query about the reasons and motives of the boy's request. In my view, and in the opinion of teachers at my school, Sihamoni has a highly developed sense of justice, is very sensitive, and any injustice deeply injures him. I have great respect for these values and intend to build his character upon them. Sihamoni is unusually intelligent, bright and friendly, far exceeding our children in many ways. However, by comparison with other children he does not veer off normal child's ways and can well be directed along with these character features.

I infer from what he says that in this respect, Sihamoni did not feel at home, at the embassy. Sihamoni felt completely abandoned because Mme Kim Thit's children had been sent to various boarding schools outside Czechoslovakia, and when they were in Prague, he felt they were being preferred by their mother, and he complained of this on several occasions. Therefore I tried to create an environment in which he would be really happy, arranged for his stay in the school club, and set up an environment for him in my family.

I know that constant change of environment is not conducive to healthy development, which was manifested, in Sihamoni's case, during the past school year. The situation was not alleviated even by the efforts of Mr. Polák who, as shown by the Prince's results in the second term, was not sufficiently strong and authoritative

towards the boy. This was due to his many duties and frail health. Therefore, Mr. Polák asked to be relieved of his tutorial duty at the end of the school year, and the Ministry of Education and Culture met his request, citing the above serious grounds.

Sihamoni's new tutor, as from 1 September, is Ms. Věra Štrouflová, a 25-year-old teacher, who reports directly to me and stays with the Prince and the school collective until 6 p.m. every day. So far, my experience with her has been good and her influence on the boy has been positive.

I can assure you that Sihamoni's request to live in our place was not a momentary whim and his leaving the embassy was not dictated by the desire to escape obedience and discipline but rather, it ensued from the general situation and was exactly what he had wished for. The boy has calmed down and is trying hard to really earn his stay. All members of our family like Sihamoni and he likes us back. He has to observe certain rules but he will always happily oblige. He is interested in music and dance, goes to theatres and movies with us, and his inventive musical and dance improvisations emanate joy and satisfaction, which makes me believe that everything is alright.

Sihamoni is also popular among his classmates and has quickly made friends to spend some of his time with after classes. We spend weekends with Comrade Durdilová's boy of the same age. All this helps create favourable conditions for the development of his character.

I am pleased to tell you that your worries concerning the behaviour of your child are unnecessary. The boy is very polite and thus far there has been no reason to complain. His conduct, discipline and attitude to class work have further improved after his return from Cambodia, and in my opinion, he takes your advice seriously and tries to behave accordingly. This school year is more challenging for Sihamoni because Russian has been added to his syllabus, but he can rely on the support of my daughter, Eva, who studied the language at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University.

In addition to education I make every effort to see him thrive physically as well. I am pleased to report that he likes the food we serve in the family, is not choosy, and has gained one kilo in less than one month. He will write you regularly every two weeks for as long as he stays with us. He last wrote on 28 September.

ČESKOSLOVENSKÁ SOCIALISTICKÁ REPUBLIKA

KONSERVATOR V PRAZE

Číslo katalogu: 30- Školní rok: 1969/70

VYSVĚDČENÍ

Zámek a příjmení: **NORODOM SIHAMONI**

Dat, měsíc a rok narození: **14. květen 1954** Rodičů: **Tham - Peng - Eanthea**

Kraj: **...** Místní přísl. **...** Zast. přísl. **...**

Ročník: **...** Oddělení **...**

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Prince Norodom Sihamoni's school report showing excellent results, 27. 6. 1969, Conservatory in Prague

My report is lengthy as I have discerned, from your letter, great motherly care and worries that some incorrect features might surface in Sihamoni's character. Madame Sihanouk, let me assure you once again that I am aware of the enormous responsibility I have assumed in educating your child, and will certainly inform you and your husband about the wellbeing of your son, in due course.

Finally, let me and my daughter thank you for the gifts you sent us through Sihamoni. We admired the skills of the Cambodian people who can weave such exquisite fabrics, and we were very pleased.

*Respectfully Yours,
Milada Novotná¹²³*

Since the situation improved after the change of ambassador, Sihamoni stayed at the embassy. However, he often visited Headmistress Novotná's family with whom he also spent weekends. Her husband, Svatopluk Novotný, would later recollect: in conversation with Miroslav Nožina:

There was the inscription 'ŘEDITELNA' (Headmaster's Study) on the door of my wife's office. At first, before getting into his Czech, he called her 'soudružko ředitelno' (literally, Comrade Headmaster's Study – author's note) and me, 'pane' (Sir). Sometimes, it was quite funny. He tried his Czech on me, and I spoke broken French.

We had a small weekend cottage overlooking Vrchlabí in the Giant Mountains. So the boy wouldn't have to be alone on weekends, we made an arrangement with the embassy secretary and took him along with us. Before long, Sihamoni was spending most Saturdays and Sundays with us. A very close friendship resulted. We had a son and daughter of our own and Sihamoni did like all kids do. He played; he made antics. Sometimes the boys use pretty harsh language. I told my wife: 'This boy must be full of hidden contradictions. Here he lives like a normal Prague schoolboy but when he goes home for holiday, people will bow and call him Your Royal Highness.' Whenever he visited his home country, it was a red letter day in Phnom Penh. I thought, oh my, the kids here treat him like an equal and the papers at home cite from his school reports.

Were these contradictions reflected by his behaviour?

No, they didn't, really, but there was something unusual about him. You see, there are many clever and talented people in this country but lots of them lack ambition, the urge to achieve. But he was different, he was ambitious. Whenever he did something, it was 110 per cent. He loved ballet. This kid was pirouetting and dancing all the time. He was physically well-endowed for that. We went to the theatre at least twice every week. He was a kind of walking encyclopedia of Prague's art scene. You could ask him anything – and he knew.

What about the relationships between the great statesman Sihanouk and the Novotný family?

I met Sihanouk only once, on his state visit to Czechoslovakia. He attended the premiere of his film 'The Enchanted Forest' at the U Hradeb cinema. Sihanouk delivered his speech in French and little Sihamoni translated it into Czech.

It was more of a relationship between Monique Sihanouk, Sihamoni's mother, and the Novotný family than Sihanouk himself. She sent them her greetings and letters regularly.¹²⁴

In 1966, the President of Czechoslovakia asked the relevant authorities for a report on Sihamoni's studies. According to the report, Sihamoni concluded fifth grade of primary school in Prague 6 in the school year 1964/65. His father's assessment of his talents proved to be correct – it was reported that Sihamoni excelled in arts, so it was decided he should continue in a school with focus on instruction of foreign languages (French and Russian) in Prague 1.

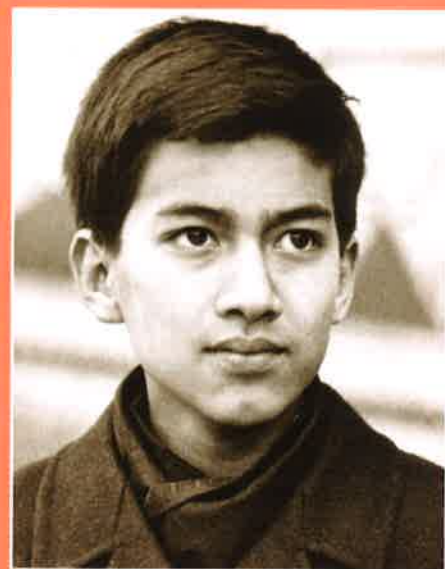
In the new school year (note 1965/6) he takes private ballet lessons (in the National Theatre), lessons of Piano and French language. Besides that we asked the school director Novotná to dedicate him also, as a preceptor, 2-3 hours per day, if necessary. He seeks any possibility to perform in theatre (ballet Nutcracker in the National Theatre), he applied on his own initiative to the casting and was chosen for a TV production of the children's opera Brundibár, so he is very active in his after-school time. He spends the money he earns in the theatre and TV for gramophone records (especially Czech operas). According to our information from Phnom Penh, during his vacation Sihamoni's mother asked him to repeat



Portrait of the Prince Norodom Sihamoni painted by Ms. Marta Novotná during his visit to Olomouc in 1965



Sihamoni at the Durdils' place, Archives of Cecílie Durdilová



Sihamoni outside a Prague palace, Archives of Cecílie Durdilová

twice a week for ca 2 hours the curriculum from the last school year, in order not to come back to Prague unprepared.

His school knowledge is good, for a foreigner very good. For his age, he has a highly superior knowledge of music, especially opera, and in the field of literature, dramatic arts and film. These predictions are always dominant and correspond to his character, which is rather quiet, contemplative and, in relation to people he does not know, reserved. He remembers very well the books he read (he read also many Czech books), he knows most operas performed in Prague, and he knows practically all Czech actors, he has his opinions on music and singing performances and individual productions. He organizes music and opera evenings at home.

The report appreciated his excellent command of the Czech language, and his fondness for the Czech environment, which, it was noted, *he likes very much and trusts it.*

In 1967, the Czech director Vladimír Sís made a film documentary on Sihamoni, *Another Little Prince*, paraphrasing the name of the famous book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.¹²⁵

Prince Sihamoni finished primary school in 1967 and continued his education at the Prague Conservatory, a respectable institution whose history goes back to 1808.

On Saturday, 27 July 1968, during Sihamoni's summer vacation in Phnom Penh, Prince Sihanouk staged an evening of classic Western ballet and traditional Khmer dance in the city's Chakdomouk Theatre, for the diplomatic corps, UN experts and other guests. The star of the evening was Prince Sihamoni, accompanied by Olga Daniel Beck on pianoforte. The prince performed, among other numbers, *Pilky* from the *Lachian Dances* by Leoš Janáček, and *Souvenir* by Frederic Chopin, in the choreography of Leo Sokolov. In an interview to Kambuja monthly, Sihamoni spoke about his favourite works of art: in the field of dramatic art, he preferred *Pygmalion* by G. B. Shaw, *L'Aigle* and *Deux Tetes* by Jean Cocteau, and *Sodome et Gomorrhe* by Jean Girardoux. He wanted to dance the clown from the ballet *Petrouchka* by Igor Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky's *La Belle au Bois Dormant*. His favourite operas were *Il Trovatore* by Verdi, *Manon Lescaut* by Puccini, and *Carmen* by Bizet¹²⁶

Czechoslovakia was occupied by the armies of the Warsaw Pact on 21 August 1968. The school year usually started in early September but Sihamoni's parents were reluctant to send him back to school under the circumstances. The fast "normalizing" Czechoslovak authorities collaborating with the Soviet occupiers were anxious to conjure up a semblance of law and order in their country, and to get Sihamoni back. In Phnom Penh, Ambassador Petrželka was working hard to dispel reports on a worsening situation in Czechoslovakia, describing Western news reports as distorted. In the event, Sihamoni, who was escorted to the airport by the premier of Cambodia, left for Czechoslovakia on board a ČSA airliner, on 22 September. Princess Monique had asked for him to be provided security and home education on embassy soil. The Czechoslovak side promised to provide security but insisted that he continues to attend classes, arguing that *the process of consolidation and stabilization continues* and that *life in Prague is normal, theatres are open, and there is business as usual at schools of all degrees*. It was allegedly impossible to recruit the sufficient number of teachers for home education. Nevertheless, Sihamoni did eventually receive Czech, Russian and French instruction at home. He returned to the Conservatory on 25 September to the rousing welcome of his classmates and teachers. Professor Šemberová and one of her colleagues reportedly had not returned and probably stayed abroad. Sihamoni joined his Czech classmates and they went on strike and demonstrated against the occupation of Czechoslovakia. After one week, the Cambodian ambassador told him that he should, as a son of the Cambodian head of state, refrain from any such activities.¹²⁷

The reforms of the Prague Spring were forcibly brought to a halt on 21 August 1968 when Czechoslovakia was occupied. Massive purges took place in the Communist Party and State establishment and Czechoslovakia obediently returned to the Soviet orbit. By contrast, Sihanouk was increasingly gravitating towards China as the Sino-Soviet rift was deepening, and he suppressed left-wingers at home. An analysis by the Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh noted: *The people who have now rallied behind Sihanouk are mostly of reactionary-monarchist and anti-Soviet hue, and Sihanouk himself is known in the country as a diehard monarchist and anticommunist, who has ordered the liquidation of many progressive, pro-democratic and pro-socialist patriots, thus helping strengthen right-wing forces in his country*.¹²⁸ This, of course, rubbed the Czechoslovak communist regime the wrong way. The Czechoslovak embassy report on the first half of 1970 described relations with Sihanouk's Cambodia as *not too cordial*.¹²⁹

In a scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian movie *Nine Circles of Hell* set in Cambodia in the late 60s, a Cambodian upper middle-class woman says to the fiancé of her daughter, a Czech physician working in Cambodia as a part of Czechoslovak development assistance: *I like your traditional customs very much. The son of Sihanouk, our Prince, who studied in your country, talked about them very often*. Her son Chivaon, a Cambodian student who returned from France recently, reacts angrily: *Sihanouk's son? I only hope he will never become King. We need socialism, not a monarchy*. His mother is appalled: *Chivaon, how can you say that?*, but he insists: *It's true, Mum. It is time to get rid of all this and establish order instead of this messy neutrality. You can't deny that there are decadent trends in the Western countries. But the new generation will free this society. When we occupied the Sorbonne, I was wondering how many of us there were. It was incredible how many people were willing to show their opinion and defend it*.

But it was not only the leftist students and insurgents who wanted to overthrow Sihanouk's government. The world was split up by the Cold War and a bloody and protracted conflict was raging in neighbouring Vietnam. For a small country, to maintain a neutralist policy in a zone where the great powers keep each other at bay, and to make overtures to socialism at the same time, was to walk a very tight rope. Sihanouk was quickly growing unacceptable for the United States as well.

In January 1970, Sihanouk went to France for his regular health checks after which he planned to visit several countries. He specifically asked for rest and recreation in an area nearby Prague.¹³⁰ He planned to pay an official visit to Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda and to attend a projection of his new film, *Twilight*. Sihanouk then left for Moscow on 13 March only to learn, five days later, that the situation in Cambodia had come to a head and right-wingers led by General Lon Nol had staged a coup d'état. Cambodia's traditional royal system had become history and a Khmer Republic would be proclaimed later in the year. Under an agreement with the new government, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops launched massive military operations in Cambodian territory. The conflict in Vietnam escalated into a war in Indochina. Virtually overnight, Sihanouk became a stateless exile. His planned trip to Czechoslovakia never took place.

In the wake of Lon Nol's coup, the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Phnom Penh was recalled to Prague for *consultations*, but formal diplomatic relations with the Lon Nol regime were not severed. Prague continued to maintain them on the lowest possible level. A single diplomat was left to man the embassy in Phnom Penh, and Czechoslovak specialists were withdrawn from Cambodia.¹³¹ Czechoslovakia did not wish to sever these relations completely as at least in the first stage after coming to power the new government of Lon Nol attempted to profile itself as a *government of national salvation* and keeper of Cambodian neutrality and non-aligned status. It expressed its preparedness to meet all its international obligations. The Phnom Penh embassy's analysis after the ouster of Sihanouk noted: *The new government, even despite its rightist character, is for many reasons committed to the presence of socialist countries in Cambodia, and maybe also to the development of friendly cooperation with them. The pressure is coming from France which fears facing the U.S.A. single-handedly and the gradual loss of its positions both here and in the whole region. The current government also is not too keen to become unilaterally dependent on the U.S.A. and its closest allies, fearing it would ultimately have to go to war against Vietnam. However, it is anybody's guess how far it will be allowed, in the ever more complex situation in the region, to pursue at least a nominally independent policy (...) If the socialist countries continued to maintain contacts with the current government in Phnom Penh, albeit only by showing their presence in Cambodia, this would enable them to more effectively influence Cambodia's further domestic and foreign policies so as to avoid complete dependence on the U.S.A...*¹³²

Economic considerations were also a factor, as Lon Nol's regime had not discontinued economic cooperation with the communist countries. An embassy analysis notes: *Our foreign trade organizations are engaged in negotiations on the import of semi-prepared rubbers, timber, rubber footwear, galvanic batteries and tires. As far as our exports to Cambodia are concerned, there is the open issue of road-building and construction machines for the Ministry of Public Works, which is still interested in obtaining these technologies from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (...) As for earlier commitments and their fulfilment, it should be noted that the Cambodian side is delivering on these contracts. On 4 April we received an*

*installment payment on the ammunition plant. Where bilateral economic negotiations require coordination with the Ministry of Trade, this is not rejected.*¹³³

The analysis describes the status of Sihanouk as follows: *Sihanouk himself will probably enjoy only limited options. It is to be expected that he will continue to slide into the fold of the People's Republic of China and Vietnam, and it is only struggle - and not negotiations - that could enable him to gradually consolidate his position, with their help. Sihanouk himself estimates that Cambodia could be liberated within a year or two. It seems that the socialist countries will have to support the more progressive developmental option, especially if the local communist party strives for legal reinstatement. These countries, Czechoslovakia notwithstanding, will have to continue to render the most effective assistance to the struggle of the Vietnamese people, and not a person¹³⁴ or group whose power may be equally ephemeral¹³⁵*

The Czechoslovak government was sitting on the fence, as far as Sihanouk was concerned. Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia de facto recognized the newly established United National Front of Cambodia in exile, on 4 May 1970, by a congratulatory telegram from the Chairman of the National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Evžen Erban, to Sihanouk. On 6 May, the Czechoslovak government released a statement condemning the U.S. and South Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia. In June, a goodwill mission led by the Cambodian United National Front's ministers of finance and economics, Penn Nouth and Thiounn Mumm, was received by the National Front of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.¹³⁶ A 1970 set of instructions for the Czechoslovak ambassadors specifically required that *if a Cambodian titular head, appointed by Sihanouk, requests a visit the record, receive him and reciprocate within usual space of time. Use these contacts to glean information about Sihanouk's intentions. Our position on the Cambodian question is based on the tenet that we do not want to undertake anything that would help the pro-American forces in Cambodia or could harm our relations with the anti-imperialist forces in South East Asia and the interests of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Interim Government of South Vietnam, and the national liberation movement. For the time being, we do not specifically propose a change in the Czechoslovak official relations with the governments of either Sihanouk or Lon Nol.*¹³⁷

In spite of so much political caginess, the Czechoslovak government's relations with both the United National Front of Cambodia and Lon Nol's regime quickly came to a head. An occupation of the Cambodian Embassy in Prague by pro-Sihanouk diplomats and students was the reason.

