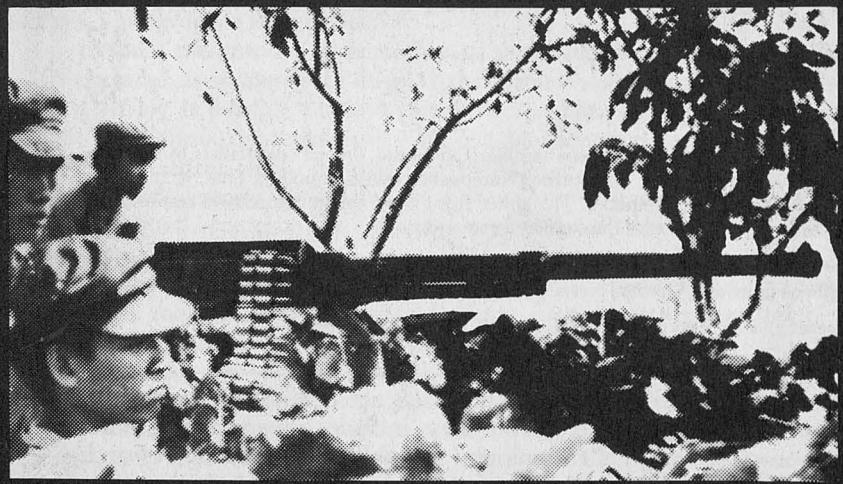


Issue No. 64

southeast
asia
CHRONICLE \$1.00

Two Views on the

VIETNAM - KAMPUCHEA WAR



Ideological conflict,
border dispute,
and
major power rivalry.



southeast
asia
CHRONICLE

Issue No. 64 September-October 1978

VIETNAM- KAMPUCHEA WAR

Where We Stand (Editorial)	1
Origins of the Conflict	3
Raising the Stakes (Role of the Major Powers)	19
The Propaganda War	31
The Border Dispute on the Land	37
The Border Dispute on the Sea	39

The *Chronicle* has made a policy of using the proper name **Kampuchea** rather than the more familiar **Cambodia**. French colonialists in the 19th century found themselves unable to pronounce the proper name of their new colony. They turned Kampuchea into Cambodge. That, in turn, the Americans had difficulty pronouncing. The Americans then labelled the country Cambodia. The united front government before 1975 restored the country's original name. Kampuchea has been maintained by the current government as the country's proper name.

auto-7
Cover photos: Stephen Heder and Vietnam News Agency.

Special Production Assistance from: Typeset and Archetype (Typesetting) and Inkworks (Printing)

The **Southeast Asia Resource Center**, formerly the Indochina Resource Center, is a major non-governmental source of information on current developments in the countries of Southeast Asia, and on the U.S. involvement there. The Center follows and interprets events in the new societies of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea (Cambodia), and also covers Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. We continue in the tradition of the Indochina Resource Center, which played a crucial role as one of the key sources of accurate information for the anti-war movement's successful effort to cut U.S. aid to the Thieu regime.

As a service to our readership, the Southeast Asia Resource Center maintains a mail-order service specializing in books, articles and audio-visual materials on Southeast

Asia. Many of these materials are not normally available in local outlets, and they include government studies, foreign publications and unpublished academic research, as well as many out-of-print works on the Indochina war. The Center offers a unique collection of books for children and high school students, and also poetry and prose by Thais, Vietnamese and Vietnam-era veterans. A free catalogue is available on request.

The Center is: Helen Chauncey, Candace Falk, Lowell Finley, Rachael Grossman, Glenn Hirsch, Joel Rocamora, and Martha Winnacker. The *Chronicle* is published six times a year. Subscriptions are: \$8 regular; \$6 low-income; \$12 institutions; \$10 foreign surface-mail; \$15 foreign air-mail; \$20 sustaining. All contributions are tax-exempt.

PO BOX 4000D BERKELEY CALIFORNIA 94704 (415) 548-2546

southeast
asia
resource
center





WHERE WE STAND

It is important not to evade the political complexities of this war in favor of "good guy-bad guy" positions.

We began work on this issue of the *Southeast Asia Chronicle* with both trepidation and hope. We hesitated to undertake an effort similar to finding a path through an intellectual and emotional minefield, but we looked forward to finding answers to tormenting questions. As we go to press, we are still picking our way among the mines, realizing that the task of identifying and interpreting the roots of the Vietnam-Kampuchea, Vietnam-China conflicts has barely begun. Its difficulty arises not only from the need for extensive research and analysis. Dealing with any conflict in which former allies become enemies presents serious problems of political principle. This is as true for outside observers and supporters as it is for the direct antagonists.

What is the purpose of an analysis of the terrible conflicts in Indochina? Is it merely to describe the conflict and explain as objectively as possible the positions of the combatants, "letting the facts speak for themselves"? We feel we should go beyond this to reaffirm clear principles and ideals. For there is a real danger of despair, which can lead us to turn our backs in disappointed cynicism on concerns beyond our immediate control.

For a whole generation of Americans and Europeans, the anti-war movement was a central political experience, forcing them to become aware of distant peoples and to take responsibility for the effects of the policies of their own governments on others. Many came to identify with the political ideals of the Indochinese liberation forces as they struggled to overcome American aggression. The present conflicts appear to call these ideals into question. During the war, the three national liberation movements appeared united in pursuit of common goals. Today, the contrast between the policies of the ruling parties in Vietnam and Kampuchea is so stark that many people feel the ideals themselves have been shattered. The continued fighting between the two countries over what appear at first glance to be relatively trivial issues adds to that anguished sense, making former opponents of the war vulnerable to charges that they were naive and misguided.

POST-FACTO JUSTIFICATION

It is in this context that official and unofficial apologists for the United States' war on Indochina are undertaking a massive campaign to justify the war retroactively and deny the legitimacy of the peace movement. A major component of the ideological offensive has been allegations of atrocities in Kampuchea, whose leaders have been portrayed as brutal, cold-blooded men calmly planning the murder of close to one half their country's population. It has been difficult to respond to this propaganda, because the Kampuchean government has refused to explain its policies to any but its closest state and party allies. Others do not want to defend mass murder and do

not have convincing evidence that the charges are not true. While not responding directly to the allegations against the Kampuchean government, Stephen Heder's article helps to explain the nature and origin of its policies.

It is important to expose the exaggerations and distortions which characterize Western accounts of Kampuchea, because these accounts are being used to justify past U.S. intervention in Kampuchea and in the whole of Indochina. Increasingly, specific but unproven charges against the Kampuchean government are now linked to generalizations about "communist dictatorship" in Vietnam and Laos, despite much more freely available positive information about realities in these countries. Such charges are being used to rebuild the ideological basis for future American intervention in liberation struggles in other countries by undermining the convictions of those who would conceivably oppose such intervention.

Yet if the precise character of current developments in Kampuchea is unclear, the brutal impact of American intervention in that country and in Laos and Vietnam remains unmistakable and unforgettable. In Kampuchea, virtually an entire way of life was destroyed by the massive assault of U.S. bombs, while Vietnamese and Laotians will suffer for years to come from the human, social and environmental wounds inflicted by the U.S. effort to control their future. Disagreements among those who opposed the war over the current situation in Indochina should not be allowed to get in the way of fulfilling our central responsibility. We must continue to remind the American people of the horrors of American intervention in Indochina, and we must continue to press for national acceptance of responsibility to help repair the destruction there.

SORTING OUT THE ISSUES

This, then, is our purpose in publishing this issue of the *Southeast Asia Chronicle*: to provide information and analysis which can help our readers begin to think about the current hostilities without retreating into cynicism, despair or indifference. We do not intend this issue of the *Chronicle* to choose sides in the current conflict, and the two major articles clearly represent very different points of view. We welcome the perspectives raised by the two authors, because we believe they help to clarify some of the strategic and historical elements in the conflict. While they do not point to some easy solution or formula for peace, they demonstrate that real issues are at stake. The terrible fighting is not just the arbitrary exercise of military power by bloodthirsty tyrants. Nor is it something that could have been prevented by further American intervention. Rather, it has been exacerbated by the U.S. involvement.

The difficulties of dealing with the current conflicts are many. The hostilities clearly have deep and complex historical

origins, but there are few historical reference points on which to base judgments. Much of the already available historical analysis focuses on the character of the colonial and neo-colonial experiences of Vietnam and Kampuchea, from which much of today's tension arises. Much more work remains to be done on the relationships between the leaderships of the three countries of Indochina and the interaction between domestic and international concerns.

Another serious obstacle to understanding the current situation is the dearth of information on key topics other than that provided by the protagonists themselves. Little independent information, for example, is available on the precise actions by either side in the Vietnam-Kampuchea border region. There is precious little information on internal Kampuchean policies and on the character of the divisions and conflicts within the Kampuchean leadership. At the other extreme, the available material on such subjects as China's foreign policy is too massive to be included within a single article.

SUPERPOWER POLITICS AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Those who are concerned about developments in Southeast Asia also need to assess the changing pattern of international relations in the region. The American role in Southeast Asia did

conflicts between the superpowers will exacerbate tensions between the Southeast Asian nations. It is our responsibility to understand what issues are involved and how the U.S. in particular is attempting to further its own interests regardless of the cost to the peoples of Southeast Asia.

WHERE WE STAND

The articles in this issue of the *Southeast Asia Chronicle* do not deal directly with all of these issues, nor do they take definitive stands. Questions related to the nature of socialist construction and the principles which guide relations between socialist states, for example, are beyond the scope of these articles. Within the editorial collective, there are different positions on these issues in general and on their application to the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea in particular. We agree, however, that it is important not to evade the political complexities of the current confrontations in favor of emotionally more comfortable "good guy-bad guy" positions.

As Americans, we believe the United States government has an obligation to end its economic blockade of Vietnam and Kampuchea. We advocate immediate normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam and an end to the cynical policy of trying to use the suffering left by the war to force the



These children were stabbed by Kampuchean troops, according to the Vietnamese. Thousands of civilians have been killed during the fighting —on both sides. (photo: Vietnam News Agency)

not end with the U.S. defeat in Indochina in 1975. The continued U.S. hostility toward Vietnam, for example, is part of an effort to manipulate countries in the region. This effort could well intensify the existing conflicts between neighbors. Making such an assessment is not easy. The clashes between Vietnam and Kampuchea and Vietnam and China have eroded the clearly directed and unified critique of U.S. imperialism which once guided our understanding of the politics of the region.

The readjustment of relations between the socialist countries in the area and between those countries and members of ASEAN is still going on. It is hardly surprising that these nations are soliciting support from the major powers—the U.S., China and the Soviet Union—in their effort to strengthen their positions within the region. But there is a real danger that

Vietnam to give up the independence they won at such a high cost. This endorsement also applies to U.S. relations with Kampuchea if the Kampuchean government indicates its willingness to enter into formal relations.

Finally, we believe this position is consistent with a general commitment to minimizing outside interference in the Southeast Asian region. For at this time, the U.S. refusal to normalize relations with Vietnam is not a "hands-off" policy but one calculated to heighten tensions between Vietnam and China as well as Kampuchea. The countries in the region should be allowed to resolve their differences on their own terms rather than being forced to pay for major power "assistance" by becoming involved in conflicts which are irrelevant to the development of their countries or the welfare of their people. □

*ignores problem
normalization of PRC*

SOUTHEAST ASIA CHRONICLE



Origins of the Conflict

Traditional antagonism, colonial manipulation, and incompatible ideology have led to open warfare.

The split between Kampuchea and Vietnam is probably as deep as any in the world today.

BY STEPHEN R. HEDER

Behind the current conflict between Kampuchea and Vietnam and their governing communist parties lie differences so profound that each revolution stands as an implicit critique of the other. That the existence of each revolutionary model challenges the basic premises of the other is the result of a complex interaction of history, politics and geography. For two such different neighbors to avoid conflict would require extraordinary good will and a mutual commitment to cooperation and compromise. Such elements have not characterized the relationships between the two parties or the states they rule. Furthermore, historically and presently, the question of how closely the two parties and states will work together has been a key source of tension. This, perhaps more than any other, is the irresolvable issue at the core of today's fighting. An examination of the contrasting histories of the two parties and of the different situations of the two states reveals why this is so.

The radical differences in domestic and international policies separating the Kampuchean and Vietnamese governments, which deeply color each side's view of the other and make even simple coexistence difficult, were shaped by the settings in

which the two parties carried out their revolutions. Perhaps most significant was the nature of the forces against which they fought. The Vietnamese revolutionaries faced a foreign enemy, while the Kampucheans sought to overthrow a neo-colonial but indigenous regime. Consequently, for the Vietnamese, the primary focus of the revolution during its formative years was not an attack on tradition or feudal class relations, but a nationalist struggle against foreign domination, which drew in a wide spectrum of the population. Class struggle and the establishment of a socialist society remained key components of the revolutionary program, but they were overshadowed for long periods by the struggle for national independence. For the Kampucheans, on the other hand, the enemy was a feudal-bureaucratic state clad in nationalist trappings. Its overthrow demanded a strategy based on radical class struggle coupled with nationalist claims even stronger than those of this state.

