



[ERN: 00011926-00011943]

Relations with Vietnam after 17 April, 1975

Right after the Liberation, NÃM Theum (ណាំ ផឹម), Chief of Commerce from South Vietnam to Zone 304, wrote me a letter through the Zone 304 courier to Stueng Trang (ស្ទឹងត្រង់). At that time, I was standing by in the “Speu (ស្ទើ)” Zone. NÃM Theum wrote as follows:

Dear Comrade Doeun (ខឿន), My Respects,

First of all, I would like to send my regards to you from afar, lamenting your absence with deep revolutionary feelings.

I have been informed that (our) Cambodian friends have entirely liberated Phnom Penh. I heard this through listening to the radio of Cambodian friends. However, I would like to clarify whether this is true or not. Please, Comrade, send me the true facts. Here, I had not expected that all (our) Cambodian friends would have been able to liberate Phnom Penh so quickly. If so, I am delighted and would like to express my enthusiasm to all (our) Cambodian friends as well! I would like the true information, so that I can disseminate and relate it to my unit to motivate them towards the storming attacks to liberate the South soon. In the meantime, how should the commercial relationship between us be organized?

If you agree, I would like to meet you in person to discuss both our commercial work and politics after the Liberation of Cambodia.

I wish you happiness and success in all the undertakings delegated (to you) by your upper levels.

With respect and profound revolutionary and militant solidarity!

NÃM Theum, Chief of Vietnamese Commerce to Zone 304

18 April, 1975

I received this letter on the night of 18 April, 1975. I then wrote a letter back immediately. This letter was sent to NĀM Theum's Office in Ou Chak (អូចក) village, Stueng Trang commune that night via a messenger. I wrote as follows:

Dear Comrade NĀM Theum,

I would like to send my regards to you and all comrades on the Commerce Committee, missing you in a profoundly revolutionary spirit.

I have received your letter already, and I am glad to provide you with my response to all the questions raised.

1- It is true that our Cambodia, particularly, Phnom Penh, which had been the last base of the enemy, was completely liberated by our Revolutionary Armed Forces on 17 April, 1975. The information aired by the National United Front radio was official. With such exciting news, I, too, had not expected the Liberation could have been achieved so quickly.

2- As for your request to see me in person, I suggest a meeting on 20 April, 1975, at the Commerce Office in Zone 304 (Speu), which you have been to. If possible, you may invite all of the Commerce Committee (members) to come along.

3- As for the commercial work, I will definitely explain that during our meeting.

After the Liberation, we have been quite busy as we have had to organize the reception of our people who had been displaced from the city.

Wishing you happiness and success in all (your) work.

With respect and deep revolutionary and militant solidarity!

Doeun, Zone 304

Date: 18 April, 1975

16 June, 1977

[Signature]

Doeun

On 20 April, 1975, as agreed, Comrades NĂM Theum, NĂM Aum (ណាំ អូម), and BA Săo (ប៉ា សៅ) arrived at the Speu Office. The participants from Zone 304 included Comrade Soth (សុត), Chief of Commerce of Zone 304, Comrade Leak (លាក់), Office Chief and myself.

I started the meeting by saying, “Today is our first meeting after Cambodia has been completely liberated in order to mark our victory and to organize our work for the future! I wish our meeting proceeds with much success!”

Comrade NĂM Theum expressed his ideas, “I and all our Vietnamese friends have come here with the main purpose of expressing enthusiasm in the triumph of (our) Cambodian friends who have entirely liberated the country! This is the victory news which has made all of us most excited and taken aback because we had not expected that it could be accomplished so quickly! I and all (our) Vietnamese friends in the Commerce Unit as a whole take this opportunity to express our enthusiasm to (our) Cambodian friends who have completely liberated the country!”

I said, “Thank you Comrade NĂM Theum for your interest in following up the situation of our shock assaults and victory. This triumph has been achieved by the efforts and difficult struggles of the people and the Kampuchea Revolutionary Armed Forces based on the stance of sovereignty and independence even though it has been achieved largely with spiritual and material support from the (Vietnamese) people and the Vietnamese Workers Party, who have always backed us, particularly with weaponry assistance. I would like to express my thanks to the people and the Workers Party for their previous support. We have achieved successive successes over our joint enemies with such good solidarity.”