Seizure of the Cambodian Embassy in Prague

On 10 August 1970, Cambodia's ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Measketh Caimeron, visited the head of the 7th Territorial Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, J. Sobotka, and told him that in the morning hours of that day, second secretary Isoup Ghanty, who was being summoned to the headquarters, together with six Cambodian students, had seized the embassy building and were preventing the ambassador and his other colleagues from entering the edifice. Ghanty, acting on behalf of the United National Front of Cambodia, no longer considered Caimeron as the ambassador as the latter had recognized the new government. Caimeron asked Sobotka to have the Czechoslovak side act so that he could continue to fulfil his mission.

Caimeron said he had contacted the police and that police guards had been positioned outside the embassy and residence. He also asked for the Czechoslovak state authorities to see to it that the building was evacuated. At the same time he requested that Ghanty be deleted from the diplomatic list. He indicated that a failure to end the seizure of the embassy building would be tantamount to official Czechoslovak recognition of the United National Front of Cambodia.¹³⁸

Ghanty told a press conference on the same day, and simultaneously announced in a note to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that he was assuming leadership of the embassy in his capacity as *chargé d'affaires*.

The Beijing-based National Front said it had not instructed Ghanty to act but approved his moves as an act of patriotism and called on the Czechoslovak government, in its public statements, to accept the new *status quo*.

The embassy seizure put the Czechoslovak government in a very awkward situation. A report to Czechoslovakia's strongman, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Gustáv Husák, read in part: *The non-*

*compliance with the Ambassador's request on the part of the Czechoslovak authorities, even in conditions of limited diplomatic representation, would constitute infringement on the rules of international law and could lead to the misuse of this incident against Czechoslovakia in the international forum; secondly, it would set a dangerous precedent as far as the security of Czechoslovak diplomatic missions abroad is concerned. On the other hand, compliance with the Ambassador's request would mean an expression of recognition of General Lon Nol's government and would be understood as our support for this pro-imperialist regime, something which goes contrary to our political stances... At any rate, it is necessary to have the Cambodian embassy building freed.*¹³⁹

Obviously, Czechoslovakia pursued two goals: on one hand it wished not to sever diplomatic relations with General Lon Nol's government and keep its embassy in Phnom Penh, while on the other hand it wanted to maintain relations with the United National Front of Cambodia and keep the door open to possible establishment of relations with the government of Penn Nouth.

Since accepting the new situation in the Cambodian embassy building could have been viewed as a breach of commitments ensuing from the Vienna Convention, the building had to be evacuated at any cost. The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia opted for two variant solutions:

- I. Negotiated solution, i.e. voluntary evacuation of the building
- II. If the first variant fails, I. Ghanty will be declared a *persona non grata*, the building will be evacuated, and the students will be expelled from Czechoslovakia.¹⁴⁰

Ghanty was invited to negotiations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and having failed to turn up he was contacted by foreign ministry officials in the embassy building. The officials argued that Czechoslovakia cannot accept the seizure of the building because of serious adverse impacts such a move would mean for the country.

Initially, Ghanty and the students claimed they had seized the embassy on instructions from the United Front. Ghanty later stated that he had been authorized by telegraph to assume the protection of Cambodian interests and hold out in the building come what may. Therefore, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry instructed its *chargé d'affaires* in Beijing to contact the United Front, convey the Czechoslovak position, and ask for understanding and to issue relevant instructions.

The Czechoslovak National Front's chairman Evžen Erban appealed to Prince Sihanouk for an amicable solution.¹⁴¹ In addition to Beijing, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry conducted diplomatic negotiations with United Front representatives through its embassies in Moscow and Hanoi.

However, the United National Front government went on protracting the talks and made every effort to make Czechoslovakia accept the existing *status quo*. It published a statement on the issue, and together with telegrams from Prince Sihanouk, addressed to the President and Prime Minister on behalf of the United National Front, the Czechoslovak chargé d'affaires in Beijing received a strongly-worded lengthy *aide mémoire*. The Front urged Prague to ignore international law and consider the impasse solely in terms of its political interests. Sihanouk resolutely asked the Czechoslovak President, in a telegram, to have the government clarify its position on the United National Front government, and to expel Ghanty from the embassy building, and from the country, in case it recognizes the Lon Nol regime. Obviously, Czechoslovakia was to be cornered and forced to recognize Sihanouk and sever relations with Lon Nol. This would have influenced other European communist nations as well. The *aide mémoire* maintained that the seizure of the embassy building was an internal Cambodian affair, and the Czechoslovak authorities should recognize the state of affairs and provide protection to Ghanty and the students.

The crisis continued to unravel. M. Caimeron again visited J. Sobotka and asked for police protection as he planned to enter the building. He claimed that Ghanty was having Arab, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean visitors, day and night, and the building's occupants were apparently armed. He said a telegram from Phnom Penh had instructed him to regain the embassy building by force, if need be.¹⁴²

Officials from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam intervened at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Hanoi and in Prague. They wanted the Czechoslovak government to *de facto* recognize the existence of the Prague embassy under the United National Front representative Ghanty and demanded that their officials be allowed to enter the occupied building. China pitched in by publishing Sihanouk's and Penn Nouth's telegrams and other texts, and by demanding that Chinese diplomats in Prague be granted entry to the embassy. That rejected, the Chinese foreign ministry summoned the Czechoslovak chargé d'affaires, lodged an official protest, and let the media in on the crisis.

In Prague, the police were ordered not to let anyone into the building. In contrast, the people holding the embassy were repeatedly assured they were free to leave at any time to settle their personal matters. On the sixth day of the siege, telephone lines and power supply were cut off. In the meantime, Chinese and Vietnamese officials made several attempts to contact Ghanty and hand over various parcels to him. On Thursday, 20 August, Ghanty and the students were supplied with basic foodstuffs because there were children present in the building.¹⁴³

With negotiations between foreign ministry officials and Ghanty still largely counterproductive, it was decided to refer further measures to the police. Czechoslovakia obtained a written statement from Ambassador Caimeron in which he disclaimed his diplomatic immunity over the embassy building. The police told Ghanty that they were assuming protection of the edifice as Czechoslovak property and subsequently seized the garden, basement and housekeeper's flat. The police had been instructed via internal channels to exert pressure on the Cambodians inside to leave the building of their own accord and without the use of violence.

The police having entered the embassy, Ghanty and the students left the building on Monday afternoon, 31 August, after three weeks of valiant defence.¹⁴⁴

On 2 September 1970, the United National Front of Cambodia released a strongly worded statement accusing Czechoslovakia of applying pressure on Ghanty and the students and instructing them to use the good offices of friendly embassies to either leave Czechoslovakia or seek asylum at these embassies.¹⁴⁵

The United National Front summoned Ghanty to Beijing to report on the incident.

Sihanouk received him on two occasions, and instructed him to ask Czechoslovakia to recognize the Penn Nouth government. The message was that the Front and Norodom Sihanouk expected the Czechoslovak government to support their struggle against the common enemy. The Front would like to further its contacts with Czechoslovakia through a former student, Long Norin, its unofficial interim representative groomed for a diplomatic career. Since, however, Long Norin had been involved in the embassy siege, Czechoslovakia rejected him as a United National Front representative. The request for organizing public rallies in support of the struggle of the Cambodian people was also turned down. Foreign Ministry officials gained the impression that I. Ghanty had visited them

of his own accord and without proper United National Front authorization. I. Ghanty then left for the post of Cambodian chargé d'affaires in Tirana, Albania.

Characteristically, the Czechoslovak authorities never returned the embassy building to Ambassador Caimeron, the government declined to receive a Lon Nol delegation led by Minister Hang Thun Hak, and the Czechoslovak chargé d'affaires did not take part in ceremonies associated with the proclamation of a republic in Phnom Penh.¹⁴⁶

The Prague incident was over.

Final Phase of Diplomatic Relations before the Arrival of the Khmer Rouge

In April 1971, Cambodia's Ambassador to Moscow, Chea San, visited the Czechoslovak titular official and asked Czechoslovakia, on behalf of the Government of the United National Front of Cambodia, to grant it recognition, provide direct material aid, and sever its relations with the Lon Nol regime.¹⁴⁷ On 1 May 1971, several dozen leftwing intellectuals and public figures issued an *Appeal for Cambodia*, in which they called on *all progressive governments throughout the world to break relations with the United States' puppets who are at present installed in Phnom Penh, and to render all material and moral assistance to the rightful government of Cambodia, headed by His Royal Highness Prince Sihanouk*.¹⁴⁸ The signatories, in addition to the French poet Louis Aragon, British author James Aldridge and the American intellectual Noam Chomsky, included also Jiří Pelikán, a former director of state-run Czechoslovak Television and chairman of the Czechoslovak parliament's foreign relations committee, who had been stripped of his posts and gone into exile after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of his country.

However, a limited scope of relations with both sides of the Cambodian conflict, and wait-and-see attitudes prevailed until 1973. The Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh had been instructed to maintain only limited formal relations with the Lon Nol government and to restrict its activities to monitoring the situation and assisting the trade department.¹⁴⁹ In 1972 alone, the Czechoslovak Embassy in Phnom Penh supplied Prague with 122 coded telegrams and about 200 telegrams *in claris*. The Trade Department exerted enormous efforts to ensure backflows on Czechoslovak loans and economic receivables.¹⁵⁰

Attitudes towards the United National Front Government are amply illustrated by a February 1972 instruction to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Moscow: *In principle, we are not avoiding contact with the Sihanouk representation and do recognize its influence in Cambodia. However, caution is recommended due to the existence of Czechoslovak and other socialist diplomatic missions in Phnom Penh and the pro-Chinese orientation of Sihanouk's United National Front of Cambodia and the government in Beijing. In conversations, it is possible to promise to communicate the information disclosed to the headquarters, without making any further commitments. Any possible anti-Soviet remarks are to be rejected. If possible, check views on the development of Cambodia, on the distribution of forces, and on the solution to the conflict in Cambodia and the whole of Indochina.*¹⁵¹

Ambassador Caimeron was recalled from Prague in late April 1972. The Lon Nol government explained it did not wish to embarrass the Czechoslovak government by his becoming the doyen of the Prague diplomatic corps, after the departure of the Finnish ambassador, since this corps also associated the countries that recognized the United National Front as the legitimate government of Cambodia – specifically North Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, People's Republic of China, Albania, Yugoslavia, Romania, Cuba, Egypt and some African states. In addition, the ambassador had been in a car accident and had served more than seven years



A scene from the wedding ceremony of Khema (Oum Sovanny) and Tomáš (Milan Kňažko), the main characters in the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987



Tomáš (Milan Kňažko) visits Tuol Sleng where his wife Khema (Oum Sovanny) was tortured to death by the Khmer Rouge, A scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987

in Czechoslovakia. Prague subsequently was only committed to maintaining mutual relations on the level of *chargé d'affaires*.¹⁵²

The Communist leaders in Prague had long lost their illusions about the anti-Sihanouk coup leading to the strengthening of leftist forces in Cambodia. Lon Nol's allegiance to the United States and his engagement in the Indochinese conflict were all too obvious. Conversely, the influence of the United National Front was on the rise, as were the ranks of Lon Nol's opponents. There were 70,000 men serving in guerilla units. This clandestine army brought together Sihanouk loyalists with their former enemies – the leftists (for whom the name *Khmer Rouge*, or strictly *Khmers Rouges* – Red Khmers, was popularized by Sihanouk in the 1960s as a term for leftist anti-government forces in the countryside). Sihanouk had managed, at least temporarily, to bridge the gap with the leftists. His visits to liberated areas of Cambodia, talks with his erstwhile Khmer Rouge opponents, his tour of African countries as well as his presence at the Nonaligned Conference in Algiers – all this greatly boosted his personal authority. Forty-eight countries recognized Sihanouk as head-of-state and his government as the only legitimate and legal representatives of Cambodia, and the Non-aligned Countries followed suit in their Algiers declaration. The recognition of the Sihanouk government by all other countries and in the United Nations emerged as one of the principal foreign-policy goals of the United National Front of Cambodia.



Two Khmer Rouge soldiers arresting Khema (Oum Sovanny) and Tomáš (Milan Kňažko) during the seizure of Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. A scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987



Khema (Oum Sovanny) works in the Tuol Sleng prison, a scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987

In an unofficial conversation with the Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow, Sihanouk's envoy asked for Czechoslovak support on this issue. In December 1973, the Czechoslovak *chargé d'affaires* in Phnom Penh communicated to the chief of the Lon Nol regime's diplomatic protocol the decision of the Czechoslovak government to end the activities of the Czechoslovak embassy in Phnom Penh and withdraw its personnel to Prague. He said the last employees of the Czechoslovak embassy would leave Phnom Penh by the end of January 1974. The chief of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry Diplomatic Protocol told Lon Nol's *chargé d'affaires* in Prague that in light of these moves, Czechoslovakia no longer considered the activities of the Lon Nol embassy in Prague useful and reasonable, either. At the turn of 1973-74, Czechoslovakia officially recognized the Government of the United National Front of Cambodia in Exile, headed by Norodom Sihanouk.¹⁵³

Khmer Rouge and their rise to power

In 1973 or thereabouts, the once small and isolated faction of Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot, assumed a leading role in the resistance movement, thanks to its strong internal organization and vigorous activities, relegating Prince Sihanouk's role to representing Cambodia abroad. The Khmer Rouge enforced draconian measures to help feed the population of the worst-affected regions. Their ranks



Seizure of Phnom Penh by Khmer Rouge in 1975, a scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987



Khema (Oum Sovanny) marries a Khmer farmer in a forced-labour camp, A scene from the Czechoslovak-Cambodian film "Nine Circles of Hell", 1987

were swelling with infusions of young blood – predominantly poor peasants. The recruits were mostly young and uneducated, but they were tightly disciplined and absolutely devoted to their commanders. By early in 1975, the resistance movement was strong enough to start a winning march on Phnom Penh.

Samley Sathy (* 1944) had lived in Czechoslovakia since 1964, spending one year in Teplice and then moving to Prague. He studied the violin at the Prague Conservatory of Music and then enrolled in Prague's Seventeenth November University. He met his wife, Ivana, during his studies and their daughter, Somma, was born in 1969. The couple later parted ways. He spent some time working for the Cambodian Embassy in Prague. In a Czech-written letter to his ex-wife, dated 6 June 1974, he described his homecoming to Cambodia, probably in 1973 or early 1974:

It was raining and mud was everywhere when I landed at P.P. It was a shock for me to see my country so very changed. Changes for good and for bad were visible. It was just like mashed potatoes.

I didn't know how to get home. Fortunately, I had met an army general on my flight and talked a little. He asked me where I was coming from. I told him I was coming from Prague and going home after studies. He asked me if anybody knew I was coming. I said no, I don't want to bother anyone. He told one colonel at the airport he'd like somebody to take me home. So I got home in a military police vehicle.

At first I could not tell where our flat was as there are many new flats here now. We live in the same place. My first meeting with my family was far from joyful, my neighbour told me as we rode that my brothers were dead. In front of our house, I could not recognize my father, he was so old, thin and ill, and his voice was weak. I stood outside our house and watched him for a while. He was reading a book and when I came closer and sat down next to him, he slowly raised his head and said in a measured voice, 'what can I do for you, mister?' He could not recognize me. I said 'I am your son and I am coming home.' He had tears in his eyes and at once started talking about the death of my brothers, and we wept together. My mother was lying upstairs; she did not know yet that I was downstairs. We went up after a while, she rose with difficulty, and began to mumble and cry. I give her vitamins B and C from Prague every day. My heart was heavy when we met.