Stephen R. Heder was in Phnom Penh from 1973 to 1975 as a stringer for *Time* and NBC. He is presently a Ph.D. candidate in the Southeast Asia program at Cornell University.



The CPK's Khieu Samphan and Sihanouk in a 1973 propaganda photo. Six years before, Khieu Samphan had fled Phnom Penh to escape Sihanouk's stepped-up repression against the communists. (Photo: PAFNLC)

In Vietnam, the communist movement, while retaining its commitment to socialist revolution, early became the virtually unrivaled representative of Vietnamese nationalism. A series of competitors—the Bao Dai, Diem and Thieu regimes—conspicuously relied on foreign support for their survival. In addition, the French colonialists had helped prevent the emergence of an alternative nationalist leadership by undermining the political importance of the Vietnamese court without establishing an indigenous commercial-capitalist political regime in its place. In this setting, the party came to emphasize continuity with pre-modern traditions of gentry-led peasant opposition to foreign rule rather than class conflict and class struggle.

With the liberation of the north and partition of the country in 1954, this tendency took on a new dimension, for it was essential that socialist construction in the north not disrupt the united front for national liberation in the south. Hence, the transformation to socialism in the north had to take place cautiously and with a minimum of provocative class conflict to avoid frightening elements of the southern population who wanted to expel the Americans and destroy the regimes dependent on them but did not support socialism. Such conditions injected into the theory and practice of the Vietnamese revolution relatively high degrees of class caution and traditionalism. In practice, this is manifested in a preference for administrative measures rather than relatively violent mass movements in resolving social contradictions. In theory, it is manifested in an emphasis on the forces of production (i.e., science and technology) rather than the relations of production (i.e., class struggle and conflict) in the post-liberation stage of socialist construction.

The setting in which the Communist Party of Kampuchea

(CPK) launched its revolutionary movement was quite different and pushed it in a much more radical direction. The party was founded in 1960, and it launched its armed struggle to take power in 1968. Hence, its theory and practice—and much of its current leadership—were developed not during the period of French colonial rule or of the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime but during the Sihanouk era. This meant that the party had to direct its revolution against a highly nationalistic autocracy which enjoyed diplomatic, economic and military support from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the National Liberation Front, the Soviet Union and China. Coopting many nationalist and anti-imperialist themes, the Sihanouk regime enjoyed a progressive image abroad, while its vaguely anti-capitalist ideology allowed it to proclaim its commitment to certain types of social reform as well. But in reality, Sihanouk's internal policies were viciously repressive and failed to resolve any of the major socio-economic problems in the countryside. Furthermore, in contrast to Vietnam, French colonial rule had strengthened the Kampuchean monarchy. After independence, the royal house was reinforced and stabilized and a repressive colonial bureaucracy modernized by aid first from the United States, then from the Soviet Union and China.

In launching a revolutionary movement against such a state, the Communists could not rely on simple nationalist and reformist themes to build up a popular base. Rather, they had to emphasize class struggle against a deeply rooted indigenous enemy with strong nationalist credentials, and the CPK's nationalist line had to outdo Sihanouk's. These tendencies toward radical class struggle and nationalism became integral elements of the Kampuchean communist movement in the period before 1970, particularly as armed struggle against the Sihanouk state expanded from a handful of armed guards for CPK cadre in 1968 to a peasant guerrilla army of 5,000-10,000 persons in 1970. These forces became the nucleus of the party and full-sized revolutionary army after the March 1970 coup which deposed Sihanouk.

The coup unexpectedly catapulted Sihanouk and members of his personal political entourage into a united front with the CPK. It did not, however, weaken the CPK's class emphasis or its extraordinarily strong nationalism. On the contrary, the party was forced to develop even more radical class and nationalist standpoints to set itself apart from the nationalist and reformist monarchism displayed by Sihanouk in his united front role. As head of state, Sihanouk had repressed the Kampuchean Communists with ferocious brutality, and the party could not allow the united front to become a means of protecting Sihanouk's political power, which drew strength from his popular image as the embodiment of Kampuchean nationalism. Hence, the very formation of the united front would require an eventual intense and violent class struggle against those elements within it which represented the social bases of the monarchy and bureaucracy. As a result, the theory and practice of the Communist Party of Kampuchea have come to reflect systematically the class and nationalist radicalism forged during this period. In its practice the CPK relies on disruptive and even violent mass-based struggles to resolve social contradictions, including such fundamental ones as those between city and countryside and between mental and manual labor. The party's theory of socialist construction stresses the absolute primacy of mass mobilization, subjective resolution and learning through practical work over technology and theoretical sophistication.

POST-REVOLUTIONARY CRISIS

Emerging from such contrasting experiences, the Vietnamese and Kampuchean communist parties took power in 1975 in equally different post-revolutionary situations. The nature of the post-liberation crisis confronting each party further widened the gulf between them. As has been the case in most other revolutionary situations, the victorious parties faced an immediate need to consolidate their power and protect themselves against their enemies. Typically in such a situation, a radical and often violent campaign is directed against potential enemies of the revolution, who may include former members of a united front or even factions within the party. But the threats confronting the Vietnamese and Kampuchean communist parties in 1975 were not on the same scale.

The Vietnamese communists came to power in the south in far more secure circumstances than those surrounding the CPK victory in Kampuchea. Not only had the Thieu regime and its forces disintegrated in a complete rout, but the existence of a consolidated socialist state in the north provided a major source of strength to the new government in the south. The Vietnamese party had in fact passed through its initial post-liberation crisis in 1956 during the radical land reform campaign in the north, an episode generally recognized as the most violent in Vietnamese revolutionary history.* This struggle against reactionary social groups was marked by serious internal party strife. Eventually the struggle was moderated and its violence partially repudiated, to be followed by a period of relative social calm. In the south, a full-scale post-revolutionary crisis has not yet occurred, although the attack on bourgeois trade in Ho Chi Minh City may be a harbinger or a first step. The delay in attacking potential enemies and the step by step pace of social and economic transformation in the south are possible because, with socialist rule well established in the north, there is no apparent threat of a counterattack which might successfully overturn or subvert the revolution.

In Kampuchea, however, the post-victory crisis was acute. The final battle between the forces of Lon Nol and those of the revolutionary army had been the biggest and bloodiest of the war, and it had left the revolutionary army badly battered. In Kampuchea, there was no socialist state in another part of the country to guarantee the fruits of victory, and both the Communists and their enemies realized that there was a real possibility that the victories won in war might be sabotaged in post-war strife. Without experience in administering major urban areas and faced with a desperate food shortage in the newly-captured cities, the Communist Party of Kampuchea moved swiftly and drastically to consolidate its position. The evacuation of the cities—strictly implemented despite what must have been serious opposition from within the united front and from many urban residents—dissipated the immediate security problem by dispersing the CPK's enemies. It also provided a means of dealing with the food emergency. But it was not only the pressing needs of the moment which persuaded the party leadership to choose this particular form of struggle. The evacuation and subsequent integration of war refugees and native city dwellers into the rural cooperative system was a radical step toward resolving the contradiction between city and

countryside, a resolution which history had made a high priority for the CPK.

Another historical factor has pushed the two revolutionary states in contrasting directions. Vietnamese revolutionaries have held state power in the north for nearly a quarter of a century. Hence in a pattern typical of governing revolutionary parties, the routinizing requirements of running a state have gradually transformed their revolutionary exuberance into either administrative efficiency or administrative stagnation. This tendency toward bureaucratization has strongly influenced even the southern cadre who moved directly from guerrilla warfare to state administration. In Kampuchea, on the other hand, the primary experience of all cadre is with quite recent and intense



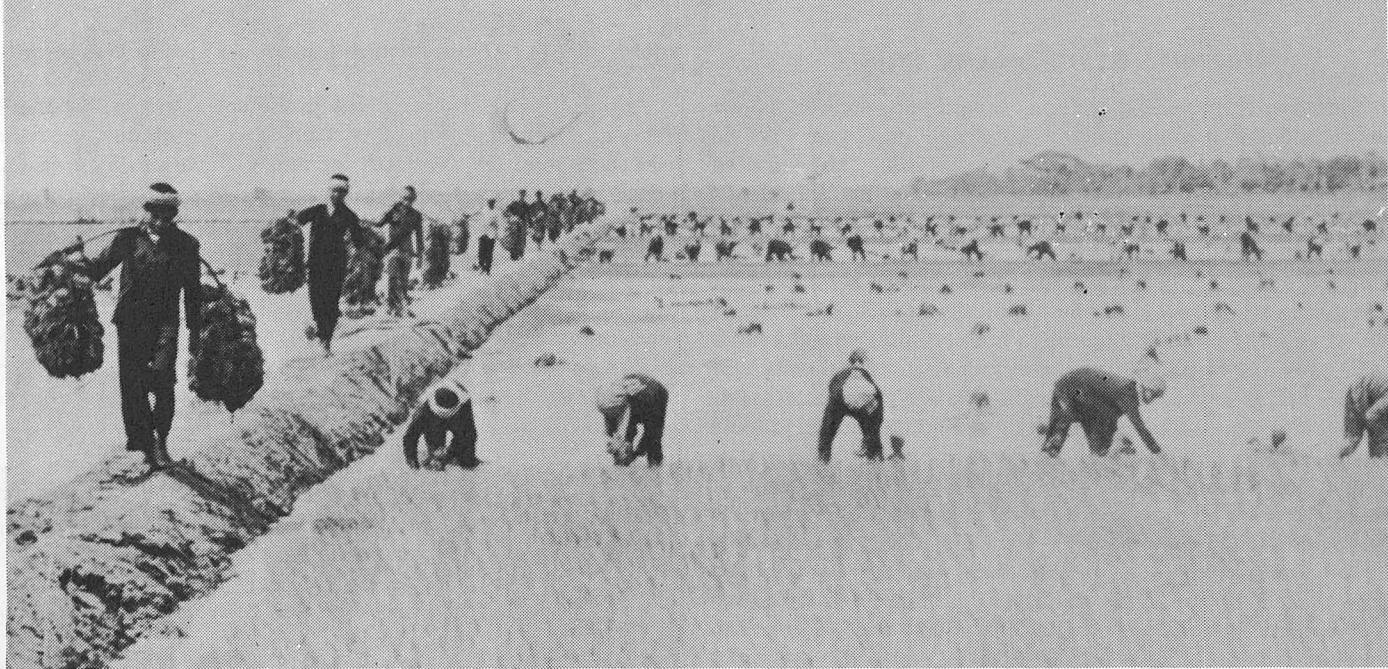
More than 2.5 million Kampuchean refugees poured into Phnom Penh to escape U.S. bombing from 1969 to 1973. More than one-tenth of the population (over one million people) were killed or wounded during the U.S. war. (source: *Congressional Record*)

military and class conflict. Their administrative experience is limited, and administration remains *ad hoc*, with revolutionary zeal the overwhelming administrative theme. Experiment and chaos rather than efficiency or stagnation appear to be the outstanding characteristics of the new Kampuchean state.

ECONOMIC CHOICES

Just as their contrasting political histories shaped the Vietnamese and Kampuchean communist parties in sharply different ways, so too the economic conditions they inherited

* For a detailed critique of exaggerated accounts of the level of violence employed, see D. Gareth Porter, *The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered*, (Cornell, 1972) [Ed.]



Post-war economic development in Kampuchea: an "agricultural cooperative." (Official Kampuchean photo)

presented them with different opportunities and limitations for the post-war reconstruction period. Although both countries' economies are relatively backward and characterized by scarcity, they are far from identical. In both its rural and urban sectors, the south Vietnamese economy in 1975 was significantly more "modern"—i.e. more highly industrialized and commercialized—than the Kampuchean. Similarly, the economy of socialist north Vietnam was more advanced than that of the Kampuchean liberated zones. Yet at the same time overpopulation and land pressure in Vietnam made the situation of scarcity there fundamentally more serious than in underpopulated and relatively land-rich Kampuchea. This contrast was heightened, because both north Vietnam, which is very densely populated, and the liberated zones in the south, which covered only limited areas, had to import rice, while the liberated zones of Kampuchea, which extended over large territories, produced a rice surplus. The double contrast between Vietnamese economic modernity coupled with rice deficit and Kampuchean economic backwardness coupled with rice surplus helps explain the divergent paths taken by each government in post-war revolutionary transformation and reconstruction.

In Vietnam, analysis of the various elements of the existing economic system suggested a strategy of transformation in the south which would attempt the conversion of modern, productive facilities into components of a state socialist system. Relatively advanced commercial networks, urban infrastructure and industrial or semi-industrial complexes were already available in both south and north. Drawing managerial and in some cases material resources from the north, it was possible simply to take over components of the old southern economy, supply them with new socialist management (or socialist supervision of the old capitalist management) and integrate them into a state socialist planning system. Highlighting the value of inherited economic resources was the underlying situation of general scarcity, which had probably conditioned the Vietnamese Communists to be cautious in considering disruptive or radical measures for economic transformation. At

the same time, there appeared to be relatively little political risk in allowing old capitalists to continue to function within the limits imposed by a state socialist economy, because their close association with foreign economic interests had left them with little domestic political base. Thus, in order to break their political power it appeared sufficient to nationalize their interests and draw their enterprises into the state economy.

