

THE NUMBER OF THE VIETNAMESES IN CAMBODIA (from 1951 to 2003)

By Dy Kareth

Since the invasion and the occupation of Cambodia by the forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) in 1979 until today, if the number of the total population in Cambodia is approximatively known, but the figure of its ethnic components, in particular that of the Vietnamese who settle there are unknown. Since 1979, the latter are primarily made up of ceaseless floods of new uncontrolled immigrants. The ruling party, Cambodian Revolutionary People Party, pro-Vietnamese, now became the CPP (Cambodian People Party), which strictly controls all the villages and districts of the country until now, must know this figure but refuse to make it public, for obvious political reasons.

Particular immigrants

In Cambodia, indeed, according to testimonys' of the historians and French research fellows, the Vietnamese are viewed by the Khmers like "a danger", unlike the Chinese the majority of whom, even of the time of French Protectorate, always knew "to live in symbiosis with the Cambodians and were assimilated to the Khmer society". A general remark is that the number of the Vietnamese (or Annamites) in Cambodia, contrary to that of the other foreign communities, does not witness a regular evolution, but absolutely extraordinary rises and falls. In fact, in the past as well as today, if the Vietnamese emigrate towards Cambodia because they are essentially encouraged and protected by Vietnamese authorities and/or by Cambodia's local administration. They are not 'normal' immigrants.

Jean Delvert noticed "the birth (in Cambodia) of a significant minority of Annamites, subjects protected by France, estimated at 250,000 in 1951 being originated primarily from Tonkin", but the author estimated "personally" at 230,000. He also noted that "Protectorate supported the annamite immigration; it employed Annamites staff and subordinates in all the administrative services and this from the very start... The most serious, undoubtedly, is that the French authorities extended their jurisdiction on all Annamites immigrants and born in Cambodia; thus Annamites escaped completely from the Cambodian authorities "(1).

When the Conference of Geneva in 1954 required communist Vietminh to withdraw its forces from Cambodia, the Vietnamese troops and the partisans of Viet-minh and their families - who had taken the way of the return to Vietnam were from 60,000 to 90,000, according to several sources. In 1954-1955, the number of Vietnamese in Cambodia was to drop to approximately 170,000.

The first census of the Khmer Administration in 1962 provided the figure of 206,100 inhabitants with "Vietnamese nationality", but a total figure of 240,500 inhabitants having Vietnamese language as their "mother language", representing 4,2% of the total population of 5,740,000 . These figures were certainly closest to the reality.

It does not seem that the last wars in Vietnam (that of 1946-1954 and especially that of 1960-1975) had pushed so many Vietnamese (civil) to come and seek refuge in Cambodia. Remy Prud' homme estimated that in 1967 there were "approximately 250,000 Vietnamese, that is to say a little more than 4% of the total population", while recalling that "in the 1950s, one knows that the Vietnamese population decreases in Cambodia" (2).

For his part, Jacques Migozzi evaluated that at the beginning of 1970, the number of Vietnamese in Cambodia is approximately 450,000, representing 6,6% of the total population of 6,800,000 (3). This figure of 450,000 Vietnamese is calculated from that which was given by French Protectorate in 1951, with an annual average increase by 3 % for the Vietnamese community, without taking into account neither of the fall of 1954-1955, nor of the census carried out in 1962. But, it is the latter figure, a little enlarged, which is retained by other authors.

However let us note that during the war in Cambodia (Vietnamese Communists / Khmer Rouge against the Republicans of Lon Nol) from 1970 to 1975, then under the Administration of the Khmer Rouges from 1975 to 1979, the civil Vietnamese population was evacuated almost completely to Vietnam. It is only after the victorious invasion in 1979 and the occupation of the country until 1989 by the forces of Hanoi, that Vietnamese "socio-economic immigrants", encouraged and protected by these last, massively invaded Cambodia. How much are they currently?