I saw almost all our family past gone. Our flat looked like an abandoned jungle hut. The next day, my younger brother and I began cleaning up. We had to clean and tidy up everything. It was slave labour but it made me see things... I am applying the European sociological theory of housing and living environment.

Ivana, what's the news in Czechoslovakia? I miss Somma badly and all of you in the ČSSR. If I could I would visit you at least once every year. It's like my second home, my second homeland. I have lived through a lot of things since I was 20. My past is both there and here, all the things that I cannot forget. Let bygones be bygones, I thought my misfortunes had been a thing of the past. From now on I will again, in a different way, do something for Somma...

His first station was the Faculté de Musique in Phnom Penh but he soon began to look for another job.

You know well my society and my conditions do not enable me to save for tomorrow what must be said of Somma today. I know I only have my views. You have more practical worth and it's all up to you. I don't know when I can see Somma or be able at all to see her in my life. I will be deeply grateful to you forever if my beloved daughter stays well and faces a beautiful future...

... Two weeks ago my youngest brother and some other neighbourhood kids went fighting voluntarily. He was 16, four days ago. Then one of them came back to tell



Sathy with
Ivana and
Somma,
1970

us he had been in a guerilla blast that luckily wounded him only on one leg. Now he is being treated in the military hospital and he keeps father and me very busy. One kid, also from our neighbourhood, went fighting along with him and his body and head were hit by the blast. He died shortly afterwards and left behind a pregnant wife who he married just a few months ago.

Don't worry about me, I have changed my views, not because I am scared but my parents begged me last month not to go because they would have no one else at home. I have put off this problem for the time being.

You see, I had a job interview last month and am supposed to report to work during this month. I will work for the American relief organization, "Resettlement and Development Foundation" that helps war refugees, and I will be a member of their political and social council. My salary, also for Somma, will be around 45,000-50,000, rising to about 80,000 next year. I will have to frequently fly to various parts of the country. Such salaries were previously reserved for government ministers but now it isn't too much. Families have to spend 20-30,000 a month - our currency now is not far from Italy's...

From a letter dated 28 July 1974: As far as my work is concerned, I reported to work on 25-6-1974. I have three positions now - adviser on wartime social affairs, head of research and social development studies - I have five staff workers, two secretaries and three assistants in this department. My third post, as of two weeks now, is head of a new centre for war refugees - that's about 30 km from P.P. I fly there twice a week to manage work, carry out inspections and to review and evaluate their outcomes and requirements. In the evening I fly back to P.P.

I take care of 14 thousand people - children and adults who have fled from the other side. Most of them have no belongings, they have only tattered pants or sarongs and shirts, and some children have short underpants. They are homeless, they have no food and medicines, and many of them are sick.

When other officials and I arrived the next day, I saw the whole tragedy, their fates - they are innocent people - I saw their eyes and faces show their fear and pain and beg for help. They were in a primary school building and also in the open, in rain or shine. I cannot tell you everything, I have no words and expressions, and it is a huge tragedy for those innocent people. In short, their lives are threatened in

a terrible way - mainly the sick children and adults - and we are concerned about the future population policies and how we can protect their lives.

Various relief organizations have brought them food, medicines and other essentials, such as tents, blankets, underwear etc.

My first task is to provide provisional shelters, distribute land and farming materials, organize health care and cultural activities, and help them start a new life.

I am very busy, I have worked from the start till now without free weekends, slept barely six hours a day, had no time to do my laundry, which I sometimes manage at six in the evening before sitting down to prepare tomorrow's study and research tasks or other work, till midnight. I often travel and fly to various parts of the country where problems have cropped up, to check the situation, conditions, options etc. One day we flew in a helicopter to Battambang Province near Thailand, where most of our rice is grown.

A plane on a domestic flight crashed. Fourteen people were killed and many more were wounded. It was near the airport; we landed at once and administered first aid to children and old people. It was horrible to see those people right after the tragedy.

Last week I travelled to our historical royal capital, Oudong, where my father was born and where my grandmother, grandfather and other relatives lived. It's over 40 km north of P.P. and when regained by our army the town was completely destroyed, even its Buddhist temples. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong have destroyed them with plastic explosives and left behind inscriptions in Vietnamese. Their bodies were left there, our children, women and old people; some people managed to escape their control and tyranny; their families and relatives wept.

I saw the war tragedy because we arrived the next day, to give them help. I met one granddad and one uncle, very close relatives of our family, and they barely recognized me. But when I told them the name of my father they wept and said they had nothing now - fortunately, women and children had been saved.

Very many people had been taken to the forest, including my relatives. As we worked with war victims we heard an explosion from the battlefield some 4 km west of the town.

m not fighting with a rifle but I am fighting for a better future for those innocent children and adults. I will never forget those Vietnamese!

The Lon Nol government, besieged in Phnom Penh, surrendered on 17 April 1975. The Red Khmers took over Cambodia and launched their gruesome social experiment that killed millions of people. Sadly, Samley Sathy was probably among the victims as his last letters to Czechoslovakia date from mid-1975.¹⁵⁴

After Pol Pot's ascent to power, Czechoslovakia did not restore effective diplomatic relations with Cambodia. Mutual contacts were deadlocked, although in April 1976 (the first anniversary of the takeover and the accession of Khieu Sampan as the new head of state of Kampuchea, following Sihanouk's abdication) Czechoslovakia was among the approximately 20 states that sent, through their diplomatic missions in Beijing (mail and wire connection with Phnom Penh had ceased to exist), congratulatory telegrams to Democratic Kampuchea.¹⁵⁵ However, Czechoslovakia's Communist government grew more keenly interested in the developments in 1977 when an armed conflict flared up between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge leaders were aggressively anti-Vietnamese but other figures, including Heng Samrin and Hun Sen, had fled to Vietnam. Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chřítoušek told his country's parliament in the autumn of 1977 that Czechoslovakia *is watching with interest the developments in socialist Cambodia*.¹⁵⁶ However, the brutality of the communist-inspired Khmer Rouge regime was not an issue in the "normalizing" Czechoslovakia. The Western press carried occasional reports on atrocities but Britain was the first to press in 1978 for a resolution on human rights violations in Democratic Kampuchea, in the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva. The Soviet Union then rejected the draft resolution, labelling it "politically motivated". Czechoslovak dissidents, who had no access to relevant information under their circumstances, had no comments on the situation in Cambodia. Václav Havel, who was in jail at that time, recalls how flabbergasted he was when details of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime began to percolate after its downfall in 1979.¹⁵⁷

Ing Norin, the leader of Cambodian students in Czechoslovakia, who aided Ghanty in the seizure of Cambodia's embassy in Prague in 1971, also joined the Khmer Rouge.¹⁵⁸ In his own account, he had seen the corrupt ways of the Lon Nol government and joined the Khmer Rouge to oust the U.S.-backed general:

I came to join the movement with all my heart. It was a big deception for me and other patriots. He worked for Democratic Kampuchea's Foreign Minister Ieng Sary and received visiting foreign dignitaries. He maintains he knew nothing about the killing; he allegedly only went to two places in Phnom Penh – his office and his home, and official radio broadcasts were his only source of information. We heard about the arrests, but we did not know clearly what was happening. I was accused of being CIA and KGB," he told Cambodia Daily reporters in 2000.

*All mistakes of the Khmer Rouge are because we came to power too soon (...). The big problem of the Khmer Rouge is the killing. Without the killing, the Khmer Rouge is good.*¹⁵⁹

Indeed, the problem is that the Red Khmers were so murderous, and murder is what the diplomat Isoup Ghanty got to know from a close encounter. Following the Prague embassy episode he was appointed a GRUNC (Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia) chargé d'affaires in Albania and later head of the GRUNC of Cambodia information office in Sweden. Although he was an avid Khmer Rouge follower, Ghanty, a.k.a. Yim (the Red Khmers had a habit to change people's identities by giving them monosyllabic "revolutionary" names) was recalled to Cambodia where he was arrested on charge of being a KGB agent who was attempting to overthrow the government on 29 September 1976. In his confession, *he admitted his guilt because when the nation was at war and the people and revolutionary forces were sacrificing everything, leading miserable lives with insufficient food, he took his family of four on tour to foreign countries and wasted much money that was obtained through people's hard work*. Ghanty was murdered in the infamous Tuol Sleng Prison on 6 December 1976.¹⁶⁰

The most prominent Khmer Rouge victim with ties to Czechoslovakia was Prince Sihamoni.

In 1970, Sihamoni earned his high school certificate with *very good* marks. He went on studying at the Prague Conservatory and won first prize in classical dance in a 1971 competition. But before that, complications arose as a consequence of Lon Nol's coup, when Prince Norodom Sihanouk was deposed and forced to remain in exile. On 25 March 1970, the Cambodian Embassy in Prague, loyal to the new regime, communicated to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Prince Sihamoni could not stay at the Residence of the Cambodian Ambassador any longer. Since then, Prince Sihamoni stayed with the families of Mrs. Milada Novotná and her daughter Eva permanently.¹⁶¹

Mr. Novotný recalls: *In 1970, Sihanouk was on a visit to Moscow and Sihamoni flew there to join him. On his flight back to Prague he learned that Lon Nol had staged a coup, and Sihanouk had been deposed and sentenced to death in his absence, by a Lon Nol court (...). Sihamoni stayed with us until 1975 when he completed his studies and returned to Cambodia. At first he lived with us and when our daughter acquired an apartment in Prague 10, he stayed with her and her husband. He had a room of his own. Monique and Sihanouk had been worried about Sihamoni in their Moscow exile. Before long, a Sihanouk courier - a plainclothes general - arrived to find out. Well, he was satisfied upon his departure.*¹⁶²

After the coup d'état Sihamoni at first reunited with his parents in Beijing. On 9 April 1970 his mother, Princess Monique wrote a letter to Sihamoni's tutor Cecílie Durdilová explaining that she wanted him to come to lift his spirits, but he would go back to Czechoslovakia to finish his studies. *He told me that you and all Czechs are very kind to him, given the painful circumstances,* she wrote, and thanked for the accommodation with the Novotný family¹⁶³. In her conversation with the Czechoslovak ambassador to China, Mr. Kohoušek, Princess Monique thanked Czechoslovakia for the care devoted to her son, expressed full satisfaction with his accommodation in Mrs. Novotná's place in Prague, and expressed her wish for him to go on studying in Prague. She asked him to convey her request to the Czechoslovak government that Sihamoni's safety was ensured and a scholarship be granted to him for the rest of his education. Also Prince Norodom Sihanouk asked Czechoslovak President Ludvík Svoboda to see to it that Sihamoni be granted a scholarship to help him complete his studies at the Academy of Performing Arts.

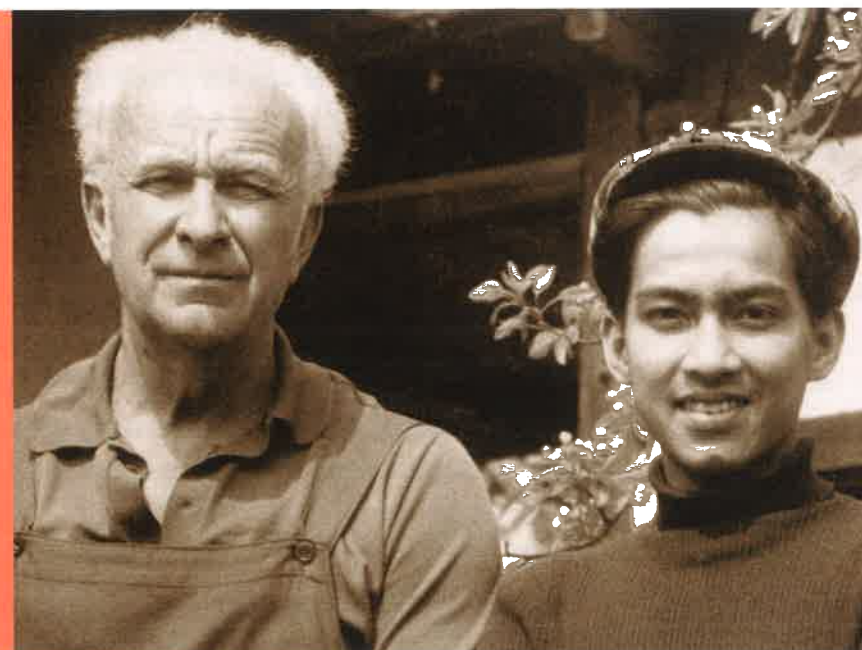
Sihamoni himself wrote to Cecílie Durdilová to highlight his difficult situation and to say he would like to return to Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovak authorities promptly promised both security and a scholarship. The ministries of culture and foreign affairs asked Prague's Lord Mayor Ludvík Černý to help provide a bigger apartment to Milada Novotná's daughter and her husband, Eva and Otto Martínek: *The current apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Martínek does not meet the requirements of the family extended by the presence of the seventeen-year-old son of the head of the Cambodian government, nor does it meet the standards of the diplomatic protocol and the political requirements we are supposed to meet at the request of his parents.*¹⁶⁴

The Ministry of Culture also asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to issue Sihamoni with a diplomatic pass as a *Czechoslovak document he could produce to Czechoslovak organs that would provide him a measure of personal safety. When moving the boy to a Czech family we requested his personal documents that were kept by the Cambodian ambassador.*

From 1971, Prince Sihamoni studied dance, music and theatre at the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague. Professors Pásková and Brodská were among

Prince Sihamoni
with Svatopluk
Novotný, 1972



his teachers. His teacher of ballet history, Prof. Božena Brodská, described Sihamoni as a very modest man with profound interest in dance and ballet. He planned to return to Cambodia after his studies to engage in and teach ballet.

He knew that his knowledge of classical European ballet would help him teach Cambodian dance, recalls Professor Brodská. She also remembers him as a gracious small man and good dancer. Sihamoni studied dance teaching. According to Brodská, he wanted to find suitable teaching methods. He planned to teach classical dance in Cambodia. His graduation thesis was appropriately titled Utilizing European Classical Dance in the Cambodian Dance Culture¹⁶⁵ Sihamoni graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts in 1975 with flying colours.

Eva Bednářová (then Martínková) remembers: I savoured many ordinary, beautiful and extraordinary moments – we used to have our lunches together, when he studied at the Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts and I worked close by, we visited theatre, concerts, and many other cultural and social events (...). I know him from his early childhood – he was an intelligent, gifted and determined child, although he knew how to be naughty, too... He spent years in our family, of which he is a member even today.... He spent his childhood and youth here and I believe he was happy.¹⁶⁶

When Sihamoni finished his studies at the Academy of Performing Arts he left his beloved Prague to join his parents, but he came back to attend his graduation ceremony in December 1975.

His tutor, Cecílie Durdilová, reported:

Record on the reception of N. S. by the Minister on 12 Dec 1975 at 14:30 hrs

On 11 December, Norodom Sihamoni, the son of the head of the Cambodian state, arrived in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to attend a graduation ceremony, together with other graduates of the Faculty of Music of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, on 12 Dec at 11:00.

On the same day, Sihamoni made a courtesy call to the Minister, Prof. Milan Klusák, in the course of which Sihamoni thanked him for all assistance and care accorded

him by the Czechoslovak government throughout his stay in Czechoslovakia and discussed his future plans as well as some problems which inevitably had occurred. From Prague he will travel to Belgrade to reunite with his parents whom he has been accompanying on their tour of some countries of Africa, Europe and Asia. After a several-day visit to Yugoslavia they are expected to continue to Syria and Pakistan, from where his parents will return to Cambodia. His father was too tired to accept a further invitation that reached him on his way from India, and will therefore return from Pakistan to Cambodia; Sihamoni will continue to Pyongyang since it has been agreed to accept an invitation from Comrade Kim Il Sung, and Sihamoni will study film – camera and direction – for about 4 years. As yet he does not know where he will stay, has no preview, initially he will probably have to communicate in English and Russian and study the basics of Korean. He was promised that if he needs some study materials in Czech, he may count on our help. He also asked to be permitted to have further contacts with the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The decision on this matter was also affirmative and he was promised that if he can make the time and consult his schedule, he may count on invitations to some prominent cultural events taking place in Czechoslovakia and closely associated with his profession, so he can further educate himself and deepen his experience in the field of dance. Mentions were made about the Prague Spring and the ballet competitions that were staged for the first time November/December this year and had a very good standard.