Kampuchea in 1975, however, possessed little that could be usefully and productively converted directly and immediately into components of a modern socialist economic system. Kampuchea had remained an undeveloped colonial backwater while French modernization efforts focused on Vietnam. Later, the Sihanouk regime had neither attracted foreign investment nor successfully mobilized the population for economic achievements. Although the country had received some industrial plants from the Soviet Union and China and had constructed some elements of a modern infrastructure, these had been heavily damaged during the war—which was even more destructive in Kampuchea than in Vietnam. With such a small modern sector, it was possible for the Kampuchean Communists to choose a reconstruction strategy which would rapidly rehabilitate those facilities considered salvageable and useful while ignoring some of the previously advanced sectors, most of which were unproductive and damaged. Furthermore, in considering the food crisis at the end of war and the highly favorable ratio of land to population, the new government was encouraged to concentrate its reconstruction efforts on the rapid transformation and expansion of agricultural production without fear of the temporary losses in production which might result from a radically disruptive policy. From a political perspective, the decision to discard much of the old regime's economically advanced sector was made more attractive because the facilities and networks in question were part of the old political power structure. Many had been part of Sihanouk's state capitalist system—and few were tainted by direct association with foreign capital. Thus with Sihanouk in the united front, there was real fear that the resurrection of these sectors as part of a socialist state enterprise system might only



Post-war economic development in southern Vietnam: a “New Economic Zone.” (Vietnam News Agency)

restore the political influence of Sihanouk’s state capitalists. This fear was heightened by the fact that the economy of the liberated zones was entirely agricultural, offering no socialist industry as a counterweight to the economic power of the old industrial sector. Hence, unlike the situation in Vietnam, simple nationalization and direct conversion of the existing economic structure to a socialist system were not adequate to break the power of the revolution’s long-standing enemies.

IMPLICIT MUTUAL CRITIQUE

Taken together, all these factors acted to push the Kampuchean and Vietnamese communist parties in strikingly different directions, particularly after they had seized power throughout their respective countries. Each revolutionary model points out the real or imaginable shortcomings of the other and thereby questions its legitimacy. In addition to the implicit mutual critique contained in the contrasting practice and theory of the two parties, their differing positions on the question of revisionism in the communist movement—an issue arising with

This complacency about internal revisionism dovetailed with the Vietnamese party’s de-emphasis on class struggle. By consistently deplored the break between the Soviet Union and China, it downplayed the substantive issues that divided the communist giants. The Kampuchean Communist Party, on the other hand, was born and grew up in the midst of the debate. Like most other non-ruling Asian communist parties in the 1960s, it took the issue of revisionism very seriously, quickly taking a staunch and vigilant anti-revisionist position. The CPK’s struggle against revisionism fit well with its radical classist tendencies.

With so many points of difference between them, even mere coexistence as neighbors became difficult. Two revolutionary leaderships dedicated to bridging the gaps between them might have been able to overcome their differences under favorable circumstances. Instead, the inherent tension between the Vietnamese and Kampuchean Communists were exacerbated by serious disagreements over foreign policy, a history of antagonistic relations between the two countries, and mutual suspicion bred by their experience of forced cooperation during

“Each revolutionary model points out the real or imaginable shortcomings of the other and thereby questions its legitimacy.”

powerful insistence out of the Sino-Soviet split—strengthened the theoretical basis for their criticism and suspicion of each other.

The Vietnamese party was already well established when the debate began. While it criticized as “revisionist” Khrushchev’s refusal to fully support Vietnam against the United States in the early 1960s, it did not join the debate over the proper internal policies of ruling communist parties or launch an insistent or violent campaign against “revisionism” within its own ranks.

the war against the United States. The irresolvable conflict hinged around the degree to which the two parties would work together after the war, for the interaction of all these factors made it impossible that this question could be resolved to the full satisfaction of both sides.

APPROACHES TO FOREIGN POLICY

As communists and nationalists, Vietnamese and Kampuchean approach the outside world very differently. Their

differences, conditioned by geography, history, and culture, have created forms of nationalism which are not only divergent but incompatible. As a result, the basic premises and goals of Vietnamese and Kampuchean foreign policy are often in conflict, particularly on such issues as international activism versus radical self-reliance, and cooperation within the socialist bloc.

A glance at the map reveals a basic reason for opposing assumptions about relations with other countries. Vietnam's long, essentially indefensible coastline, dotted with major towns, faces one of the world's more important maritime routes. Despite the traumatic nature of most of Vietnam's interactions with foreign powers, such interactions have been made unavoidable by the constant commercial and military traffic off its coast, traffic which makes Vietnam strategically important. Hence, Vietnam has had to learn to turn outside interest to its own advantage, dealing with external threats by balancing and manipulating foreign groups, even while allowing them a fairly substantial presence in Vietnam. Simple exclusion and an isolationist stance have never been feasible possibilities. Kampuchea, on the other hand, is a primarily inland country with a short coastline, conspicuously lacking the overgrown port city typical of former colonies. (Saigon provided Kampuchea's outlet for colonial exports and Kompong Som, the only port, was developed during the Sihanouk era to reduce dependence on Vietnam.) Furthermore, only traffic between Vietnam and Thailand passes along the Kampuchean coast. Hence, Kampuchea has a potential Vietnam lacks for using isolationism as a general means for dealing with foreign threats. Like the current regime in Burma, the only other Southeast Asian country to possess similar geographical conditions, the government of Kampuchea has sharply restricted foreign contacts.

It is also possible to hypothesize—very tentatively, because the evidence is impressionistic—that the distinctive interactions between two elements in Kampuchean and Vietnamese cultural psychology reinforce the tendencies stemming from geographical conditions. While the modern elites in both countries have articulated presumably mass-based fears of national extinction and pride in their respective histories, the treatment of these themes has not been the same. It is quite likely that the variations reflect fundamental cultural-psychological configurations which directly influence patterns of foreign policy and nationalism. The fear of extinction has been expressed with far more intensity in Kampuchea than in Vietnam. This of course reflects the historical diminution of Kampuchean territory in the face of a series of successful Vietnamese (and Thai) annexations and invasions. Practically every analysis of Kampuchean history or commentary on modern Kampuchean politics written by a Kampuchean repeatedly and ominously raises the specter of the disappearance of the Kampuchean race, culture and nation. There is frequent reference to the fate of the Kingdom of Champa, which once ruled most of peninsular Southeast Asia but ceased to function as a coherent political entity in the 15th century, leaving its people, the Chams, at the mercy of foreign states.

Similarly, the traditional Kampuchean celebration of the national construction aspect of historical Kampuchean glories has been more strongly pitched than that of the Vietnamese, who have traditionally emphasized their literary and martial achievements. The spectacular Kampuchean monuments of Angkor Vat provide a kind of concrete and irrefutable proof of a magnificent history of indigenous Kampuchean construction

capabilities. This proof is absent in Vietnam. Extensive archeological excavations in Vietnam have produced nothing that can be compared to Angkor, despite the richness of other aspects of Vietnam's history. Kampuchean writings on Kampuchea have been permeated with the idea that Angkor Vat bears testimony to the infinite indigenous capabilities of the Kampuchean people in the field of national construction, while Vietnamese, when taking pride in their history, have traditionally emphasized their repeated successes in expelling foreign invaders and pride in their intellectual achievements. These include their original and creative syntheses of high Chinese culture with indigenous Vietnamese traditions.

Considering these indications of national consciousness, one can suggest that the combination of intense fear of racial and national extinction with Kampuchea's historically-based mythology of greatness in national construction is compatible with a national policy strongly emphasizing national exclusiveness and self-reliance, while Vietnam's cultural tradition, with its emphases on success against foreign aggression and on synthesizing intellectual achievement, is compatible with a national policy characterized by a self-confident attitude vis-a-vis foreigners and by interest in adopting—or adapting—foreign high technology.

Another factor affecting the relative level of nationalist feeling in the two countries is the difference in degree of regional variations within them. Although the populations of both Vietnam and Kampuchea are much more homogeneous than those of most Third World countries, the people of Kampuchea are more so than those of Vietnam. In both countries, about 85 percent of the population is composed of the dominant ethnic group, but there are more regional linguistic and cultural variations among Vietnamese than among Khmers. Both the French, who divided Vietnam into three regions, and the Americans, who supported and violently prolonged its partition into two zones, encouraged heightened consciousness of these differences. By contrast, the French in Kampuchea maintained cultural and political unity, even though they helped create an estranged Francophile elite. As a result, the residual and partially artificial elements of regionalism which complicate and weaken the potential for Vietnamese nationalism are almost totally lacking in Kampuchea.

Even during the Sihanouk era, when the bulk of the Kampuchean population lived in the countryside under stultifying quasi-feudal socio-economic conditions and relatively untouched by modern political institutions linking them to state politics, nationalism was obviously strong. With the introduction of communist political organizations to link ordinary people with the political leadership, and with a national mobilization for social, economic and military purposes, Kampuchean nationalism may well be automatically more intense and cohesive than Vietnamese nationalism. Furthermore, because it is only recently that this potential has been fully realized through a nation-wide organization of the population by a modern political apparatus, namely the CPK, the strength of Kampuchean nationalism therefore appears more surprising—and so more disruptive—than that of Vietnam, which has become predictable and familiar.

NATIONALISM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

Just as the nature of the governments the two revolutionary movements opposed powerfully influenced the ways in which



The Kampuchean temples at Angkor Vat. (photo: Heinrich Zimmer)

they approached class struggle, so too those governments affected the quality of the nationalism developed by each communist party. As we have already noted, the Vietnamese communist movement became the only legitimate vehicle of modern Vietnamese nationalism. Rival parties and political groups which tried to appear more nationalist than the Communists never won any mass following or succeeded in seriously challenging the party's nationalist credentials. The regimes against which the Communists fought were too clearly the creatures of the French or the Americans to win legitimacy. Thus for the Vietnamese Communists it was relatively easy to maintain their popularity as nationalists and make it seem that their enemies could not survive without massive imperialist support.

For the Kampuchean Communists, the situation was far more complex, because their original and most important enemy, the Sihanouk regime, had strong nationalist credentials. It emphasized some of the themes which inherently tend to

emerge in Kampuchean foreign policy, including isolationism, national exclusiveness, and self-reliance. In fighting this regime, the Communists adopted an extremely strong nationalist line emphasizing these themes even more forcefully. Although they could not convincingly portray Sihanouk as the puppet of foreign masters, they noted that relatively small doses of imperialist aid helped significantly to maintain him in power. After 1970, they blamed the United States' CIA for instigating the right-wing coup which toppled Sihanouk, believing it had had the opportunity because of Sihanouk's decision to reopen relations with the U.S. in the last years of his rule. Consequently, the Kampuchean Communists developed a strong sense of threat from even a very limited imperialist presence in their country. The 1970 change of government in Phnom Penh did not free the Kampuchean Communists from the need to compete with the government for nationalist legitimacy, for even the Lon Nol regime had better nationalist credentials than the successive Saigon governments. Not only was the United

States presence in Kampuchea less spectacular than in Vietnam—although the casualties caused by U.S. bombing were proportionately greater—but Lon Nol was able to use Vietnamese support of the Communists against them. Portrayed as the tools of Hanoi, the Kampuchean Communists had to prove their nationalism and independence, a challenge never faced by the Vietnamese party.

The general international outlooks of the Vietnamese and Kampuchean governments are also differently influenced by

foreign policy mythology of international communism have been and are distinct.

The Vietnamese Communists have been part of the traditional international communist movement since they formed their party in 1930. Although the movement was never a monolith, it was an ideal, articulated by the originators of Marxism and realized, however imperfectly, by Lenin and Stalin in the form of the Comintern. Ho Chi Minh, who worked for the Comintern as well as for his own country, and other leaders

“Even in the face of their split with China, the Vietnamese do not appear to have abandoned the ideal of communist unity... But for the Kampuchean Communist Party, born in 1960, the Comintern was nothing more than an historical curiosity.”

two factors derived from their positions in world politics. First, in any system or subsystem of states, ideologies of internationalism and interdependence tend to serve the interests of the larger and more powerful states within that system or subsystem. The smaller and weaker states find their interests better served by ideologies of nationalism and independence. The implications of this tendency are obvious for Vietnam and Kampuchea, with populations of 50 million and 8 million respectively, in their roles in peninsular Southeast Asia and within the socialist bloc. Second, their relationships to the

of Vietnamese communism have always shared the ideal with its implications of the need for proletarian internationalist cooperation and coordination among the parties in the socialist camp. When the Sino-Soviet split emerged, they refused to accept it as proof of the demise of this ideal, viewing it as a temporary disagreement *within* the movement rather than the irreversible splitting up of the movement. Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, the Vietnamese saw themselves as senior members of the movement who could use their influence to mediate the dispute. Significant propaganda and material

Kampuchea in 1978. Photo: *The Call*





Kampuchea's Prince Sihanouk, P.R.G. President Nguyen Huu Tho, D.R.V. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, and Prince Souphanouvong of Laos link arms in a show of unity at the 1970 Summit Conference of Indochinese Peoples. (photo: VNA)

support from both the Soviet Union and China for their struggles to liberate the south encouraged the Vietnamese in this attitude, and no member of the socialist bloc ever seemed to be aiding an armed enemy of the Vietnamese revolution. Even now in the face of the split with China, the Vietnamese do not appear to have abandoned the ideal of communist unity. China has simply been excluded from the bloc, while Vietnam has linked itself more closely to it by joining COMECON.