Before the return of the Vietnamese

Jacques Nepote, in a study on the total population of Cambodia, indicated that in 1980 this total population would have dropped to approximately 5,000,000 inhabitants, before the return of the Vietnamese (4). Its "careful and moderate assumption" is as follows:

Estimate of population for 1980 on the basis of demography of the time of peace (7.25 million in 1970, with an average rate of growth of 3.%): 9.74 million, from which it is necessary to withdraw 4.30 million, because of:

-Fall in the birth rate (in period of war and deprivations):	1.25 millions
-Vietnamese departure (450.000 in 1970):	0.60 million
-Khmer refugees abroad:	0.05 million
-Died, disappeared during the war (of 1970-1975):	0.75 million
-Died in deportation (under the K. R Administration):	1.50 million
-Intern Purge during the Khmer Rouge Adm:	0.15 million
.....	(4.30 million)

What was to remain is about 5.44 millions. But, the author said, "this estimate does not take into account the losses related to the collapse of the Khmer Rouge Regime", the number of victims caused by the war of Vietnamese invasion, the "population of Cambodia for the end of the year 1980 (can be evaluated) to some 5 million inhabitants: half of the forecasts of the time of peace ".

In November 1980, the authorities of the Popular Republic of Kampuchea (RPK) of Heng Samrin, under the control of the Vietnamese "experts ", announced a total population of Cambodia of approximately 7 million inhabitants. This figure, announced for the donors of international assistance, has obviously a political significance "it is the figure of the total population of Cambodia of the beginning of 1970, before the war. But it may be also the "estimated " figure of the Vietnamese experts for the first years of the Vietnamese occupation of the country. Indeed, this difference for two million people moreover than the estimated figure previously seems to corroborate with the number of the very fast resettlement in Cambodia of Vietnamese settlers

from the early of 1979, as it was testified by the preoccupations of the Party and Government of the RPK in their Circulars respective (5) to accomodate them.

Moreover, a report dated April 26, 1990 from an American Task force given to the Chamber of the Representatives of the United States announced "a significant fact about the de facto annexation (since 1979) by Vietnam of the Cambodian provinces of the East, Mondulakiri, Rattanakiri and Stung Treng (in the East of Mekong). The annexation is proceeded by the massive installation from 400,000 to 950,000 of Vietnamesees who have their own militia composed of 100,000 men. "(6)

It is also to note that the Vietnamese occupation and war in Cambodia from 1979 to 1989 caused more than 450,000 of Cambodian deaths, according to several Western estimates.

A dangerous colonization of Cambodia

In November 1992, 200,000 Khmer refugees are repatriated by UN from the camps of Thailand. APRONUC (UNTAC), which was in charge of organizing the general elections in Cambodia in May 1993, had recorded 4,764,430 voters (from 18 years old and more, of the 19 provinces and Phnom-Penh and Sihanoukville) by specifying that there would be 46% of the population below 18 years old. For UNTAC, the total population of Cambodia would be then of 8.820.766 inhabitants. But, in 1992, the World Bank, being also based on investigations in all Cambodian provinces, gave the figure of 9,001,315 inhabitants.

However, if one looks once again on the study of J. Nepote, but with an annual average growth of 2.2% (7), without new Vietnamese "immigrations " and minus the 450,000 died from 1979 to 1989, the total population of Cambodia would not exceed 6,050,000 inhabitants at the end of 1992, that is to say 2,950,000 less than the 9 millions found by the international organizations. During the period 1993-2003, with a growth rate became "normal", that is to say of 2.6%, the total population of Cambodia should not exceed 8,024,000 in 2003. But, in 2003, the Cambodia Ministry for the Interior provides the figure of the total population of Cambodia of 13,124,000 inhabitants (8). A source (anonymous) of the same Ministry let us know that the number of Vietnamesees in Cambodia is currently approximately 3,300,000, from which 1,200,000 are holders of Cambodian voter registration cards. These figures do not contradict the theoretical estimates above, although in our opinion they are still below the reality (9). We estimate that in 25 years (from 1979 to 2004) the Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia are between 4.0 and 4.5 million, that is to say between 30% and 35% of the total population, not 5% as it was affirmed by the Cambodian Government. The danger for Cambodia is that, as during French Protectorate, several thousands of people being Vietnamese origin exert (from 1979 and thereafter) functions of senior executive and staff in all the fields of the Cambodian Administration, while the Vietnamese settlers have the full privilege to be established in the richest areas and the strategic places of the country.