“With respect to affairs of trade, whether to continue our (trade) relations, I would like to suggest continuation of our exchanges, as before, because we need a lot of aid relief for our people who are lacking. Currently, our Party still advises us to evacuate residents from the city to work in the rural areas, so we increasingly need large amounts of supplies to support them.”

Comrade NÃM Theum clarified, “How has the evacuation of people from the city been planned? How does it cause convenience or difficulty for us?”

I said, “This evacuation has been conducted in order to address the issue of food supplies after the war. It will also be easy to put the city under our control after the Liberation, so that enemies would not be able to place themselves undercover and act against the Revolution. What kind of support and difficulty does this evacuation cause?” I emphasized, “There will be more hardship than convenience because coming to live in the rural areas, these evacuees will encounter shortages in housing, cattle, food and tools even plates, spoons, knives and axes for their daily lives! Therefore, we will be busy with this evacuation handling many problems. In my opinion and stance, I do not agree with this evacuation for I cannot see any substantial return at all!”

Comrade NÃM Theum said, “In my experience, I have never seen a Revolution in the world like your Revolution. Doing this will cause segregation of the people’s vigour from the Revolution. There is no advantage. Enemies will agitate to separate our forces to fight against us because those people will have lost their houses, cars, factories and endeavours. In my opinion, this is a development of contradictions which will be hard to address.”

I told NÃM Theum, “Wait and see the real situation and how it will evolve.”

NÃM Theum said, “Many administrative and technical undertakings need to be regulated quickly. Who will manage these? Factories need lines with many technicians also! These are the major contradictions which are relevant to both politics and economics. An independent state needs diplomats, post and telecommunications and ministries to service daily exchanges. Where can we get the personnel to manage these works?”

I told Comrade NÃM Theum, “Building people’s understanding, the politics and economics is time consuming, so we need to thoroughly see both opportunities and difficulties. If we can address both, we will be able to allocate them accordingly. With respect to these issues, just wait and see how will the central Party (leadership) decide? How will they regulate it? However, it is my impression difficulties will definitely be present.”

NĂM Theum said, “It seems that we are creating contradictions which will make us lose!”

I told NĂM Theum, “Nothing much has come from this meeting; I have no more ideas. From now on, we will be busy for we need to handle the evacuation of residents from the city. If our Vietnamese friends want to meet us, please meet with Comrade Soth. He will stand in for me as I will not be around the office.” At that moment, Comrade NĂM Theum expressed his thanks to me for allowing this special work meeting.

I told Comrade NĂM Theum, “Please support us with more clothing, medicines and supplies for our people’s daily lives such as plates, spoons and pots, as many as you can.”

After the meeting, a small party was organized to mark the 17 April triumph.

During the party, NĂM Theum said, “We will disseminate this 17 April victory to our unit so as to encourage the shock assaults in order to liberate the South soon!”

I said, “We will determine to support the Vietnamese people’s struggle until complete liberation is achieved.”

I told Comrade NĂM Theum, “One day we will meet and resolve the commercial exchanges between us by experimentation. Currently we are so busy, so please forgive us. We need to organize frequent commercial exchanges between us.”

Comrade NĂM Theum said, “I suggest a meeting on commercial exchanges anytime at the convenience of our Cambodian friends.”

After the party, we left for our respective abodes.

The letter of Bang Meuy (ឃុំឃី), Secretary of South Vietnam to Zone 304, through SĂO Chraeng (ស្នង់ ច្រើង), expressed admiration for the 17 April, 1975 triumph.

Around 5 days after the Liberation, Comrade SĂO Chraeng brought me the letter, in person, to Skun (ស្កុន). At that time, I was at working on the evacuation of

the residents from Phnom Penh. When we met, SĂO Chraeng and I chatted a lot about the 17 April victory. Comrade SĂO Chraeng said, “You have achieved the Liberation, so please help us. I am glad to have been assigned by *Bang Meuy* to bring this letter to you directly. This time I can hear about and clearly see the activities of the cooperatives and cadres who have been delegated to manage hundreds of thousands of people in each zone. This is a very crucial undertaking I have learned.”