For the Kampuchean Communist Party, born in 1960 when the Sino-Soviet split was already serious, the Comintern was nothing more than a historical curiosity. It evidently did not attend the last world congress of Communist Parties, held amid acrimonious Sino-Soviet recriminations at the end of 1960. Throughout the 1960s it was publicly shunned by all other communist parties. Rather than providing it with propaganda or material aid, the Soviet Union and China both supported the Sihanouk regime. In fact, Soviet diplomats in Phnom Penh denounced the CPK in 1967, and China shipped a large amount of military aid to Sihanouk in 1968, just as the Communists were about to launch an armed struggle against his government. After 1970, the Soviet Union openly and materially supported Lon Nol, maintaining a diplomatic presence in Phnom Penh until its liberation in 1975. While China supported the CPK with both military aid and propaganda against Lon Nol, it was already embarking upon rapprochement with the United States, which was engaged in the destruction of Kampuchea. With such experiences, it is hardly surprising that the Kampuchean Communists have little faith in the reliability of aid from or alliances with fellow communist parties. Hence they reject the concept of a socialist bloc and eschew membership in it, while

often seeming to pay little more than lip service to the duties of proletarian internationalism, which have never had much practical import for the CPK.

Thus a reinforcing constellation of factors ranging from geography to experience with the mythology of communist internationalism operate to shape the foreign policy outlooks of the Vietnamese and Kampuchean revolutions differently. For the Vietnamese, the logical path suggested by all these factors is one of relatively mild nationalism and moderate self-reliance. Their foreign policy is characterized by international activism and emphasis upon the concepts of proletarian internationalism and the socialist bloc, with close cooperation between communist parties. The Kampuchean Communists, on the other hand, are pushed toward more intense nationalism and radical self-reliance. Their foreign policy is marked by isolationism, rejection of the concept of the socialist bloc and little attachment to the ideal of proletarian internationalism. They place strong limits on cooperation with other communist parties. Such significant disjunctions between the foreign policy outlooks of the two revolutions make the adoption of joint policies difficult. Added to the contrasting domestic tendencies of the two revolutionary movements, they become mutually negative judgments of the other's line and practice.

TENSIONS IN STATE RELATIONSHIPS

Not only are the Vietnamese and Kampuchean revolutions fundamentally different—and in many ways incompatible—for the complex reasons already described. Because the two countries are neighbors, a number of factors push them

For a Kampuchean regime, relations with Vietnam strongly affect the regime's *domestic* legitimacy.

specifically to clash directly with each other. These stem from the nature of relationships between the two nations, regardless of what kind of government is in power, and from the concrete experiences of the two communist parties in interactions often marked by severe conflicts of interest.

The sheer imbalance of power between the two countries creates serious tension which could probably only be resolved by the effective abrogation of Kampuchean national sovereignty and Kampuchean inclusion in a Vietnamese or Thai sphere of influence. The refusal of the Kampuchean to play such a subordinate role keeps the tension alive, while the disparity of the threat the two countries pose to each other profoundly influences the way each views the other. For a Vietnamese regime, relations with Kampuchea are crucial to national defense but have little effect on its internal stability and political popularity. By itself, Kampuchea can never be a major threat to Vietnam, but a hostile Kampuchean regime can seriously undermine Vietnam's ability to defend itself from attacks along its long and vulnerable coast or from China. Beyond such defense-related concerns, relations with Kampuchea *per se* have never been an overriding domestic issue in Vietnam, nor has there ever been acute popular concern with the precise location or the possibility of readjustment of the frontier with Kampuchea. Thus, a Vietnamese regime can conduct its policies toward Kampuchea relatively free of domestic political constraints.

For a Kampuchean regime, however, relations with Vietnam strongly affect its domestic legitimacy. Even in isolation, Vietnam always poses a potentially serious military threat to Kampuchea, while Kampuchean alone see themselves as no real danger to Vietnam. Moreover, the events of the 1830s and 1840s (see box) as well as the subsequent propaganda of the French and the Sihanouk regime have made relations with Vietnam an extremely delicate and important domestic political issue with inevitable repercussions on the popular legitimacy and the cohesion and stability of any Kampuchean regime. Friendship with Vietnam appears to entail certain dangers for any Kampuchean government, since such friendship exposes it to possible charges of selling out Kampuchean interests to Vietnam. Such charges can appear more or less spontaneously at the mass level and undermine the regime's nationalist credentials among the population. At the top, a government's friendship with Vietnam can provide an issue for subordinate or rival factions which want to challenge the ruling group. A Vietnamese regime does not face this problem. For Vietnamese leaders, friendship with Kampuchea is domestically costless.

Thus Kampuchean political leaders have much less domestic



IENG SARY, KAMPUCHEA'S DEPUTY PREMIER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. (photo: *The Call*)

political maneuvering room available in their relations with Vietnam than do their Vietnamese counterparts, who face no such political risks or sacrifices in entering close bilateral relations. If the risks and sacrifices appear worthwhile for other reasons, it may be possible for all concerned to gloss over the importance of domestic Kampuchean political constraints. Such an effort might be justified by the prospect of still greater risks and sacrifices in other quarters or of great benefits and security as compensation. Without such compelling considerations, the domestic implications of Kampuchean friendship with Vietnam are more prominent and obvious. Under such circumstances, what are known in diplomatic parlance as "correct" relations may be the maximum that are in the domestic political interests of a Kampuchean leadership.

The issue of Kampuchea's border with Vietnam concentrates and focuses the constraints on relations between the two countries. Indeed, since the Sihanouk era, when an intense public education effort focused on the history and problems of Kampuchea's frontiers, the border issue has consistently been for Kampuchean the key barometer of the state of Vietnamese-Kampuchean relations. Even more important than assessing Vietnam's true attitude toward Kampuchea, this standard has been used as a popular measure of a Kampuchean ruling group's fidelity to Kampuchean national interests. Concessions on the border issue entail even greater and more certain risks and sacrifices than friendship with Vietnam, since even the appearance of concession can be destabilizing, perhaps inviting a coup by those who would renounce or reverse the apparent concession. These implications of the border issue reduce the potential for flexibility of any Kampuchean regime almost to the vanishing point. The Vietnamese, however, may be insensitive to the difficulties experienced by the Kampuchean on this score, failing to realize that what would be reasonable in terms of Vietnamese domestic politics is provocative and even treasonable in Kampuchea.

PARTY RELATIONS

Much more than these lasting national tensions bedevil the bilateral relations between the Vietnamese and Kampuchean communist parties, however. Their histories, both before and after the constitution of an independent Communist Party of

GIANG HAMLET IN VIETNAM AFTER AN APRIL 1977 KAMPUCHEAN ATTACK.



Vietnam News Agency (VNA)



IS RACISM TO BLAME?

Western reporting on the current war between Vietnam and Kampuchea frequently suggests that it arises from age-old hatred between Khmers and Vietnamese. Although traditional ethnic animosity and stereotypes do play a role in the conflict, their appearance in the propaganda of both sides is a result of the current fighting rather than a sign that they are its cause. Indeed, until recently the Kampuchean and Vietnamese communist parties both apparently tried to avoid and even extinguish such attitudes.

It is now common for Kampucheans to depict Vietnamese as aggressive, devious, arrogant, egoistic, politically domineering and brutal. Vietnamese in turn describe Kampucheans as ignorant, parochial, peasant-minded, ungrateful, politically incapable and brutal. These specific stereotypes are derived from events in the 19th century rather than from millennia of mutual hatred. In the 1830s and 1840s, delegates from the Vietnamese feudal court partially co-opted and partially displaced

the Kampuchean royal center in Phnom Penh and attempted to impose Vietnamese administrative, religious and cultural forms on the Kampuchean countryside. The Kampucheans responded with large-scale popular revolts. For the rebels, earlier rural Kampuchean cultural stereotypes of Vietnamese merged with negative class images of ruling courts in general. Similarly, for the Vietnamese, earlier elite cultural stereotypes of Kampucheans merged with negative class images of peasants in general.

As part of its divide and rule policy toward the peoples of Indochina, the French colonial administration helped refine, cultivate and disseminate the resulting images. Their continued survival was encouraged by Sihanouk, Lon Nol, Diem and Thieu, as well as the Americans, and the images are widespread at elite and popular levels in both countries. Hence they are easily invoked in a confrontation, but they are hardly the cause of the conflict itself. —S.R.H.



Before the break the Vietnamese showed Kampuchean troops in a favorable light. (1975 VNA photo)

Kampuchea in 1960, have been marked by frequent and often deep conflicts of interest revolving around the separate needs of the revolutionary movement in each country. Inevitably, these conflicts reflected the relative strength of the two nations, as well as the differing views of the two parties on what was required to drive first the French and then the Americans out of Indochina as a whole. This history does much to explain the CPK's hostility toward Vietnam.

In 1930, the newly founded Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), led by Ho Chi Minh, took on the task of establishing itself as the communist movement in both Laos and Kampuchea. Until 1945, however, little was accomplished in Kampuchea other than the recruitment of Vietnamese residents there. After World War II, the ICP helped encourage and provide with cadres a Kampuchean independence movement which was communist and integrated into the ICP. However, since so little had been achieved during the 1930s, the organizational work had to begin virtually from scratch, and non-communist groups succeeded in declaring Kampuchean independence first in 1945. Returning to Kampuchea, the French dissolved the independence government, and its supporters fled to Vietnamese and Thai frontier areas, where ICP cadres tried to recruit them. In Vietnam, recruiting efforts were hampered by conflicts between Vietnamese and Kampuchean in 1946 over the degree of autonomy to be granted to the larger ethnic Khmer community in south Vietnam and by successful French military operations against Viet Minh bases. In Thailand, where a left-wing government had provided a haven for the communists, a right-wing military coup disrupted ICP recruitment in 1947.

Deprived of their frontier bases, the Vietnamese supported a communist-led resistance movement in three relatively autonomous zones within Kampuchea. Rivalry and discord between these zones apparently weakened the movement and prevented the consolidation of its communist leadership. A further

handicap arose because the Vietnamese, by their very presence as advisors and instructors, often provoked Kampuchean anti-Vietnamese nationalism. King Sihanouk, an increasingly dynamic figure, exploited the divisions among the communists to win support for his rival strategy for achieving Kampuchean independence without armed struggle or significant social reform. As a result of such problems, the communist movement which emerged in Kampuchea was characterized by internal conflict and high-level defections, and it was never formally constituted as a communist party. The Vietnamese supervised the foundation of an entity known as the Khmer People's Party in 1951, when the ICP became the Vietnam Worker's Party (VWP), but this organization was a united front apparatus apparently designed as a preliminary to a communist party.

Between 1954 and 1960 – from the Geneva Conference to the founding of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) – the Kampuchean communists suffered a series of disasters, many of which they blamed on their Vietnamese mentors. Under pressure from the Soviets and Chinese, the Vietnamese had acquiesced in the seating of Sihanouk at Geneva as the representative of Kampuchea. In the final Geneva agreement, Vietnamese communists were allowed to consolidate their power in the north, while Kampuchea was granted independence under Sihanouk's rule with no recognition of the communists.

After Geneva, it appears that the Vietnam Workers Party, now holding state power in north Vietnam, advised the Kampuchean communists to dissolve their resistance organizations and fall back on parliamentary and journalistic struggles. Facing a situation similar to that of VWP cadres in south Vietnam, the Kampuchean communists were confronted with a choice between exile in north Vietnam, where they would be cut off from their society and its politics, or repression at home, where they had few or no means to defend themselves effectively.

Much of the leadership of the Kampuchean communist movement chose the relative safety of exile. As the exile dragged into years, showing increasing signs of becoming permanent, they suffered severe demoralization and lost touch with the realities at home. Many of those at home, on the other hand, were little more than the victims of those realities.

As was the case in southern Vietnam, the sacrifices made at Geneva to win peace and ensure the establishment of a socialist state in north Vietnam had been followed by much worse: after partial withdrawal into exile and almost total disarmament came repression and decimation. Parliaments, newspapers and journals, legal activities, international opinion and organizations, and the strong rear base in north Vietnam all proved to have little protective value. After a few years of repression, all that was left of the pre-Geneva communist movement in many parts of Kampuchea was a handful of embittered cadres. What had been achieved with Vietnamese aid and advice up to 1954 had been lost. The losses could credibly be blamed upon what the Vietnamese had done at and since Geneva.

During this period, the developing vacuum in the Kampuchean communist movement was filled in part from new sources, the most important of which were French universities. Beginning in 1953, when a young Kampuchean who would later

Worker's Party found itself unable or unwilling to provide material or even propaganda support to the Kampuchean Communists. Worse, the Vietnamese Communists were becoming friendly with the Sihanouk regime. Indeed, precisely as Sihanouk's intensifying repression made it harder and harder to carry out united front activities, organize legal opposition and do underground work in the cities and towns, relations between the VWP and Sihanouk became warmer and warmer. For the Vietnamese, the need to protect the flank of their struggle to liberate the south — launched in 1960 — had become the compelling priority, making correct and even intimate relations with Sihanouk vitally important. Accordingly, they felt that the Kampuchean Communists should find some expedient way to build up their own strength while simultaneously cooperating with and supporting Sihanouk's anti-imperialist foreign policy. This the CPK was unable or unwilling to do, and relations between the two communist parties were increasingly marked by conflict of interest and suspicion rather than warmth and friendship.