In the past as well as today, the Vietnamese immigration in Cambodia is never 'a normal demographic movement of an overpopulated country towards the close country less populated' as the high ranking leaders of the CPP (10) explain it publicly. The Vietnamese conquest of Kampuchea Krom began with a massive and progressive colonization country, regularly supported by the forces of the Empire of Annam, then by the French colonial Power of Cochinchina, until the Khmers become themselves

minority in their own territory. Today, the immigration of the Vietnamesees in Cambodia is an fully act of colonization and progressive vietnamisation of what remains of Kampuchea.

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Notes:

(1) -Jean Delvert, Le Paysan Cambodgien, Thèse, Paris, 1961 ; Le Cambodge, Paris, P.U.F, 1983. (2) - Rémy Prud'homme, L'Économie du Cambodge, Paris, P.U.F., 1969. (3) - Jacques Migozzi, Cambodge, Faits et Problèmes de population, Paris, CNRS, 1973. (4) - Jacques Népote, CNRS, Démographie et Société dans le Cambodge des XIXe-XXe siècles, in Mondes en Développement, Paris, Economica, 1979.

(5) – En particulier les Circulaire n° 240 S.R.M.Ch (du 13 septembre 1982 du Comité Central du PPRC, signé par Say Phuthong, « en application de la décision n° 142 S.R.M.Ch du 7 mai 1982 du Secrétariat du Comité Central du Parti, sur l'accueil et l'installation au Cambodge des ressortissants vietnamiens »), - Circulaire n° 38 S.R (du 9 octobre 1982 du Conseil des Ministres, signé par Chan Si, pour application de la circulaire du Comité Central du PPRC de Say Phuthong), -Circulaire-Directive n° 05 SRNN (du 26 février 1986, du Conseil des Ministres, signé par Hun Sén sur « La politique à appliquer aux Ressortissants Vietnamiens au Cambodge »).

(6) - Task force on terrorism & unconventional warfare, House republican research committee, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C., 20516, April 26, 1990, Vietnam has re-invaded Cambodia.

(7) - Moyenne optimiste pour la période 1980-1992 pour un peuple sorti de l'enfer des Khmers Rouges et qui tentait encore de survivre de la grande misère et de la malnutrition de la période vietnamienne, alors que la moyenne retenue pour les paisibles années 1960 n'était que de 2,6%.

(8) – Soit, pour la période 1993-2003, un taux moyen de croissance de la population de 3,6%, ce qui reflète un taux moyen « d'immigration » très important, quand on sait que le taux moyen de croissance « propre » du Cambodge doit être entre 2,3% et 2,5% seulement pour la période, selon des sources occidentales (ONU, France).

(9) – D'après les publications de ce Ministère, la population totale du Cambodge est de 12.169.000 en 1998 (« recensement »),

(10) 12.491.501 en 2001, 13.124.764 en 2003 (avec « un TMC de 2,3% ») et 13.558.000 en 2004 (avec un TMC revu à la baisse à « 1,84% pour la période de 1998 à 2004 ». D'ailleurs, le National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia (du Ministère du Plan) a « recensé » une population totale du Cambodge de 13.091.000 habitants en 2004, avec un TMC de 1,81% seulement.

(10)- Contrairement à l'exemple du Vietnam, l'explosion démographique du Siam (Thaïlande), depuis un siècle, n'a jamais débordé ni au Laos ni au Cambodge.DK