He also said that he had been ordered to work in rice fields for one month in Cambodia, which he and his parents visited in October. He was specifically told that he would not be able to use his profession for the time being, as his field is totally unusable: it is necessary to build upon the people and their experience, and western ballet is completely unusable. He was also told he must not use foreign literature and textbooks. Therefore, Sihamoni visited our embassy in Beijing and brought along all his book and record library, which has been either procured by him or slowly developed, over the thirteen years of his stay, by our office, and said he was giving it back to us. When Comrade Minister asked him why he had not provisionally stored the books for later use, he said in a very restrained manner that books and records were his ultimate pleasure and he would have had to discard or destroy them, which he was not prepared to do, given his love of these items. Therefore he had decided it would be best if they were returned for future use. It was agreed – in accordance with preliminary consultations with the 7th Section of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs – that we will ask our embassy in Beijing to

provisionally store the books and records pending such improvement of the situation in Cambodia that would enable him to take away his possessions from Beijing. Sihamoni was very grateful for such assistance inasmuch as his library is also the foundation of his deep relationships with Czechoslovakia and a source for his further work.

He also said that regrettably, his mother had been unable to arrive, although she would have liked to visit Czechoslovakia, but she could not make it as she was accompanying her husband on a series of state visits. Comrade Minister expressed regret over the fact that she could not be present at such an auspicious moment for her son, it is, however, probable that there would be opportunities in future for the two of them to visit Czechoslovakia.

Sihamoni then again thanked him for reception and parted. The meeting lasted for about 40 minutes and Czech was spoken.

Please find enclosed records on Sihamoni's stay and conversations with Comrade Durdilova, which revealed something about the situation in Cambodia. The conversations were very confidential and Sihamoni was visibly anxious about what would happen should this information fall into alien hands.

Prague

Record:

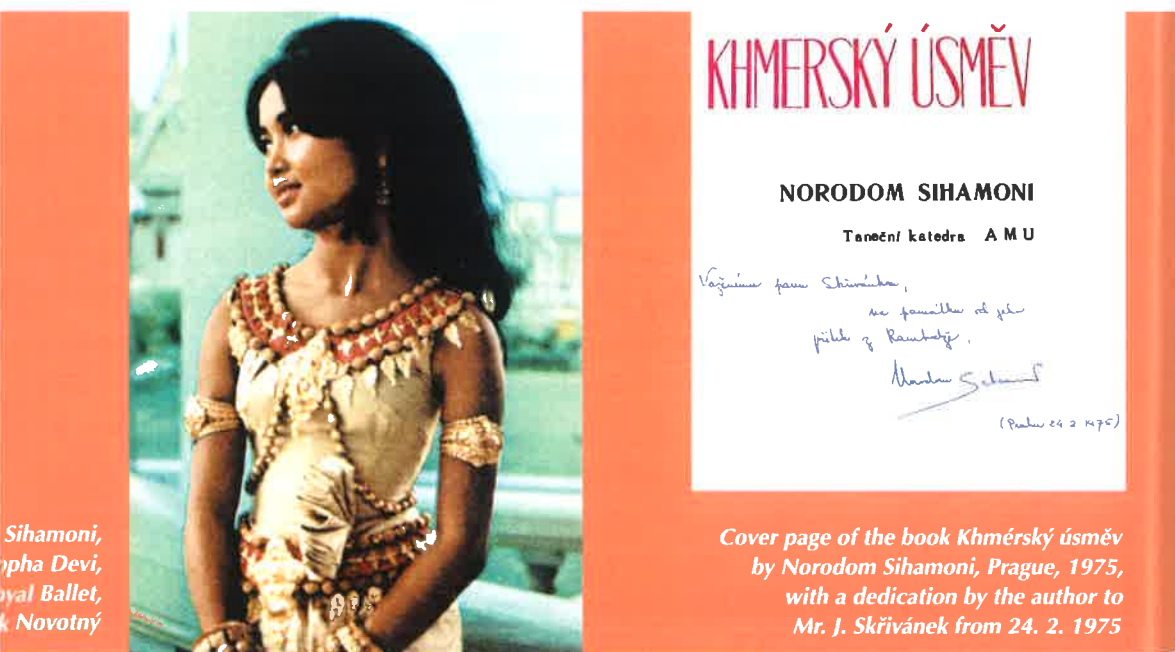
Sihamoni Norodom arrived from Belgrade on 11 Dec 1975 for his graduation ceremony. He refused to stay in his apartment at Petřiny and asked to stay with me, so we could see more of each other and he was in touch with all his friends. As he later explained to me, he would have been lonely in his place.

We talked late until three or even four in the morning and he talked about his impressions and observations since about 9 July, when he left Prague to reunite with his parents, after completing his studies.

The saddest finding for him was that he would be virtually unable to practice the skills acquired in Czechoslovakia. His diploma thesis, which his parents liked so much and which was also translated as a background for his future job classification and presented to government officials, had been found to be not revolutionary enough and the boy was told he certainly would not be able, within a foreseeable future, to utilize his knowledge as it was too pro-Western and did not meet the current requirements as everything must be learned from the people.

He and his parents visited Cambodia for the first time in September, for a month. Because towns are depopulated and the whole nation works in the fields and forests so as to ensure the self-sufficiency of supplies, Sihamoni, in view of his physical capacities, was assigned work in rice fields. He said he lived on worksites, in barracks, and these communes are stocked with food: hot meals are supplied twice a day; every worker receives two pairs of clothes and other essentials. The working attire consists of a pair of black trousers and blouse, colour garments are not permitted. There is no money in circulation. There is nothing to buy; money is used only for state representation and possibly to pay for minimal imports.

Inasmuch as more than one million people died during the war, population growth is the main concern. All marriages are official and traditional weddings are banned. Families live together in the communes but grown-up children usually work separately from their parents. Visits are not permitted and when Prince Sihanouk asked to be visited by his children, he was told that visiting was a waste of time and his children had other duties to perform, and it could not be



practically ascertained, in the course of his stay in Cambodia, where his daughter and son worked – these children had stayed in Cambodia, worked in illegality during the Lon Nol rule and had been sentenced to death, which was later commuted to lifelong internment. Once work is finished in one sector, people are collectively transferred to another sector as need be. It is envisaged that these measures will remain in effect for two years or more. In communes and towns, people call each other brothers and sisters, and if they commit transgressions of any kind, e.g. fail to meet their daily work quota, they must face their communities, perform acts of self-criticism, explain what they had done and why, and apologize to those assembled.

Schools are closed, there are no lessons, talk is about eight-year schools in future, but all subsequent experience will be collected in a practical way!

The state is trying hard to achieve complete self-sufficiency and massive austerity measures have been introduced, as discussed before. Also, the state does not wish to be influenced from the outside and diplomatic relations are not being established for the time being. Only the PR China, DPRK, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Albania and South Vietnam run their embassies in Phnom Penh. As far as he knows, the USSR has negotiated the reopening of its embassy, but this

MEILLEURS VŒUX
POUR
LA NOUVELLE ANNEE

à H⁷ et à ^{me} Novotná

Prinsesse Sihanouk

New Year's card from
Princess Monineath to
Milada Novotná, 1974
Archives of Svatopluk
Novotný



Front page of a New
Year's card from Princess
Monineath to Milada
Novotná, 1974,
Archives of Svatopluk
Novotný



Back page of a New
Year's card from
Princess Monineath
to Milada Novotná,
1974, Archives of
Svatopluk Novotný

has been rejected as a precedent-maker. Politically, the country is under Chinese influence while its relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Laos are cool as both countries have far better relations with the USSR. Sihamoni's father is greatly annoyed by such circumstances because his personal relationships with their leaders (especially with Prince Souphanouvong) were more than friendly.

The Cambodian government was rather set back by the declaration of the Lao People's Democratic Republic as it contemplates establishing a republic and is looking for a name. The decision of Laos to adopt the name of a people's democratic republic puts Cambodia in an awkward situation as it is difficult to adopt the same name without risking this being perceived abroad as copying the Laotian example. As far as his father is concerned, Sihamoni said he was being attacked by many journalists on his current African tour for his continuing involvement with the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk explained that he had always fought for the independence and self-determination of his country, and fought along with the Khmer Rouge during the Lon Nol regime for the liberation of Cambodia, and now he saw it imperative to help the country he loves and whose freedom he values over anything else. He would therefore continue to help as long as his help is needed. Sihamoni noted, however, that his father is aware of his very shaky position and is profoundly unhappy to see his country veer off the course of his expectations and taking a giant step back from the level on which his nation lived till the unfortunate Lon Nol coup. Sihamoni also said it was exorbitantly difficult to obtain official permission to travel to Prague. Political motives had been looked for all the time. But he said he admired the insistence of his father fighting for him to be able to go to Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, Sihanouk failed to win such permit for Sihamoni's mother, Princess Monique, who wanted to accompany her son on his journey. Sihamoni was happy to say that although - despite a preliminary consent - it was not clear during the African tour whether he would really go to Prague, his father, when formally introducing him to the heads of individual African states (Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Tanzania - I believe there were seven or eight of them), always made it a point that his son was about to go to Prague, where he had finished his studies and would graduate on 12 December. In the event, nothing could be done but give the go-ahead. On 11 December, Prague Airport saw no man happier than the prodigal son coming home.

After the Cambodian experience and in view of the fact that Sihamoni was no longer able to discharge his profession - whereby he was instantly prohibited to take post-graduate courses at Charles University in Prague, where the brilliant student had been offered courses at the Philosophical Faculty towards his doctorate in the field of ballet or theatre history - the Cambodian Head of State Sihanouk accepted an offer of Comrade Kim Il Sung, and it was agreed that Sihamoni would continue his studies in the DPRK in the field of film camera and film direction, which could enable him to pursue his artistic inclinations in future.

He begged us not to abandon him so he could visit Czechoslovakia occasionally; he asked for books, records and magazines to be sent to him in the DPRK so he does not come out of touch with our arts; he would visit our embassy to take delivery of these items, have a word in Czech, and above all have the sense of belonging. May I note again that he has spent 13 years in Czechoslovakia and his knowledge of our old and present cultural values betters many Czechs, old and young, because he was deeply interested especially in theatre, music and film, and was as serious in the classroom as in acquiring extra-curricular findings. To complete my information, let me quote AMU's vice chancellor, Comrade Etlík, as saying that Sihamoni was generally considered at the Faculty as a man who, in spite of his background, has a deep social empathy, deeply democratic ways and exceptional talents in his profession while being incredibly modest, and will go very far in the world of culture if allowed to devote himself to his chosen field of endeavour. Therefore I recommend that the following periodicals be mailed to Sihamoni through the Prague Information Service to the Czechoslovak embassy in Pyongyang: Kino (Cinema), Film a doba (Film and Time), Divadlo a film (Theatre and Film), and the Dilia bulletins with information on theatre plays so he could request their full versions; and that collections of new Czech and Slovak books, together with translated books, be also sent to him occasionally as this will be the only source of information available to him.

May I please ask you to treat this report as strictly confidential since the information that Sihamoni has confided only to me in such an open manner could cost him his life if disclosed through indiscretion. He noted that people disappear and the Khmer Rouge regime is so strict and suspicious that any indiscretion is detected at once. I personally, as the author of this report, would hate to lose his trust.

All music and literature is banned, especially European and old Khmer arts. Books were burned in public. Since he did not intend to destroy his vast book and record library, partially provided him by us in the course of his studies and partly bought from his allowance money, he had to take these items to the Czechoslovak embassy in Beijing and ask us to retake these single possessions into custody. He repeatedly assured us how happy he is to be able to reclaim and use them in future. No textbooks are allowed. The foreign-educated young people who cannot pursue their professions in these circumstances have not been allowed to keep their textbooks and trade literature, and they have joined their countrymen as workers in the fields and woods. There are no libraries and the people have been told that all culture must be built from scratch and must ensue from the people to be disseminated.

Having finished his studies in Czechoslovakia, Sihamoni rejoined his father, who lived in Pyongyang at the invitation of Kim Il Sung, and began to study cinematography there. *You planned very well those three days. I don't know if I will ever experience such beautiful days again. Moreover, you spirited me up greatly for my journey. I shall need the courage with the RK (Khmer Rouge – Author's note). When I finish my studies here, only suffering expects me there. But there is nothing to do about it, this is my fate,* he wrote to Mrs. Durdilová from Pyongyang on January 9, 1976.¹⁶⁷

The 13 March 1976 meeting of the Angkar, the Khmer Rouge supreme command, decided to dispatch telegrams to the sons of Sihanouk asking them to return as soon as possible, pointing out that they must come for the New Year and the National Day¹⁶⁸ celebration. *We must solve this problem once and for all. We must solve it for the interest of our Revolution.*¹⁶⁹

Sihanouk and Monique were scared when Khieu Samphan brought them the “good news” one day: their sons Sihamoni and Narindrapong would arrive in Phnom Penh tomorrow. After his arrival in Phnom Penh, Sihamoni told his father that he had received a telegram signed *Norodom Sihanouk*, ordering him to return to participate in a celebration. He was immediately escorted by the Khmer Rouge chargé d'affaires to a train to Beijing, and he was not permitted to write a farewell letter to President Kim Il Sung. From Beijing, he was immediately sent by

airplane, together with his brother Narindrapong and Cousin Sisowath Chittara, to Phnom Penh.

Sihamoni and all his family had fallen prey to the Khmer Rouge. Sihamoni was seized by soldiers upon his arrival at the airport and all his luggage was sacked and thoroughly checked. He had brought with him many Czech books, and these, along with his school certificates, were heaped together and set on fire.¹⁷⁰ The young prince was escorted to the Royal Palace where he, together with Sihanouk, Monique and his brother Narindrapong were held under house arrest. They lived in a small house in the Royal Palace garden. Sihamoni's guards threw away, smashed to pieces and burned all his possessions – his radio, his record player, and his records.

They were held in isolation. Sihanouk prepared meals and looked after his flowers. Occasionally, they heard about the events outside from visiting servants. *Oh Lord, sometimes we were really scared,* Sihamoni would later tell the Novotnýs.¹⁷¹ In order to escape ruthless psychological torture at the hands of his jailers, he would retreat to the bathroom, turn on the shower and sing Czech folk songs.

In January 1979, when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and toppled the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese arranged a flight to Beijing for Sihanouk and his family including Sihamoni. The young prince worked some time as his father's secretary but then, in accordance with the royal family tradition, he spent six months as an ordinary monk in a Buddhist temple.

He was hoping that he would be allowed to enroll in a post-graduate course at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague, but his presence in Czechoslovakia was undesirable on political grounds. Sihamoni also tried but failed to obtain a tourist visa to travel to Prague, which he loved and admired so much. From 1981, he lived in Paris where he founded a dance school and established himself as a prominent pedagogue of dance.¹⁷² Having settled in France, he kept in touch with the Czech environment through mail and Czech visitors. A story goes that one of his sisters visited him in his apartment once and told him spontaneously: *Let's call some of your friends and let's go out for a dinner somewhere.* He allegedly answered: *I have this kind of friends only in Prague.*

In January 1979, the leftist Cambodian United National Salvation Front, assisted by Vietnamese troops, overthrew the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime and took over power. On 10 January 1979, the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic recognized the People's Revolutionary Council, led by Heng Samrin, as the only representative of Cambodia, two days after its formation.¹⁷³ Soon afterwards, Prague opened a diplomatic mission in Phnom Penh. Czechoslovakia, then a member of the United Nations Security Council together with the Soviet Union, blocked a resolution which called for a cease-fire in Cambodia and for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from that country.

Norodom Sihanouk recalls: *At the Security Council, in front of a public in effervescence, I was attacked and insulted by the representatives of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Cuba (...) The anti-Sihanouk attacks can be resumed as follows: Sihanouk is the accomplice of Pol Pot & Ieng Sary and as much responsible as the Khmer Rouges for the genocide and all the suffering of the Khmer people (...) My response to this accusation was simple: The Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Cuba supported until the last minute the Lon Nol regime, which has sold the independence of our country. After the Khmer Rouge victory of April 1975, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia did not cease congratulating the Pol Pot regime until the day the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was told, on 31 December 1977, that "Democratic Kampuchea" was breaking diplomatic relations with Hanoi.*¹⁷⁴ Sihanouk originally arrived in New York, in January 1979, as the ambassador of Democratic Kampuchea but then distanced himself from that regime, began to negotiate political asylum with America and France, but eventually took refuge in China.

In May 1979, he had lunch in Beijing with the exiled Czech journalist Karel Kovanda. Also present were Princess Monique and their son, Prince Sihamoni, who acted as Sihanouk's secretary. Sihanouk said over lunch that the Cambodians today face a double enemy: Pol Pot and the Vietnamese. *First we have to get rid of those. Even the hated Lon Nol regime was better than Pol Pot or the Vietnamese. Anything is better than Pol Pot - I would even let the Americans occupy the country.* According to Sihanouk, the reconstruction of Cambodia could be resolved by the return of educated Cambodians from abroad - *they will all come back when Sihanouk is head of state.*¹⁷⁵ It seems that Sihanouk had not entirely lost all his love for Czechoslovakia because he asked Kovanda to convey his

greetings to the Czechoslovak people - something his interviewer, at the time and circumstances, could only do through the exile press.¹⁷⁶

After the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 and the ensuing "normalization" - the massive party purges in the 1970s - the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was again a firm link of the Soviet political bloc. This was duly reflected also by its policy on Cambodia. Czechoslovakia took sides with the new pro-Vietnam government in Phnom Penh.