A political crisis in Phnom Penh early in 1963 resulted in the CPK transferring the bulk of its efforts to the countryside, where it engaged in organizing peasants against Sihanouk and abandoned all pretense of a united front strategy in support of

“Between 1954 and 1960, the Kampuchean communists suffered a series of disasters, many of which they blamed on their Vietnamese mentors.”

adopt the name Pol Pot returned from France to join the maquis, and continuing until 1959 when Khieu Samphan came home, the communist movement was invigorated with Kampuchean who did not come out of the ICP tradition. In this period after the division of the ICP into three national movements and after the Geneva settlement, these cadres could not be formally associated with the Vietnam Worker's Party.

As a result, when the Kampuchean communists held their first national congress in September 1960 to found the Communist Party of Kampuchea, there were many among them whose feelings toward the VWP were either bitter or indifferent. Although there were undoubtedly some ex-ICP cadres who remained loyal to the “ICP tradition” despite what had happened, others preferred to forget it. For many of the Kampuchean communists who had been students in France, the tradition was simply irrelevant or the object of scorn.

NEW GRIEVANCES

The foundation of the Communist Party of Kampuchea might nevertheless have opened a new era of relative warmth and friendship between Kampuchean and Vietnamese communists. By adopting a line of combined political struggle and armed self-defense, the new communist party eliminated one of the major causes of bitterness in the post-Geneva period: exclusive reliance on peaceful political struggle in a context of repression. But a process of healing past wounds and erasing past wrongs soon became impossible.

Sihanouk responded to the formation of the CPK by escalating his anti-communist campaign, while the Vietnamese

his anti-imperialism. Sihanouk meanwhile, looking for support against the U.S.-supported south Vietnamese and Thai regimes, took a harder line against the United States, renouncing all U.S. economic and military aid late in the year. As the U.S. stepped up its intervention against the Vietnamese revolution in the south, the need to support and encourage Sihanouk's anti-imperialism and prevent the establishment of U.S. bases in Kampuchea became more urgent for the Vietnamese Communists—just as the CPK felt itself forced to resort to complete opposition to Sihanouk if it was to survive. To the CPK it appeared that Sihanouk's anti-communism would ultimately not only outweigh his anti-imperialism but actually destroy the strongest anti-imperialist forces in Kampuchea.

The last strong link between the old ICP and the new CPK had been broken in 1962, when Sihanouk's agents killed Touch Samouth, an ex-ICP cadre who had been elected CPK party secretary in 1960. The CPK was now almost fully in the hands of former students in France, who formed a nucleus around which probably crystallized a good number of ex-ICP cadres who agreed with their ideas about the situation in Kampuchea, including the near impossibility of working with Sihanouk and the unreliability of the Vietnamese. The CPK plotted an independent course which its leadership considered appropriate to the realities of the Sihanouk regime and the socio-economic situation in Kampuchea. But this course was at best oblivious and at worst damaging to what the Vietnamese believed were the essential and immediate requirements of the liberation and reunification of Vietnam. With most of its work now done in the countryside, the CPK had become a threat to the stability of the Sihanouk regime, which the Vietnamese were cultivating as

a bulwark of progressive bourgeois anti-imperialism. In theory, the contradiction should have been resolvable by proper implementation of united front tactics within Kampuchea by the CPK. In practice, these were not forthcoming to the satisfaction of the VWP, and they probably were not available, given the intensity of Sihanouk's anti-communist repression, to which the Vietnamese appeared indifferent.

Each year the contradiction—and with it the conflicts and suspicions—grew deeper. In 1965, Sihanouk severed diplomatic relations with the U.S., and the full-scale U.S. military attack on Vietnam forced Vietnamese military personnel to seek refuge in Kampuchean territory, first with the CPK's permission and then with Sihanouk's acquiescence. At this point, ex-ICP cadres from Kampuchea began to return home from their Vietnamese exile. However, rather than leading to rapprochement between the two parties, these returnees only generated more problems. At an earlier point they might have been warmly welcomed. Now they were suspected as infiltrators sent to turn the CPK toward greater cooperation with Sihanouk.

After 1967, the basis for CPK-VWP solidarity diminished even further. In that year the CPK declared total war on the Sihanouk regime, and the war situation in Vietnam made Kampuchean territory an irreplaceable sanctuary rather than merely a convenient refuge for Vietnamese troops. In



Asia Week

leadership that it was necessary to begin final preparations for full-scale armed struggle against Sihanouk. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese were preparing for the 1968 Tet offensive, in which the use of Kampuchean territory as a sanctuary and supply

Kampuchea charges that Vietnam wants to impose an "Indochina Federation," while Vietnam protests that all it desires is a "special friendship."

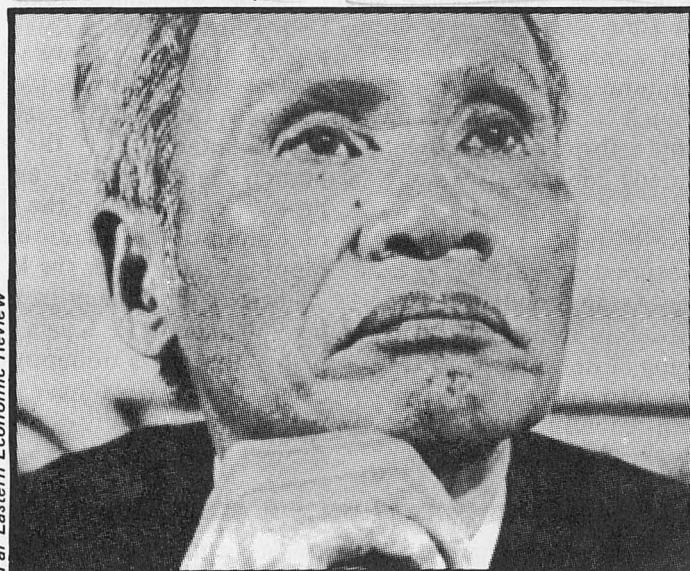
northwestern Kampuchea, peasants reacted to forced rice collection by Sihanouk's armed forces by launching a spontaneous revolt. Blaming the uprising on the Communists, Sihanouk moved to eliminate the left entirely from legitimate Kampuchean political life and drove the CPK's remaining legal cadres into the countryside. These events convinced the CPK's

route was critical. Hence, they moved even closer to the Sihanouk regime.

Thus, when the CPK founded a revolutionary army and began all-out warfare against Sihanouk in January 1968, it found its decision opposed by the Vietnamese, who did not change their position until the March 1970 coup which overthrew Sihanouk. During this period, the CPK learned to work completely independently of the Vietnamese and discovered that such an independent stance was viable. In contrast to the disaster, bitterness and decimation of the late 1960s, 1968-70 was for the CPK a period of isolated defiance, self-confidence and success.

UNEASY ALLIANCE

When the March 1970 coup forced them to work closely together, relations between the Kampuchean and Vietnamese parties were probably worse than they had ever been. Each party was most likely deeply convinced that the other had consistently proved itself incapable of thinking of anyone's interests but its own. More specifically, the CPK probably believed that the VWP had showed itself unable to understand the revolutionary situation in Kampuchea, and that its foreign policy, in particular its policy toward the CPK, was governed more by Vietnamese national interests than by consideration for the needs of the Kampuchean revolution. To the VWP, the CPK's program for revolution in Kampuchea must have appeared to be little more than a blind and hopeless offensive against the Sihanouk regime, while the CPK seemed willfully



Vietnam's Prime Minister Phan Van Dong (above left); Kampuchean Prime Minister Pol Pot (above right)

oblivious to the disasters its struggle might bring upon the struggle to liberate south Vietnam and all of Indochina.

The alliance forged in April 1970 did not erase these conceptions. Although cooperation again became possible and even necessary, they did not transform suspicion into trust or fundamental conflict of interest into harmony. Disagreements between the two parties again came to the fore in 1972-73, as the Vietnamese negotiated the peace agreements with the U.S. When, after the terror bombings of Hanoi, the Vietnamese agreed to a cease-fire removing American forces from south Vietnam, the Kampuchean found the full strength of the U.S. Air Force turned against them. At the same time, they believed the Vietnamese were trying to pressure them into negotiations with the U.S. by reducing their provision of military supplies. Kampuchean uneasiness was intensified because the Vietnamese continued to negotiate with the U.S. for six months on the issue of reconstruction aid, which Kissinger insisted would be conditional on a cease-fire agreement in Kampuchea.* The Kampuchean Communists probably felt that if the Vietnamese had continued to tie down the Americans in direct combat while offering full logistical and material support to the CPK, their armed forces could soon have taken Phnom Penh and ended the war in Kampuchea. Instead, the nation was subjected to two more years of war, including the most concentrated bombing in history. Memories of Geneva, when Kampuchean interests were sacrificed, and of the late 1960s, when the Vietnamese refused to support their fight against the Sihanouk regime, were revived. Past suspicions were reconfirmed. Cooperation with Vietnam appeared to be a path full of pitfalls, and the reliability of the Vietnamese as allies appeared to be low. The Vietnamese perception of this period must have been radically different.

These experiences are exacerbated by the general tendencies in domestic and international policies which drive the two revolutions apart as well as the great disparity in the threats the two countries pose to each other, which so strongly color their attitudes toward mutual relations. Overall, the Kampuchean view the Vietnamese as prone to make decisions in their own

national interest without regard to the losses such decisions inflict on Kampuchea. From the Vietnamese perspective, however, the Kampuchean seem unable to recognize the requirements of the collective good.

PRESENT CONFLICT

The differences in the two revolutions and the history of mistrust between the two parties set the parameters and tone of the present conflict. Within this context, the fundamental issue of conflict seems to be an irreconcilable difference over the extent to which the two revolutions are to cooperate with each other. This is reflected in contrasting propaganda themes. Kampuchea charges that Vietnam wants to impose an "Indochina Federation," while Vietnam protests that all it desires is a "special friendship." The first is probably an exaggeration; the second is probably a euphemism. Between the exaggeration and the euphemism lies a very concrete reality: the Vietnamese side wants more cooperation in more fields, both domestic and international, than the Kampuchean side is willing to accept. If the arguments presented here are correct, the Kampuchean side is in fact unable to accept more cooperation. Exactly how much the Vietnamese want is not clear, although some indications can be seen in the close relationship between Vietnam and Laos. For the present Kampuchean leadership, which has set itself on a course of total independence and radical self-reliance, the Vietnamese desire for closer relations is a threat, for history has made it unlikely that closer cooperation can be achieved unless that leadership is replaced.

The border issue is at once secondary and crucial to the conflict. It is secondary, because it is only a symptom of wider disagreements and because only a relatively small area is in dispute, despite the propaganda charges made at times by both sides. It is crucial, however, because of its role as a barometer for the Kampuchean. The government uses it to gauge Vietnamese attitudes, and the population employs it to measure the regime's nationalist credentials. In addition, the presence of troops along the frontier transforms it into a military flashpoint. The Vietnamese refusal to withdraw from zones in dispute as a prelude to rather than as a result of negotiations in 1975-76¹ and their request for a readjustment of a maritime frontier the Kampuchean felt had been recognized by the National

* For an alternative analysis, asserting the Vietnamese did not pressure the Kampuchean, see D. Gareth Porter, *A Peace Denied: The U.S., Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement* (Indiana, 1975) [Ed.].



Vietnamese and American delegations at the 1973 Paris Peace Talks.
The Kampuchean flatly refused to negotiate with the U.S. (photo: VNA)



KAMPUCHEAN TROOPS TAKEN PRISONER
BY THE VIETNAMESE THIS YEAR.

Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1967² resulted in a cut-off of negotiations by the Kampuchean. The escalatory rounds of armed clashes which eventually followed probably began when the Kampuchean attempted to drive Vietnamese forces out of disputes zones they felt had been illegally occupied by the Vietnamese between 1965 and 1975.

Although the Kampuchean may have fired the first shots, they considered their action a response to *de facto* Vietnamese aggression by long-term occupation of Kampuchean land. They wanted to demonstrate that Vietnamese military superiority would not protect them from attack if they refused to withdraw from the disputed territory before negotiations began. By so doing, the Kampuchean hoped to convince the Vietnamese that it would be less costly to withdraw than to insist on negotiating from a position of strength.³ The Vietnamese, however, did not withdraw. In some instances, they may have counterattacked. By early 1977, some local Kampuchean commanders apparently

resorted to artillery barrages and small-scale raids into what they recognized as Vietnamese territory. From their perspective, such raids were merely a response in kind to Vietnam's prolonged *de facto* aggression against Kampuchean territory. To the Vietnamese, however, the raids were a new escalation of Kampuchean aggression, and in April they sent several thousand troops into Kampuchean border zones in response.⁴

In June,⁵ the two sides exchanged notes. The Vietnamese proposed a high-level meeting, and the Kampuchean replied by proposing that both sides pull their troops back 0.5 to one kilometer from the frontier.⁶ Since the Vietnamese ignored the proposal to disengage forces, the Kampuchean ignored the proposal to meet. Then, in mid-July 1977, the Eastern Region Committee of the Kampuchean administration decided to respond to any new Vietnamese attack with coordinated quick assaults across the frontier into Vietnamese territory.⁶ Following incidents in late July and throughout August in which the Vietnamese apparently took the battlefield initiative, and which the Kampuchean saw as provocative,⁷ such assaults were launched in late September. The intensity and scale of Vietnam's December retaliation finally led to an episode of full-scale war and the Kampuchean decision to break openly with Vietnam. Since then, large-scale fighting has flared occasionally, and the diplomatic situation has remained deadlocked. Each side has rejected the other's negotiating proposals.

