

Vickery's hysterics

Julio A Jeldres

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The Editor,

I normally do not reply to Michael Vickery's hysterics because they are based on innuendo and attempts to discredit me but his latest outburst (Post, Nov 15-28) must not be left unchallenged.

At the outset, readers of the Post should be made aware that Vickery has been conducting a systematic campaign of denigration against me for several years now, in fact since July 1984, when I had the temerity of challenging a piece he had written for the Bangkok Post comparing the Cambodian resistance fighters struggling against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, with the Contras of Nicaragua.

It seems that Vickery not only specializes in distorting Cambodian contemporary history but even had a go at doing the same with Nicaragua's contemporary history. When I responded that Nicaragua was not under foreign occupation but under the rule of a Marxist regime which was under attack by a foreign-sponsored guerrilla force, his argument collapsed and he went ballistic, as he normally does when anyone dares to challenge his writings.

Since February this year, Vickery has used the Internet facilities given to him by Penang's Universiti Sains Malaysia to constantly and relentlessly attack me. As I do not enjoy the same facilities of this so-called scholar and do not have access to the Internet, I am unable to respond to his vitriolic.

In his letter to the Post, Vickery claims that my recent article on the Ieng Sary saga was "incoherent and hysterical". If it was so, why is it that it has been reproduced since by the respected Bangkok Post and magazines in Australia and Scandinavia?

Then, he goes on to write that "Jeldres' letter was true to his form over the years as a hatchet-wielding assassin of character of all who did not follow his line on the PDK-bulwarked Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, under the clairvoyant leadership of you-know-who, hatcheting especially those who wrote sympathetically of the PRK-SOC and criticized great power support to the CGDK".

First, I would like Vickery to produce any concrete examples of my so-called activities as "assassin of character". There is none because I do not operate in such fashion, which is, not surprisingly, the way he normally operates. Readers of the Post need to go no further than the back issues of this newspaper, where they will find abundant examples of Vickery's vitriolic against anyone who dared to make critical remarks about his "sacred cow", the PRK-SOC-PPC.

Secondly, I strongly reject Vickery's veiled attack against His Majesty the King, because of his past presidency of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

Any serious historian of Cambodian contemporary history would know that His Majesty prior to accepting the presidency of Democratic Kampuchea was confronted with the intransigence of Vietnam and its occupation of Kampuchea, and the combined pressure of the US, China and ASEAN to join the Khmer Rouges in the said coalition.

Thirdly, Vickery writes that "Back in 1994 Jeldres, in his opposition to the anti-Khmer Rouge law, allegedly to promote democratic debate, was supporting the return en bloc of the entire PDK, not just a few breakaway leaders". This is a lie! The forum

I organized on 2 July 1994 was to draw attention to certain loopholes in the legislation which gave no protection to people accused of being Khmer Rouges when they were not. It had nothing to do with a return "en bloc of the entire PDK". Since the law was passed by the Cambodian National Assembly, Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations have reported that several people have been extra-judicially executed following accusations made against them without any evidence proving that they were indeed Khmer Rouges. It was precisely this travesty of justice that we were trying to prevent by organizing the forum in July 1994, which was attended by all Cambodian political parties.

Vickery never visited the Khmer Institute of Democracy but on every visit he paid to Cambodia, he went around Phnom Penh denigrating KID. Then, last year, he wrote a report for the Swedish International Development Agency stating that KID was a "propaganda-front". He never explained who for? or what evidence he had to make such a remark.

I often wonder whether Vickery has got any time to concentrate on his academic curriculum at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, as he seems to spend 95 percent of his time attacking other Cambodia scholars and researchers.

- Julio A. Jeldres, Honorary Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Beijing.

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