In March 1979, a seven-member United National Salvation Front delegation, led by General Secretary Ros Samay, arrived in Czechoslovakia for talks on developing relations between the two countries.¹⁷⁷

In February 1980, the full top brass of communist Czechoslovakia descended upon Cambodia: President and Party Leader Gustáv Husák, Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal, Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek, and many other members of the Communist Party's Central Committee. *In the course of our sojourn in your country, we have learned with deep indignation about the cruelty and brutality with which the Pol Pot clique eliminated the peace-loving population. We have strengthened our understanding of the justified hatred and anger with which the people toppled that regime early last year. The victory of the progressive and*

Czechoslovak President
Gustav Husák visits
Cambodia, 15.-16. 2. 1980,
Archives of the Office of
the President
of the Republic





Speech of Heng Samrin, Visit of President Husák to Cambodia, 15.-16. 2. 1980, Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic



Heng Samrin, General Secretary of the People's Revolutionary Council, visits Prague, 17. 11. 1980, Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic

patriotic forces, led by the Cambodian United Front of National Salvation and relying on the selfless international assistance of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, was the culmination of many years of your heroic struggle against feudalism, the aggression of U.S. imperialism, struggle against the expansionist schemes of Chinese hegemonism and the forces of internal reaction, President Husák summed up, in his speech, Czechoslovakia's new official position. Heng Samrin replied that *our revolutionary army, which has the full support of the people, is successfully carrying out its task of eliminating the last vestiges of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique in order to enforce law and order, and security in the country. Thanks to their diligence, and thanks to international assistance above all from the socialist countries, our people have scored successes in all spheres,* and he thanked specifically for international assistance from Czechoslovakia. At the end of their talks in Phnom Penh's Chamcar Mon Presidential Palace, Gustáv Husák and Heng Samrin signed a Joint Declaration expressing interest in mutual cooperation and stating fully identical views on topical international problems. An agreement on Czechoslovak-Cambodian cooperation in the field of health care was signed on the same day.¹⁷⁸ November saw talks of both countries' leaders in Prague.¹⁷⁹ Several important agreements on cooperation in various spheres were signed: an agreement on cultural cooperation, an agreement on the abolition of visa requirement for diplomatic and official passport holders, an agreement on goods exchange and an agreement on payments, as well as an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation.¹⁸⁰

This exchange of top-level visits triggered cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Cambodia which continued to be politically boosted, throughout the 1980s, by an active exchange of delegations based upon the mutually-agreed annual plans. In April 1981, a Cambodian delegation attended the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz), and in May of that year, a CPCz delegation attended the 4th Congress of the People's Revolutionary Party of Cambodia. In June, Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek met for talks with his Cambodian counterpart Hun Sen in Prague. In April 1982, Czechoslovak Defence Minister Martin Dzúr visited Cambodia, and in May, Cambodia's Minister of National Defence Bouthong arrived in Czechoslovakia. There were swaps of delegations of communist youth leagues, ministries of the interior, industry and trade, parliaments, etc. In November 1987, Czechoslovak government representatives witnessed the pullout of Vietnamese troops from

Cambodia. Internationally, Czechoslovakia actively supported the Phnom Penh government's quest for diplomatic recognition and representation in international organizations, notably in the United Nations where it demanded the expulsion of Pol Pot's representatives. The communist government of Czechoslovakia and the leftist regime in Phnom Penh maintained very active relations until 1989, when Communism collapsed, and democracy prevailed in Czechoslovakia. As late as in April 1989, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Miloš Jakeš visited Cambodia and, among other sites, he also visited the Khmer Rouge-era Tuol Sleng prison and torture chambers.

Reports from Embassies

Even though the communist press in Czechoslovakia sang praises of the achievements of government and Vietnamese troops in Cambodia and popular enthusiasm about socialist construction, classified reports from the Czechoslovak embassies in Phnom Penh and Hanoi were appreciably more sober in their assessment of the situation. They are an interesting source of information on Cambodia's complex development in the 1980s.



Secretary
visits the
genocide
1989,
Czech
CTK

Thus, a report from January 1980 notes: *“Especially the rural population is still under the influence of Pol Pot and frequently obeys enemy instructions. The Party’s influence is still weak whereas construction of the People’s Revolutionary Party of Cambodia is a slow process and ideological and propaganda efforts are still in their nappies.”*¹⁸¹ The embassy’s annual report: *The new regime did not have sufficient opportunity last year to convince the population about its virtues, although it made it sufficiently clear that it was heading towards socialism. Nor was the regime able to face vast hostile propaganda from within and without. The majority of the rural population was on the fence. Their attitudes are best explained by their popular wisdom: People are like a tree on which birds of all feather rest; leaves fall but the tree will continue to live and thrive. Importantly, the Cambodians themselves began to discuss, in the second half of the year, the situation when sympathy for the enemy was obvious in the population and many officials were ambiguous – devoting their days to revolution and their nights, to Pol Pot. The report on the military situation said: The People’s Republic of Cambodia did not have sufficient resources of its own, last year, to provide for security and a successful confrontation with the enemy. The army, with one division, three brigades and a few independent units, numbering 43-45 thousand poorly armed, politically uneducated and poorly trained troops, is still only in the initial phases of construction... Since the build-up of the interior-ministry unit was just as sluggish, the country’s security and defence are completely in the hands of the Vietnamese troops. They are deployed in the border areas, in the provinces, in Phnom Penh and at important traffic junctions, but they are not ubiquitous. Since the liberation, i.e. in three years, around 30,000 Vietnamese troops have been killed in action. They have to operate in extremely difficult conditions (swamps etc.) and by insider estimate, 90 % of them suffer from malaria, to which they are not half as immune as the Khmers.*¹⁸²

Another document states that *some Pol Pot troops defect to Sihanouk but Pol Pot elements are trying to infiltrate the Sihanouk organization. Even in their mass-political and propaganda work with the population, the Pol Pot elements are acting under the guise of Sihanouk.*¹⁸³

To quote a French priest, 1979 was “year zero” for Cambodia. Industries did not produce anything and the social situation was disastrous. This was duly reflected by the nature of economic cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Cambodia, geared in the first years after the downfall of the Khmer Rouge towards free-of-charge economic aid to reconstruct Cambodia. The bulk of assistance went to the restoration of factories built with the help of Czechoslovakia. The techno-scientific cooperation agreement comprised above all the provision of expert and advisory aid, as well as the exchange of information, documentation, and samples of raw materials and products.

As early as July 1979, the Czechoslovak embassy in Hanoi notified Cambodia about the provision of Czechoslovak economic assistance for that year. In subsequent years, Czechoslovak experts restored, free of charge, the tire factory at Takhmao, and performed general overhaul and extension of the 18-MW Chak Angre power station, the main source of electricity for Phnom Penh. Cambodia also requested help in restoring a textile factory in Phnom Penh. Although it was never listed among the investment projects previously supervised by Czechoslovakia, the factory was nevertheless equipped with Czechoslovak technologies. Therefore, Czechoslovakia supplied one hundred new textile machines and repair work to the factory. Later, Czechoslovakia took part in the restoration of other industrial installations.

The exchange of goods began in 1982. Czechoslovakia commenced the supplies of engineering goods (tractors, diesel power generators, medical technologies etc.) and began to import raw materials (natural rubber, tropical timber, soybeans, rice). Czechoslovakia followed the example of the other socialist states in subsidizing the inauguration and running of the Cambodian embassy in Prague. The annual subsidies amounted to 1,300,000 crowns a year, by the mid-1980s. This would have been partly made up for by the free provision of local labour for the overhaul and operation of the embassy in Phnom Penh and by supplies of electric power.¹⁸⁴ However, Cambodia charged exorbitant prices for these services and Czechoslovakia deemed it more practical to import the embassy equipment and hire Czechoslovak specialists to supervise the repair of the embassy building.

The provision of expertise and supplies to the Takeo Hospital was a significant component of Czechoslovak aid to Cambodia. The sum of 39.4 million crowns was allocated for this purpose. Three doctors dispatched by the Czechoslovak Red Cross worked in Kampot Province. Czechoslovakia donated medicines and aid for disabled people to Cambodia. Every year, around 20 Cambodian students were granted scholarships to enroll in Czechoslovak schools; many of them were army members enrolling in the Brno Military Academy.

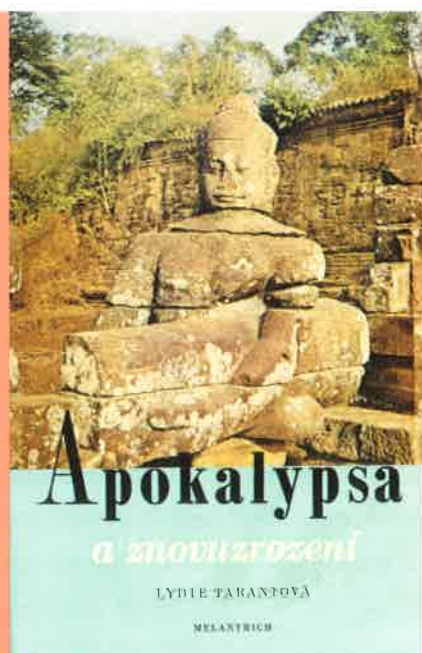
In the sphere of culture, Cambodia especially sought Czechoslovak aid in the spheres that made Czechoslovakia famous – animated films, puppetry, music and conservation of historical monuments.¹⁸⁵ The cultural agreement, signed in November 1980 in Prague, envisaged extensive exchanges of art ensembles, book translations, publication of literary, art and cultural works; full-feature, documentary and other film productions; mutual visits by writers, composers and other creative personalities. Although eventually, these contacts failed to realize in their expected scope, Czechoslovaks nevertheless did obtain a wealth of information on Cambodian culture, and the process was a two-way street.

Czech authors published books on Cambodia, such as *Záhady Angkoru* (The Mysteries of Angkor) by Milan Syruček¹⁸⁶ or *Apokalypsa a znovuzrození* (Apocalypse and Rebirth) by Lydie Tarantová¹⁸⁷

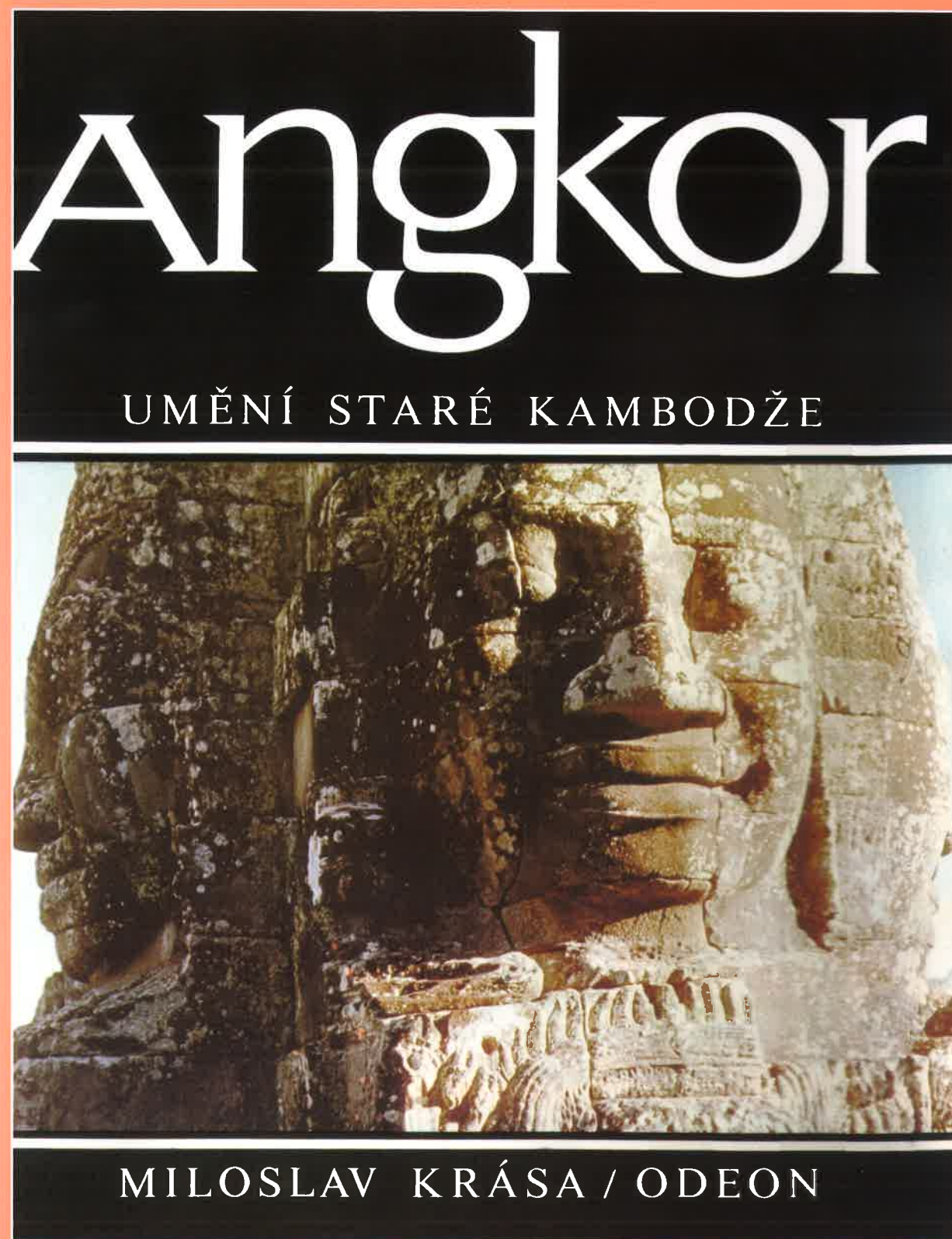
In 1985, a glossy book by Miloslav Krása, *Angkor: Umění staré Kambodže* (Angkor: The Art of Ancient Cambodia)¹⁸⁸, was published in Czech and was later translated into several languages. The photographs were by Ján Cifra and Vlado Kubenko.

In Cambodia, *Days of Czechoslovak Film* were staged repeatedly, followed by *Days of Czechoslovak Culture* in 1987. Agreements were signed between the state television companies of Czechoslovakia and Cambodia, and between the dailies *Rudé právo* and *Pracheachun*. The Czechoslovak CTK News Agency provided material assistance to Cambodia's SPK.

The joint film production, *Nine Circles of Hell*, about a Czech doctor on a mission to find his Khmer wife and missing daughter in the Phnom Penh of 1979, was the most significant Czechoslovak-Cambodian film project: The film was directed by Milan Muchna, and the main characters, Tomáš and Khema, were played by Milan Kňažko and Oum Sovanny. *Nine Circles of Hell* was produced in 1986-1987 and first shown in April 1988 in Prague, and in May, it was premiered in Phnom Penh. It was the first-ever film about the Khmer Rouge period shot in Cambodia (the famous Hollywood movie *The Killing Fields* was filmed abroad).



Cover of the book, Lydie Tarantová,
Apocalypse and Rebirth,
Prague, 1984



Cover of the book *Angkor*,
Miroslav Krása, *The Art of Ancient
Cambodia*, Prague, 1985

The Iron Curtain collapsed in the late 1980s and the international environment for Czechoslovak-Cambodian cooperation changed dramatically. At the same time, both countries experienced a radical transformation of their political systems.

Czechoslovakia embarked on the path of democratic change on 17 November 1989. Its political representation changed and this was duly reflected in bilateral relations with the State of Cambodia. Although the ouster of the old communist guard of Gustáv Husák and Milouš Jakeš did sever many personal ties, the new Czechoslovak leaders were not entirely indifferent to Cambodia, which the new foreign minister, Jiří Dienstbier, fondly remembered as *the most beautiful country in the world*. However, the events of 1989 ushered more balance into Czechoslovakia's relations with the two Cambodian governments, i.e. the government in Phnom Penh and the coalition government in exile, led by Norodom Sihanouk. When the Paris Agreements of October 1991 put an end to the activities of the exile government, and Norodom Sihanouk became Chairman of the Supreme National Council of Cambodia, the Czechoslovak President Václav Havel sent him a congratulatory telegram and invited him to visit Czechoslovakia. This planned visit did not take place, owing to Sihanouk's state of health. Upon signing the Paris Agreements, Czechoslovakia was prepared to engage in the UNTAC plan and send an army battalion to Cambodia to take part in the UN peacekeeping operations. However, complex organizational and logistical problems prevented the dispatch of a Czechoslovak unit.