Meanwhile, the Vietnamese have begun to call openly for the overthrow of the Kampuchean regime. They appear to be gathering forces, including many Kampuchean, which could be used in such an attempt. This has probably ended any chance that remained of a limited rapprochement that would have settled some differences and overlooked the rest. The conflict is probably as permanent and deep as any in the world today. □

NOTES

References are provided only for the last section of this article. For documentation of the historical analysis, see Stephen Heder, "The Historical Bases of the Kampuchean-Vietnam Conflict: Development of the Kampuchean Communist Movement and Its Relations with Vietnamese Communism, 1930-1970," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, forthcoming.

1. See Anonymous, "Intelligence," in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Feb. 27, 1976, p. 5; Ellen J. Hammer, "Indochina: Communist but Non-Aligned," in *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1976 (Vol. XXV), pp. 3-4; Milton Osborne, "Kampuchea and Vietnam," in *Pacific Community*, April 1978, (Vol. IX, No. 9), pp. 260-61; and Russell Spurr, "Comment," *FEER*, January 20, 1978, p. 13.

2. For the Kampuchean version of this problem, see its December 31, 1977 statement and Pol Pot's March 1978 interview with the Yugoslav journalists. For the Vietnamese version, see their white book *Dossier Kampuchea*. The Vietnamese position since January 1978 has been that they never recognized the so-called Brevie line, which the Kampuchean claim as the maritime frontier, as one dividing up territorial waters, even if it establishes sovereignty over ocean islands. However, in August 1977, a senior Vietnamese official, evidently referring to the 1967 statements by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front, explained the matter rather differently. He stated that, "At the time we agreed to the Brevie line, we were not aware of the problems of territorial water, continental shelf, etc.—these new phenomena." Apparently on this basis, the Vietnamese have been asking to reopen

negotiations on the maritime frontier question. Nayan Chanda, "That's Far Enough, Says Hanoi," in *FEER*, August 19, 1977, p. 12.

3. This line of action apparently combines elements of Sihanouk era diplomacy with an adaptation of the Chinese belligerence strategy for deterring stronger adversaries. See the explanation by Chea San of the Kampuchean adoption in late 1965 of a blow-for-blow policy of counter-attacks against Thai and Vietnamese territory, as presented in the journal *Kambuja* (Phnom Penh), January 15, 1966, pp. 13, 100; February 15, 1966, p. 9; and Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrance* (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 202.

4. Don Oberdorfer, "Hanoi is Massing Troops at Border with Cambodia," *Washington Post*, April 8, 1978, p. 14.

5. For information on the Vietnamese note, see *Dossier Kampuchea*. For information on the Kampuchean note, see the March 17, 1978, letter from Ieng Sary to the governments of the members of the non-aligned movement.

6. See "Decisions Concerning the Report of the Eastern Region Conference Mid-Year 1977," p. 84. This document was captured by the Vietnamese during military operations in Kampuchea and copies have circulated among the foreign press.

7. Intelligence sources in Thailand began reporting Vietnamese attacks on Kampuchean forces, including forces on Kampuchean territory in late July 1977. For example, see *Ban Muang* (Bangkok), July 28, 1977, pp. 1-2. The Thai delegation publicized these and early August clashes at the ASEAN meeting. See, for example, the Reuters dispatch from Kuala Lumpur, dated August 6, 1977; and Rodney Tasker, "Enter the Japanese," *FEER*, August 19, 1977, p. 22. Thai sources also reported Vietnamese raids into Kampuchean territory that occurred in late August. See Anonymous, "This Week," *FEER*, September 16, 1977, p. 7. The Kampuchean obliquely referred to the fighting in an early August radio broadcast. See Phnom Penh radio, August 8, 1977, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service: Daily Report, Asia and Pacific*, August 9, 1977, pp. H 1-2.

•RAISING•THE•STAKES•



The Major Powers Still Play for Keeps in Indochina

• BY LOWELL FINLEY •

The current war between Vietnam and Kampuchea has deep roots in local problems between the two nations. Yet the scale and intensity of the fighting can only be understood if the interests and involvement of the major powers are recognized. When Zbigniew Brzezinski described the conflict as a "proxy war" between the Soviet Union and China, his remark was correctly criticized by a number of experts for ignoring the local issues fueling the dispute and oversimplifying the roles played by the Soviet Union and China. However, it is increasingly clear that Sino-Soviet rivalry for influence in Southeast Asia has deeply affected the development of the Kampuchea-Vietnam hostilities. It is equally clear that the United States is once again maneuvering in a major power game being played out in Indochina, despite the stinging U.S. defeat by revolutionary forces there only three and a half years ago. The

perspective and actions of each of the three major powers reveal the shadowy diplomatic struggle which they are waging far from the actual shooting along the borders of Vietnam and Kampuchea.

CHINA'S ROLE

Peking's view of the situation has led China to turn against the Vietnamese revolution which it had supported through the long struggle against U.S. imperialism. China's material and

Lowell Finley is co-director of the Southeast Asia Resource Center.

technical support for Kampuchea's war with Vietnam is based less on concern for Kampuchea than on a desire to block what it sees as the threatening spread of Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia. Apparently an independent-minded Vietnam, the third largest communist country, with a well-equipped and experienced military larger than any other on China's Asian borders, is regarded by the Chinese leadership as a potentially dangerous rival. This alone suggests an explanation if not a justification for Chinese backing of Kampuchea. However, because Vietnam is friendly with the Soviet Union, Chinese fears are multiplied. China believes that its arch-enemy is increasingly influential in Vietnam's policies. The Chinese claim that, although Moscow's strategic emphasis is still on Europe, it is also attempting to expand its presence in Asia at the expense of the other "superpower," the U.S., in order to dominate the region.¹ In China's view, Soviet support for Vietnam is an indirect route to this goal.

China believes that the Soviet Union backs Vietnam in the fighting with Kampuchea for two reasons, both threatening to China. The first is a desire to reduce Chinese and U.S. influence in Southeast Asia by developing a string of Soviet bases to control vital sea lanes, intimidating Japan and the weaker governments in the region. The already existing close ties between Vietnam and neighboring Laos are seen by China as the first step toward such a Vietnamese/Soviet power grab. If the Kampuchean regime were overthrown or defeated militarily by Vietnam, the Chinese believe, it would be another big step toward Vietnamese domination of mainland Southeast Asia, providing a convenient base area for Soviet operations. "The Soviet Union is using two pairs of pincers," said the Chinese news agency Hsinhua. "A pair of pincers is the Cuban forces which serve Moscow in Africa and the other is Vietnam, known as 'the Cuba of Asia.'"²

The second explanation the Chinese have offered for Soviet support of Vietnam portrays Soviet intentions as more devious and cynical, and more immediately threatening to China. In this view, the Soviets have incited Vietnam to attack Kampuchea as a provocation of China. They have also goaded Vietnam to provoke China directly by persecuting and expelling Vietnam's ethnic Chinese residents and by disputing Chinese claims to ownership of two groups of islands in the South China Sea. (China seized control of the strategic and potentially oil-rich Paracel islands in 1974. Despite the fact that the Paracels lie more than 500 miles south of China and only 250 miles off the coast of Vietnam, China claims that Vietnam is demanding them back strictly because the Soviets would like to use the islands for naval bases. The other disputed islands are the Spratleys, which lie roughly equidistant from China's Hainan island and the central coast of Vietnam.) By embroiling Vietnam in economically and politically debilitating conflicts, the Chinese believe, the Soviets could force concessions from the Vietnamese. Specifically, the Soviets could demand permission to build missile bases aimed at China and naval bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Haiphong in return for military protection against China and economic aid to replace recently terminated Chinese projects.³ Pro-Peking newspapers in Hong Kong have reported that such Soviet bases are already in use or under construction, but the reports have been challenged by U.S. intelligence sources and recent foreign visitors to the alleged installation sites.⁴ The charges are more likely intended as a warning to Vietnam and to other Southeast Asian nations to steer completely clear of the Soviets or face Chinese retaliation.



Vietnamese troops with victim of recent China-Vietnam border clash. (photo: *Asia Week*)

ROOTS OF THE CHINA-VIETNAM TENSIONS

China's suspicion of Vietnam's ties to the Soviet Union have been public knowledge since 1963. In that year, the Hanoi leadership tilted toward China in the growing dispute with the Soviet Union over ideological revisionism, but the shift was not enough to please the Chinese. Hanoi joined Peking in condemning Moscow for signing the first nuclear test ban agreement with the United States. Both saw the test ban treaty, in which the Soviets agreed to abrogate their nuclear sharing agreement with China, as a dangerous indication of Soviet Premier Khrushchev's willingness to expose less powerful members of the socialist bloc to nuclear blackmail. Khrushchev's pursuit of peaceful coexistence, although it was based on genuine Soviet fears of the devastation of nuclear war, nevertheless threatened to undermine the positions of militarily weaker China and Vietnam. Both China and Vietnam were, at the time, confronted by the most hawkish elements of the U.S. military, backed by right-wing, "rollback communism" cold-war politicians.⁵ Chinese leaders were pleased with Hanoi's concur-

rence in their criticism of the test ban treaty. However, they were not satisfied with Vietnam's more equivocal attitudes toward the rest of Soviet policy. Chinese Prime Minister Liu Shao-chi, in a May 1963 speech to the Hanoi Party School, warned the Vietnamese against choosing to "look on with

between the two governments.¹² After the purge of the "gang of four," however, there was a perceptible warming in Sino-Vietnamese relations. Chinese press coverage improved, and work on Chinese aid projects, slowed almost to a halt as relations worsened, suddenly resumed. A January 10, 1977,

"Beneath the charges concerning Vietnam's 'persecuted Chinese nationals,' China's real concern was the Soviet presence in Vietnam."

folded arms or follow a middle course" in the Sino-Soviet split.⁶

Moscow-Hanoi relations continued to sour through most of 1964 as Khrushchev hinted that he was considering reducing or ending support for the Vietnamese communists. The Tonkin Gulf incident in August 1964, signaling an impending U.S. escalation of the war, and Khrushchev's ouster two months later, led to renewed assurances of Soviet support for the Vietnamese revolution and a rapid improvement in relations between Hanoi and Moscow.⁷

The next year, in obvious reference to the Vietnamese, who were relying on the Soviet Union for aid to meet rapid U.S. military escalation, Chinese Communist Party Deputy Secretary Teng Hsiao-p'ing denounced revolutionaries who took an "opportunist" attitude in the Sino-Soviet quarrel. The Chinese press began to stress the need to defeat Soviet revisionism before victory over U.S. imperialism would be possible.⁸ In 1966, China refused to join a "joint action" proposal backed by a number of Asian communist parties that would have put a partial moratorium on their dispute with the Soviet Union so that military and economic aid to Vietnam could be coordinated and expedited. This joint action plan was strongly favored by the DRV, which was by then under heavy U.S. aerial bombardment. China's refusal indicated the degree to which the rivalry with the Soviet Union already influenced key Chinese decisions governing Vietnam.⁹ China continued its own separate aid program, and permitted shipment of Soviet supplies to Vietnam by rail through China, but only if Vietnamese delegations went to meet them at the Soviet border. There were some hints by Vietnamese officials that these shipments were intentionally delayed.

These tensions threatened the very survival of the Vietnamese revolution. Vietnamese leaders skillfully controlled them as long as the war with the U.S. continued. They managed to keep both the Soviet Union and China as allies, despite attempts by Nixon and Kissinger to exploit the rift between the two major communist powers to weaken Vietnam's defenses. Within months of the final Kampuchean and Vietnamese victories in 1975, however, it was clear that Chinese leaders were far from relieved. Speaking at a welcoming banquet for Thailand's Prime Minister Kukrit Pramog in Peking on June 30, 1975, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, now Chinese Vice Premier, declared that "the other superpower" was replacing the defeated U.S. as a threat to the peace and security of Southeast Asia.¹⁰ While on the same trip, Kukrit met with Mao, who reportedly warned him that the Vietnamese had plans for conquest in the region as the cutting edge of Soviet imperialism in Asia.¹¹

The Chinese media carried almost no coverage of Vietnam in the first three quarters of 1976, an indication of the strains

article in China's *People's Daily*, in an indirect critique of the "gang of four," referred warmly to Chou En-lai's efforts to help Vietnam. The article even acknowledged that all had not been well in past Chinese treatment of Vietnam, quoting the late premier in a 1960 visit to Hanoi chastising Chinese experts and workers for harboring "big-nation chauvinism" toward Vietnam.¹³ In the spring of 1977, top Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Giap was taken on a tour of Chinese military installations, something that would have been out of the question in the atmosphere of the preceding year.