I invited Comrade SĂO Chraeng to meet with me directly if he had a message from *Bang Meuy*.

Comrade SĂO Chraeng said, “Right after having been informed that Cambodia had been liberated, *Bang Meuy* wrote a letter immediately and assigned me to bring it to you in person in case you (Doeun) had any messages to bring back to him.”

I told Comrade SĂO Chraeng, “I have some matters to put in a message back to him too.” *Bang Meuy* wrote as follows:

Dear Comrades Tēs (តេស) and Doeun,

I would like to send my regards to both of you with bottomless revolutionary spirit and much longing.

I am fine. How about both of you?

I would like to send you a letter whose essence is as follows:

On 17 April, 1975, your radio aired news of the worldwide roaring victory that “Cambodia had been completely liberated”. We were taken aback with this piece of news that excited all of us and filled us with wonder and much enthusiasm!

From day to day, the news from Phnom Penh and the whole country had become more believable, and through walky-talkies, the “Adversary” groups also informed us here too! When we were aware for sure that Phnom Penh had been liberated, I immediately wrote a letter to you both.

My beloved Comrade Tēs and Comrade Doeun,

I am delighted that all of you have liberated the country as a whole.

- This wonderful triumph has much excited the world. In my opinion, no such victory before this one had occurred in the history of the struggles of the Cambodian people for thousands of years! We consider this victory as our joint conquest too. With respect, we would like to hail this triumph with you!

- Previously, the Cambodian people and the Revolutionary Forces of Kampuchea had persistently fought the American Imperialists, and many of them had sacrificed their lives before this victory was attained. We would like to pay our respects to their memory and to commit to learn from their experiences in order to expedite storm attacks to absolutely liberate the South.

- Your victory has much encouraged us, our cadres and army. It has imbued the shock assaults on the Southern battlefields with a high determination to liberate more land, and subsequent conquests are being advanced towards complete liberation soon.

- We understand that Cambodia has been liberated. However, your plan in mobilizing forces from the Party of Kampuchea for fighting for control is still the main task through your efforts of building your own forces. Thus, your work is still serious. I am so glad to have seen you are struggling to get everything ready to make use of when necessary.

We would like to inform all of you that we will support you until you achieve this great goal. We will back you as you already know.

Wishing you happiness and success!

With revolutionary militant solidarity and fraternity!

Meuy, Secretary of the South Zone, April, 1975

To this letter, I responded quickly through Comrade SĂO Chraeng, for the Comrade Secretary was at work in Phnom Penh.

Dear *Bang* Meuy,

First of all, I would like to say hello to you from afar with longing and the deepest revolutionary spirit.

We are all fine. We have already received your letter through Comrade SǎO Chraeng, and we are very excited that you have paid attention to our triumph and highly prize this victory together with your contribution, particularly your attention to supporting us in absolutely fighting for control. Moreover, you have advised us to continue paying attention to this work.

We all would like to express our thanks for your attention and the advice you have offered. We are confident that South Vietnam will surely be liberated soon.

Our Cambodia has been liberated, and we commit to do our best in supporting the Vietnamese people and troops in order to contribute to the liberation of South Vietnam as expeditiously as possible. Currently, in Zone 304, we have related to our people and cadres to sacrifice themselves for the sake of supporting our Vietnamese friends. All this husked rice, corn, these pigs, cattle, beans and supplies have been delivered through the South Ministry of Commerce which is standing by in Zone 304. We are paying attention to supporting our Vietnamese friends, but not on a commercial exchange basis!

Many cadres of either the Zone Ministry of Commerce, or bases and cooperatives, have made sacrifices to help support products to the South in the form of exchanges. Currently, liaisons with our Vietnamese friends in Zone 304 are close and mutually helpful regardless of profit or loss.