The amicable dissolution of Czechoslovakia (Czech and Slovak Federal Republic) on 1 January 1993 resulted in the formation of two successor states – the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, both of which were recognized by Cambodia on the same day. When Czechoslovakia's foreign assets were divided, the embassy building in Phnom Penh went to Slovakia while Czech interests in Cambodia were looked after by the Czech Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. Until 1996, however, the Bangkok embassy was run by a *chargé d'affaires*, Ambassador Jan Bečka presented his credentials to King Norodom Sihanouk in Phnom Penh on 7 September 1996. Cambodia closed its embassy in Prague in 1998, citing austerity measures, and its interests in the Czech Republic have since continued to be administered by embassies in Berlin, Germany and as of 2006, Warsaw, Poland.

Succession into the Czechoslovak-Cambodian agreements was the first urgent issue to resolve. On 1 January 1993, the Czechoslovak foreign minister sent a letter to his Cambodian opposite number, saying: *I have the honour to confirm that the bilateral Conventions and Agreements listed in Annex to this note remain in force between the Czech Republic and the Kingdom of Cambodia*. This Annex contained a list of 13 agreements. However, the note remained unanswered. November 1995 saw the first round of negotiations, on expert level, concerning the succession rights to the treaties and agreements with Cambodia. The talks were frozen in the coming years due to the complex internal situation of Cambodia where an armed conflict flared up in 1997 between the followers of the co-Prime Ministers Hun Sen and Norodom Ranariddh. Another round of expert talks was held in August 1999 in Bangkok but again, the Czech proposals to Cambodia remained unanswered. The succession issue was repeatedly brought to the fore by urgent diplomatic notes of the Bangkok embassy and in the course of bilateral negotiations. In October 2000, inter-ministerial consultations were held in Phnom Penh, conducted by the Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Hynek Kmoníček. The talks confirmed there were no political problems and cooperation on multilateral forums (support of candidatures) was good. In addition to pointing out the succession problem, H. Kmoníček reiterated President Havel's invitation for Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk to visit the Czech Republic. At the same time, he invited Cambodia's Foreign Minister Hor Namhong and State Secretary Uch Kiman for a visit to the Czech Republic. Hor Namhong availed himself of this opportunity to invite the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs for a visit to Cambodia. However, the issue of succession was finally resolved following Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Petr Kolář's visit to Phnom Penh in June 2005, in the wake of which Cambodia issued a diplomatic note dated 8 August 2005 and expressing agreement with the succession of 10 Czechoslovak-Cambodian agreements. Deputy Foreign Minister Kolář was accompanied on his visit by a delegation of Czech NGOs engaged in humanitarian and development aid in Phnom Penh, and Takeo and Siem Reap provinces. The Czech delegation was received by King Norodom Sihamoni and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong.



A Dance Evening in the Royal Palace, from left: King Norodom Sihanouk, Ms. Khek Sysoda, Director of the Department of Protocol of the Royal Palace, Jiří Štiller, Czech Ambassador, Ms. Katharina von Schnurbein, 7. 10. 2003, © Royal Palace in Phnom Penh



King Norodom Sihanouk meets the Czech movie director Jiří Menzel, Ms. Olga Kelymanová and Jiří Štiller, the Czech Ambassador, 25. 11. 2003, © Royal Palace in Phnom Penh

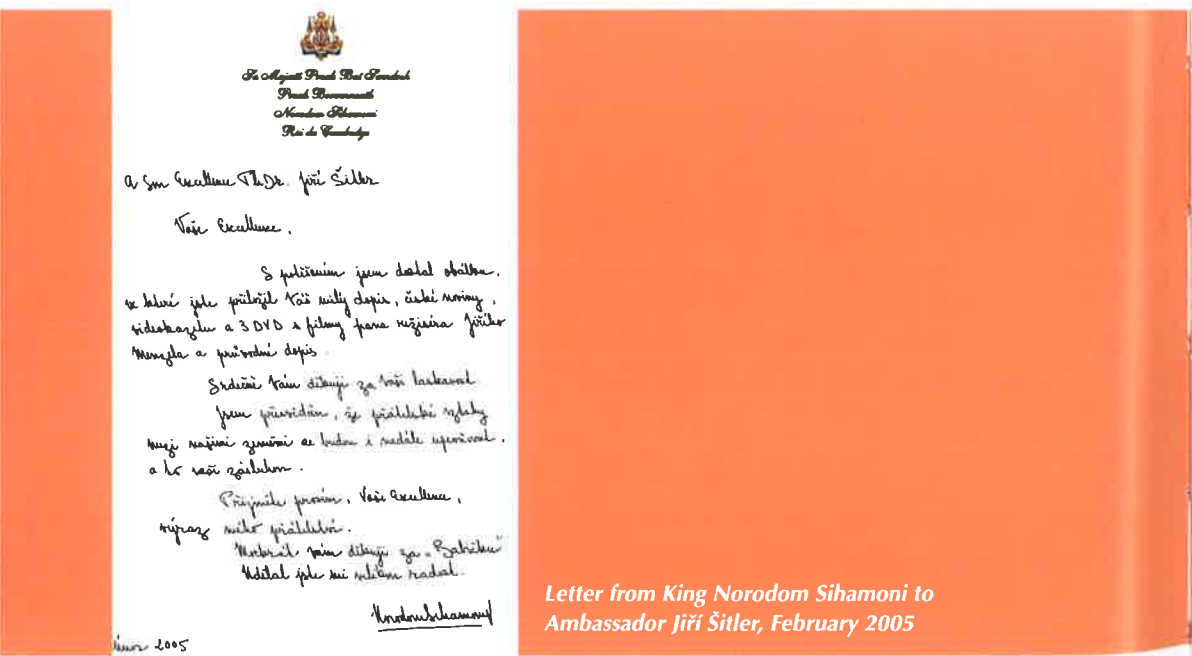
Cambodia's Transport Minister So Khum visited Czechoslovakia in March 1992 to discuss the delivery of ČKD Praha-built diesel-electric locomotives to Cambodian railways. The delivery of 10 diesel-electric locomotives plus spare parts and operation equipment was the last major Czechoslovak export to Cambodia, two locomotives having been previously supplied under a Czechoslovak government loan project. The contract for 10 locomotives, signed in 1992, was delivered by INEKON in 1994.

However, Czech-Cambodian economic and trade relations have lately been on a fairly low level. Following the suspension of "international assistance" to Cambodia and the introduction of trade in free convertible currencies, mutual economic and trade cooperation has fallen considerably. Mutual trade exchange volumes have been quite meagre in the past few years. For a number of years now, the Czech Republic has regularly reported a debit balance in mutual trade. The 2003 Czech exports were limited to four commodities – telecommunication parts (58%), road rollers (20%), paper (20%) and sewing machines (2%). Cambodia has lately exported only textile products and footwear to the Czech Republic. Garments accounted for 68 percent and footwear for 32 percent of the Cambodian export to the Czech Republic, in 2003.

Cambodia owes 9.2 million convertible rubles in arrears towards the former Czechoslovakia. A delegation of Czech and Slovak experts held talks on this issue in late March 2000, in Phnom Penh. Both sides agreed in principle on the 1:8.5 USD conversion factors and a framework schedule of payments. Thus the Czech Republic ought to receive about USD 766,599. However, the conditions of this preliminary agreement have yet to be approved by the Cambodian government. Cambodian Trade Minister Cham Prasidh officially asked the Czech Republic to waive the debt in 2003.

A number of Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade delegations have visited Cambodia to discuss the succession to Czechoslovak-Cambodian agreements and to try and reestablish past cooperation ties. In April 1996, a delegation led by Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Miroslav Somol visited Cambodia. In December 2001, a Ministry of Industry and Trade delegation led by Deputy Minister Jiří Maceška met with Cambodia's Minister of Labour, Mining and Energy Industries Suy Semm and State Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce Sok Siphana. Maceška and his Cambodian partners agreed to set up a joint consultative group to deal with information swaps, identification of suitable joint projects, and other relevant aspects of mutual trade. Cambodia favourably received the Czech program of development aid, specifically the electrification of certain rural areas which, in the opinion of both parties, could be the springboard of future joint commercial projects. Ultimately, however, none of these agreements were implemented.

In October 2003, a Ministry of Industry and Trade delegation led by Deputy Minister Somol visited Cambodia, and its leader met with Trade Minister Cham Prasidh, State Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Energy Ith Praing, and Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Visalo Long. The main objective of the visit was to revive contacts with the most senior officials of Cambodian economic ministries and officially express the interest of the Czech Republic and its corporate sphere in restoring economic and trade cooperation in specific areas. The visit also helped revive the exchange of information, which has lately been very poor and is seen as one of the root causes of very low trade exchange. The talks were specifically focused on renewing cooperation in energy (a Škodaexport delegate negotiated supplies of spare parts to the Chak Angré power station and possible participation in some future projects), terminating a 1980 goods-exchange agreement (due to Czech EU entry), and the



completion of talks on Czech succession to treaties between the former Czechoslovakia and Cambodia.

The Czech Republic entered the European Union on 1 May 2004. Prior to that, it had to bring its agreements in line with the EU *Acquis Communautaire*, especially trade agreements under Brussels jurisdiction. However, the Czech side had preferred terminating such agreements with friendly nations by mutual consent and not by unilateral abrogation; therefore the Czech Republic, in its note issued in Bangkok on 25 March 2003, proposed ending its Agreement on the Exchange of Goods with Cambodia, signed on 19 November 1980 in Prague. After due clarification and negotiations, the Czech embassy received a note on 28 October 2003 saying that *the Cambodian side has no objections to the termination of the said Accord proposed by the Czech side* and the agreement was instantly terminated. Trade agreements between the EU, including the Czech Republic, and Cambodia are administrated by the European Commission, which incidentally bought the building of the former Czechoslovak embassy from Slovakia in 2005 as the future seat of its delegation in Phnom Penh. Under the flag of Europe, the building will continue to serve the Czech Republic, albeit indirectly.

Development and Humanitarian Aid to Cambodia

The Czech Republic has continued to grant stipends to Cambodian students under the government program of development assistance, and several doctoral and master degree scholarships are provided every year. Cambodian students can also apply for study opportunities in the Czech Republic via UNESCO that receives Czech government contributions to this effect. The ranks of Czech-speaking Khmers have been constantly swelling. EU programs offer additional new possibilities for university-level cooperation schemes.

Having joined the European Union in 2004 (and previously NATO in 1999), the Czech Republic was in a position to look around the world and review its development and relief aid to traditional territories.

Although the Czech Republic offered a CZK 3 million development aid to Cambodia in 1996 and another CZK 1 million for mountain electrification projects in 1997,



Visit of Czech Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Petr Kolář to Cambodia, 21. 7. 2005, © Royal Palace in Phnom Penh



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Petr Kolář distributing Czech humanitarian aid in Takeo Province, 21. 7. 2005



Visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Petr Kolář to Cambodia, from left: Bohumil Mazánek (Deputy Director of the Asian Department of the Czech MFA), Jiří Šitler (Czech Ambassador to Cambodia), Jan Kreuter (Assistant to Deputy Minister), Petr Kolář (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs), King Norodom Sihamoni, Prof. Jaroslav Poncar (photographer), Hana Flanderová (Consul of the Czech Embassy), Jan Bárta (Director of the humanitarian organization ADRA Czech Republic), Linda Vejlupeková (Director of Rainbow Gateway, Czech NGO in Cambodia), Karel Kranda (Nuclear Physics Institute of the Czech Academy of Science), 21. 7. 2005, © Royal Palace in Phnom Penh

Cambodia failed to avail itself of the offer. In October 2000, Deputy Foreign Minister Hynek Kmoníček presented humanitarian aid to the head of the Cambodian Red Cross, Madame Bun Rany Hun Sen, the wife of Prime Minister Hun Sen, and used this opportunity to meet with Foreign Minister Hor Namhong.

The past few years have seen an upsurge in Czech activities in Cambodia. In 2005 and 2006, the Czech Republic granted 300,000 USD worth of relief aid to Cambodia, to help overcome disastrous drought and bad crops in 2004, and to alleviate the fate of HIV-positive Cambodians. The aid was distributed through the Rainbow Centre, a Phnom Penh – based organization led by Mrs. Linda Vejlupeková. Not only the Czech state, but also several Czech NGOs contributed substantial amounts to assist Cambodia, especially in the area of AIDS prevention (ADRA Czech Republic) or care for HIV-positive children (Stonožka/Centipede movement).

On 16-17 December 2004, an international donors' conference on Angkor in Siem Reap accepted the project of analysis of stones from the Angkor presented by the Czech Institute of Nuclear Physics at Řež near Prague. This was the historic first involvement of a Czech institution in the effort to restore the world-renowned historical monument.

Cultural Relations

The Czechs have gradually traded their perception of Cambodia as a country bereaved by civil war for the notion of a country of immense cultural values and scenic beauties. Czech tourists are discovering Angkor and Cambodia's beaches. The numbers of Czech tourists in Cambodia have been rising.

A Cambodian-Czech Friendship Society was founded in the Czech Republic in 2004.

Travelogues on Cambodia have hit the shelves of Czech bookstores, including *Kambodžský pouťník* (The Cambodian Pilgrim)¹⁹⁰ and *Koza, která žere hady* (The Snake-Eating Goat)¹⁹¹ by M. Nožina, together with other miscellaneous articles and reports. A book on Cambodian history is to be published soon.

In the late 1990s, a Czech film crew, directed by Jan Hošek, cut two documentary films; *Opustit Angkor* (Leaving Angkor) singing the beauties of one of the world's cherished cultural phenomena; and *Expedice Rattanakiri* (The Rattankiri Expedition), on the scenic beauties and inhabitants of the northern regions of Cambodia. Czech viewers were captivated by Rithy Panh's film *S-21, La machine de mort Khmère Rouge* (S-21, the Khmer Killing Machine) that confronted the inmates and tormentors of one of the most notorious concentration camps of Cambodia. At the 2004 One World Festival in Prague, this film was awarded the *Best Direction Prize* and the *Václav Havel Prize*.

In November 2003 and October 2004, the Czech Embassy in Bangkok, in conjunction with the French Culture Centre in Phnom Penh, staged a show of films by Jiří Menzel, with the author attending. Film director Menzel was received by King Norodom Sihanouk in November 2003. Czech films are regularly screened during the EU film festivals.

In February 2005, the Czech embassy staged a display of drawings in Cambodia's *Tuol Sleng* Museum of Genocide, in order to commemorate the 60 years anniversary of the World War II and 30 years of the beginning of the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia. The drawings were painted by children from the

Czech movie director
Jiří Menzel attends
a show of his films
in Phnom Penh,
30. 10. 2004



Terezín (Theresienstadt) concentration camp established by Nazi Germany in occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II, and most of their authors were killed by Nazis. This exhibition, commemorating victims of all genocides, was the first ever event organized in the *Tuol Sleng* Museum which was not directly connected to the Khmer Rouge crimes. A reception was organized on this occasion by the German Ambassador, and the Czech Ambassador Jiří Šitler presented to the Royal Family, represented by Princess Monipong, a Czechoslovak Television tape-recording of the 1967 performance of the children's opera *Brundibár*, in which a 14-year old Sihamoni played while studying in Prague. The opera was originally composed by Hans Krása and showed the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Hans Krása and most of the performing artists, mostly children, were also killed by Nazis in Theresienstadt or in Auschwitz. The event was widely covered by the Cambodian press.



King Norodom Sihamoni
in the House of Family
(shelter for HIV positive
children), 31. 5. 2006,
© Royal Palace in
Phnom Penh

After the collapse of communism in 1989, Norodom Sihamoni was finally allowed to travel to Prague, and he paid several visits to the country in which he spent his childhood and youth. He has been reunited with the Novotný family and his friends and teachers, and gone to Czech theatres again. But he continued to live in Paris. After the peace agreements between the warring parties in Cambodia, Norodom Sihamoni was unanimously chosen by the Supreme Council of Cambodia to be permanent representative of Cambodia to the United Nations in 1992, but in the following year he was appointed ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia to Unesco in Paris.

On his visit to Prague in 2001 he brought along his exceptional film, *The Four Seasons*. This is a meditation over the four natural elements and their symbolical impact on the fate of the land of Sihamoni. The prince has directed the film and danced the main character, accompanied by the Royal Dance Troupe. His latest visit took place in 2002.

As Sihamoni recalled in his conversations with the Czech painter Jaromír Skřivánek, his studies in Prague and encounters with the Czech environment had left indelible marks on him. These marks were not only professional, artistic and intellectual but they were mainly emotional. Jaromír Skřivánek wrote: *In comparison with the other foreign students' approach to Czech culture, his captivation was truly exceptional. His command of the Czech language equals that of any native Czech. He loves Czech music, sings our folk songs, and I was moved to hear him say that his infatuation with the Czech environment equalled his warm relationship with his mother.*¹⁰²

During their Prague encounter in June 2002, Jaromír Skřivánek asked if Sihamoni could single out one event from his earlier stay that was so important for him it still lingered in his memory. Sihamoni said, after a while: *I walked down the Mánes Bridge on my way from a theatre last night. I had to pause, in the middle of my walk, and that was precisely the moment that I experienced there and that's still coming back in my memories.*

Čtyři roční období a čtyři přírodní živly.