For a time, then, it appeared that China's new leaders had decided a friendlier approach would help to strengthen Hanoi's visible efforts to maintain independence vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.¹⁴ But by the fall of 1977, all such signs disappeared. China greeted Kampuchea's Pol Pot with great fanfare in October, lavishing the kind of attention on him that would indicate close solidarity. In a highly significant step in December, China terminated all technical cooperation with the Vietnamese army. At least one account of the decision, in the French newspaper *Le Point*, suggested that China's reason for ending military cooperation was Hanoi's growing closeness to Moscow.¹⁵ This action was reported the same day that the Kampuchean government made its decision to break relations



Kukrit in Peking, 1975. A warning from Teng Hsiao P'ing about Vietnam's intentions...

with Vietnam. The close timing of the Chinese and Kampuchean actions indicates the degree to which the Sino-Soviet and Kampuchea-Vietnam disputes were already intertwined when the border fighting first drew worldwide attention.

China terminated all economic aid to Vietnam in May, 1978. The sudden aid halt paralyzed hundreds of projects in Vietnam. The vehemence of the accompanying propaganda attacks indicated that China was preparing to make a thorough and perhaps permanent break with Vietnam. The official explanation of the aid termination said that resources previously routed to Vietnam had to be diverted to care for more than 150,000 ethnic Chinese who had recently left Vietnam for China. Large numbers of ethnic Chinese chose to leave Vietnam after the Vietnamese government's move to close down capitalist trade networks. But Teng Hsiao-p'ing made it clear that, beneath the charges concerning Vietnam's "persecuted Chinese nationals," China's real concern was the Soviet presence in Vietnam. In clear reference to the Soviet Union, Teng told visiting Japanese journalists in June that there was a "third country behind the conflict" between China and Vietnam.¹⁶

CHINA AND KAMPUCHEA

The anti-Vietnam dimension of China's relationship to Kampuchea may long pre-date Pol Pot's October 1977 visit to China. Some academic experts believe that as early as 1956, China offered to guarantee Kampuchea's security against harassment from the D.R.V.¹⁷ To varying degrees since that time, China's cultivation of friendly relations with political forces in Kampuchea has benefited from Kampuchean fear of domination by Vietnam—north, south, or reunified. The Chinese were apparently taking long-term precautions against the possibility that an adversary relationship would eventually develop between China and a reunited Vietnam.

Before 1970, the Chinese government maintained friendly state-to-state relations with the Sihanouk regime, while the Chinese Communist Party worked surreptitiously with the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Chinese support for the CPK was low-key during the 1960s, however, since state-to-state relations with the neutralist Sihanouk government satisfied Peking's main foreign policy objective, which was to keep U.S. troops, bases, and military aid presence away from China's perimeter. A brief exception came in October 1967, when the CPK decided to launch armed struggle against Sihanouk, whose government had adopted increasingly severe policies of internal repression. The Cultural Revolution was at its peak in China, and radicals who had briefly seized control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry may have signaled endorsement of the armed struggle decision. Within months, however, Prime Minister Chou En-lai regained control of the Foreign Ministry, withdrew Chinese support for the fledgling war on Sihanouk, and actually shipped weapons to the Sihanouk regime which were probably used against the "Khmer Rouge" (Red Khmer), as Sihanouk had dubbed the revolutionaries.¹⁸

When Sihanouk was deposed in 1970 by his former right-hand man, General Lon Nol, he was offered asylum by both the Soviet Union and China. He chose China, and with the advice and mediation of Chou En-lai, a tactical alliance against Lon Nol was hastily worked out between Sihanouk and his former enemies, the CPK. Together they formed the Royal Government of National Unification of Kampuchea (GRUNK).



Coct
This September 1977 meeting cemented the China-Kampuchea alliance

China's leaders were well aware that the exile government they were sponsoring was a potential ally in a struggle with Vietnam. Sihanouk made some accommodations with the Vietnamese communists and sometimes spoke as their supporter against the U.S. But he also frequently expressed fear and distrust of Hanoi's intentions. The Kampuchean communists, although they were entering into unprecedented cooperative efforts with Vietnamese revolutionary forces, had already developed sharp disagreements with Hanoi and saw themselves as being closer to China ideologically. At a minimum, both Sihanouk and the CPK were solidly anti-Soviet after Moscow recognized the Lon Nol government soon after the coup.

Sihanouk and the CPK had very different reasons for working with China. Although firmly anti-communist, Sihanouk believed that China more than any other major power had reason in the 1950s and 1960s to desire a neutral Kampuchea. Until 1970, he successfully used relations with China as leverage to counterbalance western influence threatening his country's precarious neutrality. Sihanouk also relied on substantial aid he received from China beginning in 1956. More importantly, in the current context, he turned to China for protection against pressure from Thailand or Vietnam. "Westerners are always astonished that we Cambodians are not disturbed by our future in which China will play such a powerful role," he told reporters in 1961. "But one should try to put himself in our place: In this jungle which is the real world, should we, simple deer, interest ourselves in a dinosaur like China when we are more directly menaced, and have been for centuries, by the wolf and the tiger, who are Vietnam and Thailand."¹⁹ Sihanouk evidently succeeded in getting China to pressure Hanoi to make concessions on territorial issues as early as 1963 in return for his country's friendship toward China.²⁰ This early Chinese intercession on Kampuchea's behalf may have planted the seeds of Vietnamese resentment of China's role in Kampuchea.

The CPK, on the other hand, held ideological views very close to those of the Communist Party of China. The Kampucheans agreed with the Chinese critique of Soviet revisionism. Because of strained relations with the more powerful and experienced Vietnamese communists, CPK leaders probably thought Kampuchea's relationship with Vietnam was analogous to China's struggles with its one-time "big brother,"



Ieng Sary and Pol Pot with China's Hua and Teng.

the Soviet Union. That identity would strengthen further the CPK's conscious identification with the Chinese.

The CPK also identified with the emphasis on economic self-reliance and crash development programs which characterized earlier periods of the Chinese revolution. Hu Nim, Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, and others developed understandings of rural class structure, the pitfalls of western aid and loans, the practice of guerrilla warfare, and the centrality of class struggle, similar to but greatly distorting main precepts of Chinese communism in the 1960s.²¹ CPK policies appear to have been influenced by purified radicalism that many of Kampuchea's current leaders carried over from earlier Paris student days. Kampuchean leaders sometimes refer to their own revolution as a "Great Leap Forward," although their actual policies bear little resemblance to China's Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s.

As soon as they assumed power in April 1975, the CPK

of Kampuchea in the dispute with Vietnam goes beyond common dislike for Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The Kampuchean communists have pushed principles often identified with the Chinese revolution to such radical extremes that their domestic policies are reportedly viewed privately by the current, rightward-leaning Chinese leadership as ultra-leftist. The CPK, for its part, labeled Chinese Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing "anti-socialist and counter-revolutionary" when he was still out of power two years ago. Teng is believed to have bluntly told visiting Kampuchean Defense Minister Son Sen in August that Chinese aid would not be able to save his regime unless it abandoned his divisive domestic policies in favor of a broad united front to fight the Vietnamese. Teng and other Chinese leaders believe that the CPK was influenced in the early 1970s by the gang of four, which maintained party-to-party relations with the CPK. As a result, the Chinese believe, the CPK adopted a disastrous policy of instant revolution and absolute egalitarianism. According to well-informed Indochina correspondent Nayan Chanda, China is most distressed as the "ruthless series of purges and executions" which have apparently occurred in Kampuchea. The "internationally bloody image" of Kampuchea, Chanda reports, is seen by Chinese leaders as a serious obstacle to China's efforts to form alliances with the non-communist world against the Soviet Union.²³

China's reported dissatisfaction with the Pol Pot regime is the first indication that Chinese leaders might back away from supporting Kampuchea, unless they are more successful than in the past in influencing changes in the CPK's domestic policies. It seems clear, however, that China is not especially concerned with the fate of Kampuchean peasants or the course of revolution in Kampuchea except as it affects Chinese global strategy. Nor is this a new attitude on the part of China's leaders. China was happy to work with the CPK's bitter enemy, Sihanouk, throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, as long as Sihanouk was capable of checking the spread of U.S. power into Kampuchea and the threat of U.S. encirclement of China. For many years, in fact, Chinese policy towards Kampuchea was remarkably similar to the policy of the Vietnamese communists

"The Kampuchean regime's domestic policies are reportedly viewed privately by the rightward-leaning Chinese leadership as ultra-leftist . . . "

reaffirmed and strengthened ties to China. Within months, Kampuchea was receiving substantial military aid from its northern ally. In August of that year, the new Kampuchean premier Khieu Samphan went to Peking to sign an agreement on economic cooperation with China. He also signed a joint communique endorsing China's line on all foreign policy issues which included an attack on both the Soviet Union and the U.S. for seeking world hegemony.²² For the next two years, China was to be the only country with which Kampuchea would maintain any alliance or even close contact.

HOW DEEP A FRIENDSHIP?

Despite apparent affinities, it is unlikely that China's backing

which the CPK has so roundly condemned. Before the 1970 formation of the CPK-Sihanouk coalition, China gave very little material support to the Kampuchean communists, and, like the Vietnamese, opposed the CPK's 1967 decision to launch armed struggle to overthrow Sihanouk.

REFLECTIONS ON CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The conflict between China's relations with the Sihanouk regime and its party-to-party ties with the Kampuchean communists in the 1960s foreshadowed a much more serious problem in China's current foreign policy. Tension between state-to-state and party-to-party relations has always been present in Chinese foreign policy. In the 1950s and 1960s, in

Southeast Asia, China was largely successful in reconciling those differences. The U.S. was clearly the principal enemy, U.S. imperialism the main threat to China's security. In this situation, China was able to make relatively clear-cut decisions, supporting anti-U.S. and anti-imperialist governments, like the D.R.V., or, where the government was a U.S. ally, like Thailand, supporting the country's revolutionary movement on a party-to-party basis. Most of the parties China supported during this time were anti-Soviet as well as anti-U.S. The aim was to weaken the U.S. and its allies while forming a strong bloc of communist parties with sufficient leverage to convince the Soviets to return to what China saw as a correct path, closing the rift in the ranks of socialist nations.

A series of major reverses doomed this strategy. First Hanoi moved back toward closer relations with the Soviet Union after its brief tilt towards China in 1963 and 1964. In 1966, the once powerful, pro-Peking Communist Party of Indonesia was virtually destroyed, after a bloody right-wing military coup. These and other setbacks, together with clear threats of a Soviet military attack in 1969, convinced a powerful element of the Chinese leadership that a drastic reorientation was necessary. The shift became clear in 1972 when China openly identified the Soviet Union as its chief enemy, and invited Nixon to China in a major step toward an anti-Soviet alliance with the U.S.

In the new Chinese strategy, party-to-party relations have been subordinated to state-to-state ties with any regime willing to agree with China on the overriding priority of opposing the Soviet Union. China's goal is to exclude Soviet influence from Southeast Asia. For this, alliances with ruling governments are faster and more secure than support for revolutions that promise long and difficult struggle before state power is gained. China's support for the anti-Soviet communist parties in Thailand and the Philippines has decreased, for example, as vigorous efforts have been made to cement alliances with the right-wing military dictatorship in Thailand and Marcos' martial law regime in the Philippines. In other parts of the world, China has thrown its support behind reactionary regimes such as Chile, Zaire, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Even China's alliance with the Pol Pot regime is based on current state-to-state criteria of anti-Sovietism. There are deep differences between the two countries on the party-to-party level. For China, however, the fact that a fraternal communist party, whatever differences there may be, rules Kampuchea is less significant than the fact that Kampuchea is fighting Vietnam, which China sees as a puppet of the Soviets.

Stated most simply, when a contradiction developed between continued support for revolution, on the one hand, and China's interests in state-to-state relations to reinforce its campaign against the Soviet Union on the other, revolution was sacrificed. In his memoirs, Richard Nixon recalls that French writer André Malraux, who had known Mao and Chou En-lai in the 1930s, visited him at the White House just before Nixon's historic 1972 trip to China. Nixon approvingly quotes Malraux as saying: "China's action over Vietnam is an imposture. China has never helped anyone! Not Pakistan. Not Vietnam. China's foreign policy is a brilliant lie! The Chinese themselves do not believe in it; they believe only in China. Only China!"²⁴ China's actions since then appear to support this bold assertion, at least to the satisfaction of U.S. policy-makers, with whom the Chinese are rapidly proceeding to build an anti-Soviet alliance, an alliance with ominous implications for third world countries.

THE SOVIET ROLE

The Soviet Union has sided with Vietnam in the dispute with Kampuchea. Like Vietnam, the Soviet Union sees China's hand behind Phnom Penh's decisions. Vietnam endorses most of the Soviet Union's foreign policy stands at the UN and at meetings of the Non-Aligned Nations. However, there is no evidence to support the Chinese charge that the Soviet Union is behind the Vietnam-Kampuchea fighting. It was not until September of this year that the Soviet Union shipped additional military equipment to the Vietnamese, more as a sign of support in the event of direct armed confrontations with China, than as reinforcement for the Kampuchean front. The Soviet Union has supported Vietnam's proposals for a negotiated settlement of the Kampuchea dispute.