Ever since you left Zone 304, the friendship between both of us has been strengthened and improved on a daily basis. The Vietnamese, Cambodian cadres and combatants at the Ministry of Commerce are close as honest friends, so their efforts have never been contravened. I will work hard to improve this friendship even more. In the future, I will organize a party at the Ministry of Commerce of Zone 304 by inviting 20 Vietnamese cadres and combatants to attend it! In the near future, I will organize an idea exchange meeting about the previous commercial cooperation in order to improve activities in this effort.

Please rest assured that we will, as you advise, actively intensify the effort through which the friendship will always be consolidated and improved.

Please accept our frank respect and loyal respects.

We wish you good health and success and that the South be liberated soon!

With respect and profound militant and revolutionary solidarity.

Doeun, Zone 304

April, 1975

I met with SĂO Chraeng before I delivered the letter to him. Comrade SĂO Chraeng reiterated, "I have been delegated to bring you the letter and to receive ideas or opinions raised by our Cambodian friends and to discuss any other issues."

I asked Comrade SĂO Chraeng, "Do you have any issues to be considered?"

Comrade SĂO Chraeng said, "When Vietnam is entirely liberated, both of our countries will set up diplomatic links and open relations. What about secret communications?" SĂO Chraeng added, "I will suggest undertakings including in politics, economics and trade! Who would you recommend to be the consul? Comrade BA Toeng (ហ៊ា តឺង), or I would be engaged, for it will be easy to communicate secret undertakings of the Party."

I said, "If such an arrangement is carried out, it will be convenient for communications. As for me, I would assign Comrade TOEK Kim Och (តឺក គីមអុច) to stand in there because he has been aware of the Party's secret activities. What does Bang Meuy think?"

* I told Comrade SĂO Chraeng, "We are busy with the work of building secret forces to be a core for leading the people and the public in the fight. I have successfully built certain forces, but our main concern is "weapons to be used." *Bang Meuy* has committed to provide them to us, and yet we are not sure whether or not they can be provided soon when we need them."

Bang SĂO Chraeng said, "*Bang Meuy* is very thoughtful, so he will do what he has promised! Please don't be worried. I will report more about this to him!"

* I informed Comrade SĂO Chraeng, "Since the Liberation, I have collected almost a hundred Vietnamese friends who had been imprisoned in Kampong Cham and Phnom Penh. What will the Vietnamese Workers Party decide with respect to

these friends? They are very thin, and they are now being fattened up with injections and food!”

Comrade SĂO Chraeng said, “Please hand them all over to Comrade NĂM Theum and also those who were from Phnom Penh. Our Party has had an option to build (up) these partners. Most of them were from the North who had been caught by enemies on Cambodian battlefields! I have to take them back to the North.

After SĂO Chraeng, I and Doeun had finished, I gave him a letter and said, “This letter is for *Bang Meuy*, so please help bring it to him. By the way, please send my regards to him too.”

With regard to *Bang Meuy*’s letter, when I finished reading it, I immediately sent it to Comrade Secretary Khuon (ក្បួន) in Phnom Penh. It was sent via Comrade Sâmbat (សម្បត្តិ), who was a driver to Khuon. After having read *Bang Meuy*’s letter, Khuon wrote me a letter via telegram. Khuon mentioned that he had received *Bang Meuy*’s letter and read it carefully. He was interested in the essence of the letter. Moreover, through the letter, I was instructed to carry out some tasks:

1. Prepare to organize a joint zonal party in Kampong Cham.
2. Organize a party at the Vietnamese Commercial Unit in Zone 304.
3. Advise each unit to prepare a solidarity meal.

These parties are suggested in order to raise enthusiasm for the 17 April triumph.

After I read the Secretary’s letter, I wrote him back confirming my consent to the instructions and gradually to get ready for them ...

I wrote a letter to Comrade NĂM Theum informing him that Zone 304 would organize a party to mark the 17 April triumph, and 20 Vietnamese friends would be invited to attend it. In the letter, everyone would be requested to arrive at the appointed place. NĂM Theum wrote back to me that he was delighted and would be ready as agreed. He additionally responded that he would suggest a work meeting prior to the party. I then agreed to the suggestion.