Kambodža, dokumentární film, 59 minut
Režie: Sdeh Krom Khun Norodom Sihamoni - Jeho královská výsost kambodžský princ, syn současného kambodžského krále Sihanuka
Film vyrobila kambodžská The National Society of Cinematography, režíroval ho a v hlavní roli tančí Sdeh Krom Khun Norodom Sihamoni, doprovázený královským tanečním souborem.
Norodom Sihamoni je dnes předně pověstný ztvárněním vzhledem Kambodžského království a mezinárodní organizací UNESCO v Paříži. Studoval od dětství v Praze, absolvoval v Praze také Akademii múzejních umění, obor tanec a choreografie, intuíí perfektně česky.
„Čtyři roční období a čtyři přírodní živly“ je meditační film a zamyšlení nad čtyřmi přírodními živly - Vzduchem, Zemí, Vodou a Ohněm - a jejich symbolickým významem pro osudy Kambodže.
Barvitý videofilm - moderní toalet je inspirován způsobem Mahábháraty.
Film se souhlasem autora - Jeho královské výsosti kambodžského prince Sdeh Krom Khun Norodoma Sihamoniho poskytl pro filmovou přehlídku předseda Sdružení přátel Indie pan Jaromír Skřivánek.
Česká televize plánuje uvedení tohoto filmu v nejbližší době.



Annotation of Sihamoni's film
The Four Seasons



Sihamoni's initiation rites, a scene from
the Sihamoni's film *The Four Seasons*,
Archives of Jaromír Skřivánek



Sihamoni's initiation rites, a scene from
Sihamoni's film *The Four Seasons*,
Archives of Jaromír Skřivánek



Sihamoni initiates a young monk,
a scene from Sihamoni's film *The Four Seasons*, Archives of Jaromír Skřivánek

I saw the other bank of the river, with the panoramic view of Hradčany Castle, the silhouettes of spires, and the cathedral. The dramatically illuminated palaces, darkened gardens, and the starry skies above... I have walked down there quite often, always reliving moments of enormous enchantment and happiness. My heart sings here. It is as though all my childhood desire for beauty came to fruition in these places. I have always had the urge to thank fate for my privilege to spend my youth here. This is a fairytale that never ends.

I have not seen the likes of this in Paris and anywhere else.

And also, I have to admit that Grandmother by Božena Němcová made indelible marks on me and keep valuing the book. In regard to Němcová, my great desire and wish is to stage Grandmother in the theatre, as a producer. It could happen either in Prague or in Cambodia."¹⁹³

Two years later, Norodom Sihamoni became the King of Cambodia.



The Throne Hall
in the Royal Palace,
Phnom Penh,
Cambodia, Archives
of Svatopluk Novotný

On 11 March 2006, a unique event entitled *Les mondes lointains - 50 ans d'amitié tchéco-khmère* (Faraway Worlds – 50 years of Czech-Khmere Friendship) took place in the gardens of the Chaktomouk Theatre in Phnom Penh. Under the High Patronage of His Majesty the King of Cambodia Norodom Sihamoni and under the auspices of His Excellency Václav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic, the evening was organised by the Prague Gallery Zdeněk Sklenář and Mr. Jiří Lammel. An exhibition of paintings by the renowned Czech artist František Kupka from the collections of Mr. Zdeněk Sklenář and Mr. Jiří Lammel was unveiled. Among the exhibits on the display, designed by young artist Federico Díaz, there was Kupka's Khmer-inspired painting *Les mondes lointains* (Faraway Worlds), which was created one hundred years ago.

The King and everybody in the room was visibly moved and touched by the magical atmosphere of the piano and accordion performance by Norodom Sihamoni's former conservatory teacher, the seventy-eight-year-old Professor Anna Hujčková from Prague, accompanied by Vlastimil Harapes, former Artistic Director of the National Theater Ballet in Prague. Seated in his throne, King Norodom Sihamoni joined them singing Czech folk songs and an aria from Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*.

All Czech ambassadors in Asia, who were holding their annual regional conference in Phnom Penh and many former students, who went to universities in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic sang with them too. Also, many members of the Royal Family and Cambodian government were in attendance.

King Sihamoni was presented with one of the nine existing collector's editions featuring reproductions of the paintings from *The Man and Earth* by František Kupka, with the inscription: *Gift of the Czech Nation to His Majesty the King Sihamoni*. The publication of the title was vastly assisted by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Royal Palace, His Excellency Kong Som Ol, whose son Dara had spent six years in Czechoslovakia. The Czech ambassadors were received by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Hor Namhong, whose daughter has also studied in Czechoslovakia.

It was agreed that the King would soon pay a visit to the Czech Republic. For as Shakespeare wrote:¹⁹⁴

*They were trained together in their childhoods; and
there rooted betwixt them then such an affection,
which cannot choose but branch now. Since their
more mature dignities and royal necessities made
separation of their society, their encounters,
though not personal, have been royally attorneyed
with interchange of gifts, letters, loving
embassies; that they have seemed to be together,
though absent, shook hands, as over a vast, and
embraced, as it were, from the ends of opposed
winds. The heavens continue their loves!*

Distant worlds came together a notch closer.



King Norodom Sihamoni in front of the picture "Les mondes lointains", a Khmer-inspired painting by František Kupka, 11. 3. 2006, © Jaroslav Poncar



Prague gallerist Zdeněk Sklenář, Mr. Jiří Lammel and Czech Ambassador Jiří Štíler presenting the collector's edition of „The Man and Earth“ with Kupka's paintings to the King Norodom Sihamoni, exhibition „Les mondes lointains“, 11. 3. 2006, © Barbora Šlapetová



Collector's edition with the reproductions of František Kupka's paintings „The Man and Earth“, only nine copies were published in Khmere style, exhibition „Les mondes lointains“, 11. 3. 2006, © Martin Polák



Dance performance by Khmer dancer, member of Royal Ballet, exhibition „Les mondes lointains“, 11. 3. 2006, © Barbora Šlapetová



Wall painting in the Royal Palace, Phnom Penh, 11. 3. 2006, © Barbora Šlapetová



Wall painting in the Royal Palace, Phnom Penh, 11. 3. 2006, © Barbora Šlapetová



*His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni, exhibition „Les mondes lointains”,
11. 3. 2006, © Barbora Slapetová*

ANNEX

Ambassadors and Chargés d’Affaires of Czechoslovakia to Cambodia

Date of presenting the letter of credence (Ambassadors) or appointing to the office (Chargé d’Affaires)	
Zdeněk HRADEC, Envoy	29. 5. 1957
Zdeněk HRADEC, Ambassador	7. 1959
Vladimír KNAP, Ambassador	19. 8. 1963
Karel PETRŽELKA, Ambassador	5. 11. 1967
Zdeněk KARMELITA, Ambassador (on 30.6.1970 recalled to Prague for consultations)	30. 8. 1969
Jiří KOS, CDA a. i.	1. 7. 1970
Luděk PEŠEK, CDA a. i. (left for Prague on 26. 1. 1974)	27. 7. 1971
František KÁN, Ambassador (residing in Vientiane)	7. 6. 1979
Zikmund Tobiáš, Ambassador	29. 5. 1980
Jiří VESELÝ, Ambassador	5. 11. 1983
Petr JANEČEK, Ambassador (recalled on 20. 2. 1990)	14. 10. 1987
Vladimír PODRACKÝ, CDA a. i. (recalled on 4. 7. 1991)	unknown
Michal KOTTMAN, CDA a.i.	5. 7. 1991
Marcel ČINTALAN, CDA a. i.	30. 9. 1991

Ambassadors and Chargés d’Affaires of Czech Republic to Cambodia

Jiří BEDNÁŘ, CDA a. i. (residing in Bangkok) (recalled on 3.9.1993)	1. 1. 1993
Bohumil MAZÁNEK, CDA a.i. (residing in Bangkok)	12. 1993
Jan BEČKA, Ambassador (residing in Bangkok)	7. 9. 1996
Jiří VATAHA, CDA a.i. (residing in Bangkok)	14. 6. 2000
Jiří ŠITLER, Ambassador (residing in Bangkok)	8. 5. 2002
Ambassadors and Chargés d’Affaires of Cambodia to Czechoslovakia	
Leng NGETH, Envoy (residing in Moscow)	12. 2. 1957
Nhiek TIOULONG, Envoy (residing in Moscow)	23. 10. 1957
Nhiek TIOULONG, Ambassador (residing in Moscow)	8. 7. 1960
Khim TIT, Ambassador	18. 12. 1961
Measketh CAIMEROM, Ambassador	27. 3. 1964
Nguon PYTORAVUTH, CDA a.i.	28. 4. 1972
Phang SARET, Ambassador	25. 11. 1980
Chim NGUON, Ambassador	27. 6. 1984
Ung SEAN, Ambassador (left Prague on 17. 12. 1991)	16. 2. 1989
Voeuk PHÉNG, Ambassador	unknown
Lim SAMKOL, CDA a. i. (left on 17. 9. 1996)	2. 7. 1992

Ambassadors and Chargés d’Affaires of Cambodia to Czech Republic

Lim SAMKOL, CDA a. i. (left on 17 .9. 1996)	2. 7. 1992
Makana YOUS, CDA a. i. (left on 1. 7. 1998)	1. 10. 1996
Hav Bun SE, CDA e. p. (residing in Bonn)	before 15. 1. 1999
Lerang KHEK, Ambassador (residing in Berlin)	4. 4. 2000
Ky Sim CHAN, Ambassador (residing in Warsaw)	17. 1. 2006

Endnotes

Chapter I

From the Schoolyards of Prague to the Throne of Cambodia
Coronation of King Norodom Sihamoni in October 2004

¹ Julio A. Jeldres, The Royal House of Cambodia, Phnom Penh 2003, p. 17

Chapter II

Faraway Worlds

Early accounts of Cambodia by Czech missionaries and geographers

² To Shakespeare, Bohemia was a “desert country near the sea”. Winter’s Tale, Act 3, Scene 3

³ Kdo byl kdo. Čeští a slovenští orientalisté, afrikanisté a iberoamerikanisté [Who was Who; Czech and Slovak Oriental, African and Iberian-American scholars], LIBRI, Prague 1999, pp. 25–27; Oldřich Čech z Pordenone: Cesta do Říše Velkého Chána (1316–1330). Popis východních krajů světa (Travels to the Empire of Big Khan (1316–1330). Description of the Oriental Regions of the World).Translated to Czech by Frantisek Gel and dr. Rostislav Kocourek (1962), publ. by Kvasnicka and Hampl, Prague 1998, p. 49

⁴ Münster, Sebastian: Cosmographia. Das ist Beschreibung der ganzen Welt, darinnern Alter Monarchien (Cosmography. This is the description of the whole world and its old monarchies). Basel 1628. Cosmographia was first published in 1541 and is referred to as the first German geography book. Twenty-four editions were released in 1541–1628. The book was translated into French and Italian, and a Latin translation appeared in 1550. It was widely read in the Czech Lands. Its only Czech version, dating from 1554, was translated and adapted by Jan of Púchov. (Cf. František Horák: Česká kniha v minulosti a její výzdoba /Czech Book in the Past and its Decoration/. Prague 1948, p. 96)

⁵ Cosmographia, 1628, c.d., p. 1592

⁶ Moravian Regional Archive in Brno. Translation from Latin and analysis of the text dr. J. Kroupa

⁷ Macassar (Ujung Pandang), a city and prominent trade centre on Sulawesi Island

⁸ Church administrator of Malacca (Malay Peninsula and adjacent areas)

⁹ Second letter from Father Jan Köffler, Missionary of the Society of Jesus in Cochin China, Czech Province, to Father Josef Ritter, SJ, and Confessor to Her Majesty the Queen of Portugal; Written in Sin-hoa at the Royal Court on 7 July 1747; Borrowed from: Koláček, Josef, Magister Nhiem (Thầy Nhiêm). Refugium Velehrad – Roma, Velehrad 1998, pp. 25–26. This is Koláček’s translation of Köffler’s letter cited in Stöcklein-Keller’s Weltbott (WB 714)

¹⁰ Wšeobecný zeměpis neb Geografia ve třech dílech s welikau rytinau a dvěma mapama zvláště pro učitele a čekance školní a mládež vlasteneckau. Prací a nákladem Karla Šádka, učitele na hlavní škole w Hradcy Králové. Díl třetí. (General Geography in three Tomes with a large Engraving and two Maps, especially intended for Teachers and Candidate Teachers as well as the Czech Youth; Compiled and Printed by Karel Šádek, Main School Teacher at Hradec Králové; Volume III), 1824, p. 157

¹¹ Lovek, Mekong

¹² Mekong

¹³ Zap, Karel Wladislaw: Wšeobecný zeměpis (General Geography). Part II, Vol. II, Malá encyklopedie nauk (Little Encyclopedia of Arts) Tome VI., w Praze, w kommissi Frant Řivnáče 1850, p. 155

- ¹⁴ Saigon
- ¹⁵ Phnom Penh
- ¹⁶ Rieger, František Ladislav: Slovník naučný (Encyclopedic Dictionary). Volume IV; Published by I.L. Kober, Prague 1865, p. 507
- ¹⁷ Ernest Doudart de Lagrée (1823–1866), well-known French explorer and diplomat active in Indochina
- ¹⁸ Cambodia: Ottův slovník naučný (Otto’s Encyclopedic Dictionary) – An Illustrated Encyclopedia of General Knowledge, Vol. 13 – Jana-Kartas; with 17 supplements and 172 illustrations in text; published by J. Otto in Prague, 1898, p. 834
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- ²⁰ Angor: Otto’s Encyclopedic Dictionary – An Illustrated Encyclopedia of General Knowledge, Vol.2, Alqueire-Azušak.; with 47 supplements and 218 illustrations in text; published by J. Otto in Prague, 1889, p. 325
- ²¹ M. Nožina – J. Šitler – J. Todorovová – K. Kučera – Pierre A. Boussard – M.R. Chakrarot Chitrabongs – Jiří K. Kroupa – J. Fajfrová, Siam Undiscovered. Czech-Thai encounters between the 16th and 21st centuries: rare documents, old photographs, royal visits. Bangkok 2005
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Chapter III

Journeys Into Fairytale

Angkor, royals, and the magic of buffalo - Czech travellers in Cambodia (1918–1956)

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- ²⁴ Havlasa (Jan Klecanda) was a member of the Czechoslovak delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919–1920, served in 1920–24 as Czechoslovakia’s first ambassador to Brazil and was envoy to Chile in 1943–1947. He died in California
- ²⁵ Typed text from J. Havlasa’s estate, Památník národního písemnictví (Museum of Czech Literature), Prague, section Jan Havlasa
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- ²⁷ Novák, A.V.: V zemi žlutých. Črty z cest po Birmě, Annamu, Kambodži a Číně. Návrat přes Sibiř (In the Country of Yellows. Notes From Travels to Burma, Annam, Cambodia and China. Return Across Siberia). Nakladatelství knih cestovatele A.V. Nováka, Horní Černošice 1932, p. 117
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- ²⁹ Novák , A. V.: V zemi žlutých, pp. 87–89
- ³⁰ Czech Musical Dictionary of Names and Institutions; In: <http://www.musicologica.cz/slovník/hesla.php?op=Pheslo&hid=3405> (13 June 2005)
- ³¹ Siblík, E.: Angkor a jeho tanečnice (Angkor and its Dancers); Aventinum, Dr. Otto Štorch-Marien, Prague 1929
- ³² Siblík, E.: c.d., pp. 25–26
- ³³ Siblík, E.: c.d., pp. 70–71
- ³⁴ Ibid, pp. 76, 80
- ³⁵ Ibid, pp. 86, 88–89, 90–91, 94
- ³⁶ Ibid, pp. 82–83.
- ³⁷ Ibid, pp. 94–95

- ³⁸ Český hudební slovník osob a institucí (Czech Musical Dictionary of Persons and Institutions). In: <http://www.musicologica.cz/slovník/hesla.php?op=heslo&hid=3405> (13. 6. 2005). More on the Cambodian Royal Orders, see Julio A. Jeldres, The Royal Palace of Phnom Penh and Cambodian Royal Life, Post Books, Bangkok 1999, p. 126
- ³⁹ Julio A. Jeldres, The Royal House of Cambodia, Monument Books, Phnompenh 2003, pp. 38-43
- ⁴⁰ O právech a ústavách. Korunovace krále v Kambodži (Law and Constitution: King’s Coronation in Cambodia). Širým světem, 1928/VI, no. 4, pp. 225–228
- ⁴¹ Miscellanea; Širým světem, 1941/XVIII, no. 12, p. 514
- ⁴² Pospíšil, B.: Francouzi jako kolonizátoři (The French as Colonizers); Širým světem 1935/XII, no. 7, (pp. 372–375), pp. 373, 375
- ⁴³ Lukáš, J.: Francouzská Indočína (French Indochina); Širým světem, 1940/XVII, no. 16–17, (pp. 593–601) p. 602
- ⁴⁴ Ibid; pp. 603–604

Chapter IV

Vive l’amitié khméro-tchécoslovaque!