I adopted the Speu Commerce Office as the meeting place, and the participants from Zone 304 included:

- 1- Doeun, mutually responsible person
- 2- Soth, Chief of Economy and Commerce
- 3- Leak, Chief of Commerce
- 4- Bâ (ឃ្ល), Deputy Chief of Commerce of Zone 304

The Vietnamese participants included:

- 1- NĂM Theum, Chairman
- 2- NĂM Aum, Vice Chairman
- 3- BA Săo, Member
- 4- TEU Khē (តេ ខេ), Member

NĂM Theum introduced to me that the components...

16 June, 1977

[Signature]

Doeun

[ERN: 00011946]

With profound revolutionary and militant solidarity.

Doen, Zone 304, April, 1975

After having received the letter, read and replied to it, I started to work on the following program with Comrade NẮM Theum:

- 1- Our Vietnamese friends expressed their enthusiasm for the 17 April Victory.
- 2- Review of commercial cooperation.
- 3- Work direction.

Outside the meeting, Comrade NẮM Theum said to me that during this late period, the Ministry of Commerce of the South and the Commerce (Ministry) of Zone 304 had had good communication and mutual understanding. This communication would be improved in the future.

I took the opportunity to inform Comrade NẮM Theum that all the participants in the meeting were the leading cadres of the Ministry of Commerce of Zone 304. Comrade Soth was the Deputy Chief of the Ministry of Commerce of Zone 304, and he had clear standing in liaising with our Vietnamese friends. He had always tolerated and enabled our Vietnamese friends over minor, or substantial, contradictions which might have occurred.

NẮM Theum said that previously the communication had been quite suitable.

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We all are delighted that our Cambodian friends have held a party to mark the 17 April triumph. This party is an encouragement to us in committing ourselves to achieve the liberation of South Vietnam soon.

This party has been held in an atmosphere of solidarity and close friendship with a commitment to mutually help each other. Through this party, our Vietnamese friends have gotten to know even more Cambodian friends who are the zonal cadres such as Comrade Tol (តុល), Comrade Keam (គាម), Comrade Lân (ឡាន), Comrade Chhoeun (ឃៀន), Comrade Ngin (ងិន), Comrade Kun (គុណ), Pich (ពិជ) and the cadres of the Ministry of Commerce such as Comrades Bâ, Leak, Chhan (ឆាន), Kuon (គួន), Pau (ប៉ូ), Dēt (ដេត) and Nguon (ងួន).

I am delighted to have experienced the good atmosphere of solidarity with the hope that, in the future, nothing would block communication, and cooperation would be going well, through which secret actions in liaison with the Vietnamese would be convenient in this legal form.

I met Comrade NĂM Theum in person and told him that, currently, this Ministry of Commerce was being built to be a core for fighting power from the Party, and, thus, all these good friendships had been built. Therefore, communications with...

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Doeun

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... expert of each section, therefore. I said, "If you can inform and discuss with Comrade Soth, it will also be great if you can gradually help explain to our Cambodian friends. It will be easy for them to understand if they are educated with practical undertakings. When I need to organize a main course, I will inform you later. I am delighted that Comrade NĂM Theum has paid attention to this matter. It can also be regarded as assistance to us."

I told Comrade NĂM Theum, "From now on our cadres shall be educated to do trading and politics. They shall not only concentrate on commerce, but also politics shall be deemed more significant. If our Vietnamese friends can do this, it will expand its good impact amongst my people. Previously our comrades had still focused on commerce more than politics."

Comrade NĂM Theum totally agreed with the ideas I expressed.

After the party meeting ended, Comrade NĂM Theum and I said good bye to each other (and went) back to our places.

A week after the party, Comrade NĂM Theum wrote me a letter informing me that South Vietnam had been liberated. However, his unit had not yet been ordered to withdraw and had to stay positioned on Cambodian territory. Thus, communications were still the same in terms of commerce and ...

17 June, 1977

[Signature]

Doeun