Alliance between Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Socialist Czechoslovakia (1956–1970)

- ⁴⁵ Denis D. Gray, Twilight falls on Cambodia’s towering 20th century figure, but his legacy – good and bad – endures. Associated Press 25.9.2005
- ⁴⁶ Milton Osborne, Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness, Allen & Unwin, Sydney...
- ⁴⁷ Princ Norodom Sihanuk a další představitelé Kambodžského království v Praze (Prince Norodom Sihanouk and other representatives of the Kingdom of Cambodia visit Prague). Rudé právo 12 July 1956 (193/36)
- ⁴⁸ Ibid
- ⁴⁹ Jednání vládních delegací Kambodže a ČSR (Talks of Czechoslovak and Cambodian government delegations). Rudé právo, 14 July 1956 (195/6), (pp. 1–2), p. 1
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- ⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2
- ⁵² Ibid pp. 1–2
- ⁵³ Kambodžský princ Norodom Sihanuk navštívil Karlovy Vary (Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk visited Karlovy Vary). Rudé právo, 16 July 1956 (no. 197/vol. 36), p. 1
- ⁵⁴ Delegace království Kambodže se rozloučila s Československem (Kingdom of Cambodia delegation parts with Czechoslovakia). Rudé právo, 17 July 1956 (no. 198/vol. 36), p. 1
- ⁵⁵ Kambodžský vyslanec v ČSR (Cambodian envoy in Czechoslovakia); Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. no. 104.690/57-AO/I-2, 9 Feb 1957, Cambodia, Box 1; MFA Archive, Prague
- ⁵⁶ Kancelář Národního shromáždění republiky československé (Office of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic), 10 July 1958, ref. no. 558/41; : Program návštěvy delegace Kambodžského království (Program of the visit of the Kingdom of Cambodia delegation), TO-O-1945-1959, Box, Cambodia, MFA Archive, Prague, file 146/72. FMA Archive, Prague
- ⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 115/372/58-7, TO-O-1945-59, Cambodia, MFA Archive, Prague
- ⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archive, Cambodia Fund
- ⁵⁹ Srdečné uvítání hlavy kambodžského státu v hlavním městě ČSSR. Odpověď prince Norodoma

Sihanuka (Cordial welcome to Cambodian head of state in the capital of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic; Prince Norodom Sihanouk's reply); Rudé právo, 22 November 1960, no. 324/vol. 41, p. 1

Ibid

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Princ Norodom Sihanuk mezi slovenskými pracujícími (Prince Norodom Sihanouk among Slovak workers); Rudé právo, 24 November 1960, no. 326/vol. 41, p. 1

Hlava kambodžského státu v Ostravě (Head of Cambodian state visits Ostrava); Rudé právo, 25 November 1960, no. 327/vol. 41, p. 1

Zpráva o návštěvě Norodoma Sihanuka v Československé socialistické republice (Report on the visit of Norodom Sihanouk in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic); copy from MFA Archive, no. 032.298/60-7, Enclosure 2; Classified

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Smlouva o přátelství a spolupráci mezi ČSSR a Kambodžou podepsána (Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Cambodia is signed); Rudé právo, 28 November 1960, no. 330/vol. 41, p. 1; Komuniké o státní návštěvě hlavy státu Kambodža Jeho královské Výsosti prince Samdech Preaha Norodoma Sihanuka Upayuvareacha v ČSSR (Communiqué on the State Visit of the Head of State of Cambodia, His Royal Highness Prince Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Upayuvareach in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic); Rudé právo, 29 November 1960, no. 331/vol. 41, p. 1

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³ Evaluation of the Activities of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Cambodia in the first half of 1964; Phnom Penh, 13 July 1964; FMA Prague, 7th Section, ref. no. 076/64, Classified; copy from Czech FMA Archive

⁴ Reception offerte a l'occasion du depart de l'ambassadeur de la Tchecoslovaquie et Madame,

Phnompenh, 13 Juillet 1963. From the private archive of Norodom Sihanouk, courtesy of his official biographer Ambassador Julio A. Jeldres

⁸⁰ Ceremonie de remise du materiel militaire offert aux FARK par la Republique Socialiste Tchecoslovaque (Palais Royal, 19 octobre 1964), Les paroles de Samdech Preah N. Sihanouk, Octobre – Decembre 1964, p. 41

⁸¹ Baptême du boulevard „République Socialiste Tchecoslovaque“ (Phnom Penh, 23 Aout 1965), Les paroles de Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, Juillet – Septembre 1965, pp. 772–773

⁸² Source: MFA Archive; Doležal, I.: Kambodža. Zeměmi světa (Cambodia. Countries of the World). Svoboda, Prague 1973, pp. 186–187

⁸³ Business Policy Report October–November 1958, Phnom Penh, 8 December 1958; copy for MFA, TO-O-1945-59, Cambodia, MFA Archive, Prague

⁸⁴ Informace o československo-kambodžských stycích (Information on Czechoslovak-Cambodian Relations): Year 1963; copy from MFA Archive, Prague

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⁸⁶ Zpráva o činnosti ZÚ Phnom Penh v I. pololetí 1970 (Report on the Activity of the Embassy in Phnom Penh in the first half of 1970), Phnom Penh, 15 June 1970, no. 035/70. TO-T-1970-1974

⁸⁷ Doležal, I.: Kambodža. Zeměmi světa (Cambodia. Countries of the World). Svoboda, Prague 1973, p. 187. Source: MFA Archive

⁸⁸ Rudé právo, 20 November 1960, no. 322/vol. 41, p. 3

⁸⁹ Zpráva ZÚ Phnom Penh (Report by Phnom Penh Embassy), no date, copy from MFA Archive, Prague

⁹⁰ Informativní zpráva o návštěvě staveniště montovny traktorů (Informative report on a visit to the construction site of a tractor assembly plant); filed by Comrade Knap, Phnom Penh, 31 Oct 1963, no. 080/63, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7th Section, Classified! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Between 1955 and 1963, the United States provided Cambodia with almost \$ 500 million in economic and military assistance. Relations deteriorated in the early 1960s and diplomatic relations were broken by Cambodia in May 1965. See <http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/c/40546.htm>, 11 Feb 2006

⁹³ Kambodža/Kamerun 2 (Cambodia/Cameroon 2), 1970-1974, MFA Archive, Prague; see also Kambuja vol. 3, no. 22, 15 Jan 1967

⁹⁴ Důvodová zpráva. Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí (Exposé: Ministry of Foreign Affairs), ref. no. 022.944/64-7, Enclosure II, Classified! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

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⁹⁹ Zájezd souboru SEUK do Kambodže (SEUK ensemble tour of Cambodia), no. 148.182/56, TO-O-1945–59, Cambodia, MFA Archive, Prague

¹⁰⁰ Zpráva o pobytu filmařů v Kambodži (Report on film-makers' stay in Cambodia), no. 1.110/59, Phnom Penh, 14 July 1959, TO-O-1945-59, MFA Archive, Prague

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- ¹⁰² <http://www.pozitivni-noviny.cz/IMAGES/Sis/01.jpg>
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- ¹⁰⁴ Doležal, I.: Kambodža. Zeměmi světa. Svoboda, Prague 1973, p. 188
- ¹⁰⁵ Zpráva o kulturních, školských a vědeckých vztazích se zahraničím (Report on Cultural, Educational and Scientific Contacts with Foreign Countries); Phnom Penh, 22 Apr 1962; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7th Section, no. 034/62-V-taj; Classified, copy from FMA Archive, Prague
- ¹⁰⁶ Zpráva o činnosti s. Kolmana (Report on the activities of Comrade Kolman), no. 1272/59, File 146/6826. TO-O-1945-1959. MFA Archive, Prague
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- ¹⁰⁸ Kambodžská tělovýchova – vyžádání zprávy (Cambodian physical education – report requested); No. 025-258/7/64, TO-T-1960-64, Cambodia, Box 1, MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹⁰⁹ Military History Institute, MOD Fund, 1964, Dukla Prague Tour, Prague, 31/3, carton 252

Chapter V

Whence the Little Prince?

King Norodom Sihamoni and Prague (1962–1970)

- ¹¹⁰ Kopie odpovědi prezidenta republiky. Praha 30. května 1962, Složka Studium syna Sihanuka v Československu 146/38(Copy of letter to President of the Republic; Folder Sihanouk’s Son Studies in Czechoslovakia, 146/38), 114.493/62; Czech MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹¹¹ Kopie odpovědi premiéra V. Širokého (Copy of reply by Prime Minister Viliam Široký); Folder Sihanouk’s Son Studies in Czechoslovakia, 146/38, 114.493/62; Czech MFA Archive, Prague
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- ¹¹⁴ Le prince Sihamoni a Prague. Kambuja vol. 2, no. 14, 15 May 1966
- ¹¹⁵ Ministry of Education and Culture
- ¹¹⁶ Kopie, Zpráva o princi Norodomu Sihamonim (Copy, Report on Prince Norodom Sihamoni) (October–November 1962), Prague, 5 December 1962, Karel Polák; Ministry of Education and Culture to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, c/o Cambodia Desk; Folder Sihanouk’s Son Studies in Czechoslovakia, 146/38, 114.493/62; Czech MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹¹⁷ Zpráva o pobytu ve škole prince Norodoma Sihamoni (Report on the School Attendance of Prince Norodom Sihamoni); Prague, 9 January 1963, Folder: Studies of Sihanouk’s Son in Czechoslovakia, 146/38, 114.493/62, Archive of Czech FMA, Prague
- ¹¹⁸ Zpráva o pobytu syna prince Sihanuka Norodoma Sihamoniho v ČSSR (Report on the sojourn of Prince Norodom Sihamoni in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic), copy without date, Folder: Studies of Sihanouk’s Son in Czechoslovakia, 146/38, 114.493/62, Archive of Czech FMA, Prague
- ¹¹⁹ The younger son of Sihanouk and Monineath Prince Narindrapong, was sent to school in Moscow. He would later graduate from the Moscow Institute of International Relations

- ¹²⁰ Dopis K. Poláka (Letter by K. Polák); copy, Prague, 20 October 1963, Folder: Studies of Sihanouk’s Son in Czechoslovakia, 146/38, 114.493/62, Archive of Czech FMA, Prague
- ¹²¹ Záznam pro s. ministra, k šifře ZÚ Phnom Penh – č. 49. Složka Studium syna Sihanuka v Československu (Cf.: Notes for the Minister, on coded message from Phnom Penh Embassy – no. 49, Folder: Studies of Sihanouk’s Son in Czechoslovakia), 146/38, 114.493/62, Archives of Czech FMA, Prague
- ¹²² Ministerstvo školství a kultury čís. 20655/63-VII/2a Ministerstvu zahraničních věcí, ref pro Kambodžu, Praha. (Ministry of Education and Culture, no. 20655/63-VII/2a, to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, c/o Cambodia Desk), Report by Czechoslovak Embassy Phnom Penh, 6 May 1963; Folder Sihanouk’s Son Studies in Czechoslovakia, c.d., Czech MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹²³ Kopie z archívu MZV ČR. Složka Studium syna Sihanuka v Československu (Copy from Czech MFA Archive; Folder: Studies of Sihanouk’s Son in Czechoslovakia), 146/38, 114.493/62
- ¹²⁴ Nožina, M.: Kambodžský poutník (The Cambodian Pilgrim), Livingstone, Prague 1997
- ¹²⁵ Internet: <http://www.pozitivni-noviny.cz/IMAGES/Sis/01.jpg>
- ¹²⁶ Le triomphe du prince charmant Norodom Sihamoni. Kambuja, August 1968
- ¹²⁷ Personal recollection of King Norodom Sihamoni, communicated to ambassador J. Šitler on June 14, 2006
- ¹²⁸ Situace po sesazení Sihanuka a perspektivy vývoje Kambodže (Situation after the deposal of Sihanouk and developmental prospects of Cambodia); Phnom Penh, 22 April 1970; No. 029/70, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7th Section, File 146/111. Classified! Personal Delivery! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹²⁹ Zpráva o činnosti ZÚ Phnom Penh v I. pololetí 1970 (Report on the Activity of the Embassy in Phnom Penh in the first half of 1970), Phnom Penh, 15 June 1970, no. 035/70. TO-T-1970-1974, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7th Territorial Section, MFA Archive, Prague

Chapter VI

Nine Circles of Hell

Civil War and the Khmer Rouge Rule (1970–1979)

- ¹³⁰ 18. 2. 1970. Norodom Sihanuk – Kambodža – Pobyt v ČSSR (18 Feb 1970. Norodom Sihanouk – Cambodia – Visit to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic); No. 020.865/70/5, T-1970-1974, Cambodia;. MFA Archive, Prague
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- ¹³² Situace po sesazení Sihanuka a perspektivy vývoje Kambodže (Situation after the deposition of Sihanouk and developmental prospects of Cambodia); Phnom Penh, 22 April 1970, No. 029/70;. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7th Section, File 146/111. Classified! Personal Delivery! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹³³ Ibid
- ¹³⁴ meaning Sihanouk
- ¹³⁵ Ibid
- ¹³⁶ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. Č.j.: 024.620/70-7. I. Návrh usnesení, Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ. Tajné! (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. no.: 024.620/70-7. I. Draft Resolution, Presidium CC CPCz. Classified!) Copy from MFA Archive, Prague
- ¹³⁷ Dokument Ministerstva zahraničních věcí, č. 022.906/70-7. Styk s velvyslancem vlády N. Sihanuka. (Document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, no. 022.906/70-7; Contact with ambassador of the government of N. Sihanouk). TO-T-1970-1974, Cambodia. Classified, MFA Archive, Prague

¹³⁸ Záznam o návštěvě velvyslance Kambodže Measketh Caimeronu u vedoucího 7. ter. odboru s. ing. J. Sobotky, CSc (Record of the visit of Cambodian Ambassador Measketh Caimeron to the Head of 7th Territorial Section, Comrade J. Sobotka, on 10 Aug 1970); no. 024.435/70-7, TO-T-1970-74, Box 1. MFA Archive, Prague

¹³⁹ Vážený soudruh Dr. Gustáv Husák, I. tajemník Ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa, Praha. V Praze dne ... srpna 1970 (Dear Comrade Gustáv Husák, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Prague: Prague, ... August 1970), Ref. no. 024.458/70-7, Classified! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

¹⁴⁰ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí. Č.j.: 024.620/70-7. I. Návrh usnesení, Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ. Tajné! (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. no.: 024.620/70-7. I. Draft Resolution, Presidium CC CPCz. Classified!) Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

¹⁴¹ Dopis s. Erbanu N. Sihanukovi (Letter of Comrade Erban to N. Sihanouk), Prague, 15 August 1970; Enclosure to Exposé, ref. no. 024.620/70-7; Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

¹⁴² Záznam z návštěvy velvyslance Kambodže v Praze p. M Caimeroma u ved. 7. t. o. MZV s. Ing. J. Sobotky CSc., (Record of the visit of Cambodian Ambassador Measketh Caimeron to the Head of 7th Territorial Section; Comrade J. Sobotka), on 10 Aug 1970; no. 024.435/70-7, TO-T-1970-74, Box 1. MFA Archive, Prague

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¹⁴⁵ Declaration du gouvernement royal d'Union nationale du Cambodge. Fait le 2 Septembre 1970. Agence Khmere d'Information – Pékin 1970

¹⁴⁶ Záznam o rozhovoru pracovníka 7. ter. odboru MZV Dr. O. Žádného s bývalým II. tajemníkem velvyslanectví Kambodže v Praze p. I. Ghanty dne 21. 10. 1979 (Record of conversation between Dr. O. Žádný from the MFA 7th Territorial Section and former second secretary of Cambodia's embassy in Prague, Mr I. Ghanty, on 21 Oct 1979); Document ref. no. 025.628/70-7. Classified! Copy from MFA Archive, Prague

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Don't Abandon Me

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Chapter VIII
Internationalist Assistance
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Chapter IX
Winds of Change
Czechs and Khmers on their path to peace and democracy (after 1989)

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Chapter X
Royal Comeback
Sihamoni and the Czech Republic after 1989

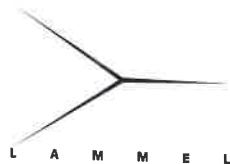
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Epilogue

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