The Soviet Union contends that China is attempting to become a hegemonic power in Southeast Asia. Moscow charges that China has incited the Kampuchean to aggress against Vietnam and distorted the issue of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese in order to attack Vietnam's revolution. The Soviets also warn that China is attempting to expand southward by claiming territorial waters adjoining Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. China is cultivating diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian governments, the Soviets say, so that China can interfere in their internal affairs. (All of the countries have sizeable ethnic Chinese populations, and Moscow warns that China may use them to pressure other countries as they have done with Vietnam.) The Soviet Union charges that China's actions will harm all of the countries in the region, to the ultimate benefit of the United States.²⁵

THE SOVIET UNION AND VIETNAM

The Soviet Union would undoubtedly like to see a pro-Soviet Vietnam become a major influence in Southeast Asia, and would welcome the chance to build bases in Vietnam. In this sense, there is a kernel of truth in China's efforts to create a Soviet scare in Southeast Asia. However, it is fairly clear that these goals are low priorities for Moscow. The Soviet Union is pursuing regional policies which rely upon diplomacy and trade, rather than military conquest. More importantly, the lack of evidence for China's recent allegations about Soviet base-building in Vietnam indicates that the Vietnamese have firmly resisted whatever pressure Moscow may have applied. This is not the first false alarm on Soviet bases. China also charged that the Soviets were constructing bases in Vietnam in 1975. China was, at that time, proven wrong, as it has been recently.²⁶ China's frequent loud warnings of a Soviet military threat to Southeast Asia have focused on alleged buildups of missiles and increased naval activity. However, China has deployed its own missiles with a 2,500 mile range within reach of all Southeast Asia, as well as beefing up its own naval presence in the region.²⁷

While Vietnam is now politically as close as it has ever been to the Soviet Union, Hanoi made serious efforts after the victory in 1975 and reunification in 1976 to maintain Vietnam's independence and non-alignment. One indication of this policy was the relaxation of trade and investment codes designed to attract business from the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan. Vietnam also attempted to secure enough aid from these

countries to meet about 50 percent of its overall postwar reconstruction and development needs. This diversification would have reduced Vietnam's dependence on aid from the Soviet Union and China, which in turn would have lessened the vulnerability to political pressures such dependence implied.²⁸ Vietnam's turn toward the West and the slight improvement

press heaped praise on Kampuchean reconstruction efforts, remained silent on the mounting human rights charges, and continued to call for good relations with the Kampuchean government, emphasizing past Soviet "moral and material support."³² The only response was a perfunctory Kampuchean message of congratulation on the 1976 anniversary of the

"The lack of evidence for China's allegation of Soviet base building indicates the Vietnamese have resisted any pressure Moscow may have applied . . . "

in Sino-Vietnamese relations in this period led to some tensions with the Soviet Union. Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong appeared to snub the Soviets during an October 1976 reception offered by the Soviet embassy in Hanoi on the 59th anniversary of the Russian revolution. There were also reports that Soviet officials spoke privately of "fraternal differences" with the Vietnamese about this time.²⁹ By late 1977, however, Vietnam pulled back from these tentative efforts to put distance between itself and the Soviet Union. At the October 1977 Moscow celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Russian revolution, Vietnam adopted a high profile, in contrast to its coolness of the preceding year. Hanoi also publicized a number of meetings in the latter months of 1977 between top Vietnamese and Soviet military leaders.

The latest tilt toward the Soviet Union reflected Vietnam's discouragement at the lack of progress in normalization talks with the U.S. and the lukewarm response to its policy of opening to the West. It also reflected Hanoi's concern that China was moving quickly to isolate Vietnam, signalled by Kampuchean party head Pol Pot's big October reception in Peking and Chinese attempts to promote good relations between Thailand and Kampuchea.³⁰ In May, after it became clear that China intended to halt all economic aid, and with no sign of progress toward ending the U.S.-imposed trade embargo, Vietnam joined the Soviet-East European trade bloc COMECON, which also includes Mongolia and Cuba. This move was taken by China as further proof of Vietnamese subservience to the Soviet Union. It was seized on by the official Chinese press to justify the Chinese aid cut, although sharp reductions indicating an impending full termination began before the COMECON decision. The Soviets and East European governments have since sent aid teams to Vietnam to determine which former Chinese projects will be continued with their assistance.

SOVIET RELATIONS WITH KAMPUCHEA

Relations between the Kampuchean communists and the Soviet Union have been bad since at least 1967, when the Soviet ambassador in Phnom Penh reportedly refused to loan the CPK \$160 to start a newspaper and denounced the CPK as ultra-leftist for attacking Sihanouk.³¹ Soviet recognition of the Lon Nol government only worsened matters. When the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh in April 1975, they expelled the Soviet embassy staff, along with all but a handful of other foreigners. Yet for some time after this action, in a belated effort to woo Kampuchea away from China, the Soviet

October revolution. Kampuchea boycotted the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1976.³³

ENTER THE U.S.

The U.S. role in the current China-Kampuchea-Vietnam situation hinges on the interlock between U.S. policy toward China and Indochina. Long before the final defeat of the U.S. in Indochina in 1975, a sweeping reassessment of this interlock was underway in American policy-making circles concerned with Asia. In the 1950s and early 1960s a primary motive for U.S. intervention in Vietnam had been the highly questionable but firmly held conviction that Chinese communism was determined to expand throughout Asia, directly threatening American security. By the early 1970s, many of the same cold warriors who had held this view, escalating U.S. intervention in Vietnam, even supporting "preventative" nuclear attack on China, were beginning to advocate a U.S. alliance with China against the Soviet Union. A major catalyst for this turnaround was the recognition of the seriousness of the split between the Soviet Union and China. Leading the conversion were Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and top U.S. military leaders in the Pacific, who saw an opportunity to exploit the growing Sino-Soviet rift. By playing the Chinese against the Soviets, they hoped to gain greater leverage in U.S. relations with both. They also hoped to drive a wedge between both the Soviet Union and China, on the one hand, and Vietnam on the other. Vietnam was now seen as posing its own, independent threat to U.S. power and prestige. When the U.S.-China thaw began in earnest in 1972, the competing socialist powers each allowed Nixon to visit their capitals even though the U.S. was simultaneously escalating the war in Vietnam. This U.S. effort to strip away Vietnam's support ultimately failed.³⁴ However, the opening to China presented an obvious alternative for continued U.S. pressure on Vietnam, since there were ample indications that China would regard suspiciously a victorious and reunified Vietnam, allied with the Soviet Union. That alternative, fraught with bitter irony, was U.S. support for China against Vietnam.

SILENT PARTNERS

From the start, Kampuchea played a prominent role in the calculations. The December 1975 *Reader's Digest* contained a remarkable article on the first signs of the emerging

Kampuchea-Vietnam conflict and its implications for the major powers. Written by right-wing columnist Joseph Alsop and entitled "Showdown Over Southeast Asia," this article deserves serious attention, because it revealed three years ago the outlines of a startling new U.S. policy in Asia which is only now becoming visible.³⁵ The *Reader's Digest* has a circulation of over 30 million and is often used by U.S. government opinion-makers to popularize a new high-level foreign policy consensus. Alsop's

make this prediction come true by worsening the tensions between Vietnam and China. By imposing a full trade embargo, refusing to discuss reconstruction aid or normalization of relations, and repeatedly vetoing Vietnam's bid for a U.N. seat, Kissinger left Vietnam without an alternative to greater dependence on the Soviet Union. This in turn increased Chinese distrust of Vietnam, making cooperation with the U.S. more attractive and urgent in the eyes of China's leaders.

"By the early 1970's, many of the same cold warriors who had supported 'preventative' nuclear attack on China were advocating a U.S. alliance with China."

writing represents the views of the coldwar conservative lobby which has long been preoccupied with Asia, a group symbolized by Nixon. His information on the new developments in Indochina evidently was provided by U.S. intelligence sources.

Alsop reported that serious fighting between Kampuchea and Vietnam had already taken place in mid-1975. He saw this as proof that Vietnam planned an imperialistic campaign to control all of Indochina and Thailand. More significantly, Alsop reported that Mao and other Chinese leaders agreed in this assessment of Vietnamese ambitions and saw such a "North Vietnamese military empire" as a major threat to China because of Vietnam's increasingly close ties with the Soviet Union. Alsop reported that in June and July 1975 a special meeting of the entire Chinese military leadership had been devoted to the issue. A substantial flow of technicians, military advisors, and military equipment began immediately to Kampuchea, although Alsop thought that these were only temporary, stop-gap measures. "I would guess that the Chinese will go on temporizing for a while, using military aid and diplomacy to keep Hanoi's expansion within bounds," Alsop wrote, "but I would also guess that these half-measures will fail over time. In that case, the Chinese will eventually have to make the fearful choice between preventative military measures in Southeast Asia—with all the risks of Soviet intervention—and acceptance of paralyzing encirclement by Soviet power to the north and North Vietnamese power to the south." Resurrecting the discredited domino theory, Alsop warned that unless China was able to stop the Vietnamese, the rest of Southeast Asia would be threatened "and the whole hard-won American position in the Western Pacific will begin to founder." It was with this dire prediction that he delivered the real message of his article: "As the Soviets are effectively allied to the North Vietnamese, so we, in an odd way, are at least the silent partners of the Chinese."

There were clear signs at the time of Alsop's writing that such a silent partnership was in fact developing. On May 3, 1975, three days after the final defeat of the U.S.-backed Saigon regime, Henry Kissinger was interviewed by television correspondent Barbara Walters. Kissinger remarked that China "now has 40 million Vietnamese on its frontiers who do not exactly suffer from a lack of confidence in themselves." He predicted this would lead China to redouble its efforts to normalize relations with the United States, and made it clear that this was an important U.S. policy objective.³⁶

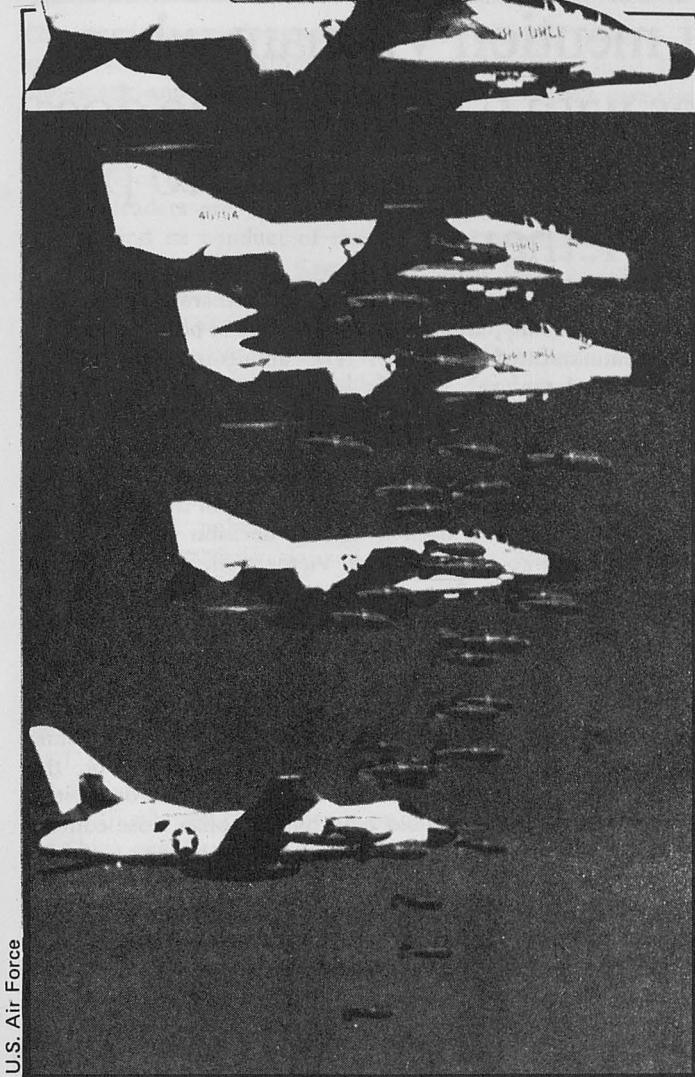
Kissinger's postwar policy toward Vietnam was designed to

Kissinger's statements were among the many indications of an accelerated movement toward alliance between the U.S. and China but Alsop's article is remarkable because there seems to have been no other acknowledgement that this alliance might eventually involve de facto U.S. support for Kampuchea in a war with Vietnam. Alsop's sympathetic portrayal of Kampuchea's plight appeared just months after President Ford, in a senseless display of American muscle designed to shore up flagging domestic morale, unleashed the U.S. Marines on Kampuchean forces in the Mayaguez incident, calling the Kampuchean communists "international pirates." Alsop, no supporter of drastic revolutionary measures, even defended the CPK's decision to evacuate immediately all of Kampuchea's cities, a move which was being widely condemned by U.S. politicians and the press. The only explanation is that Alsop was preparing the public for the mind-boggling prospect of de facto U.S. support, via China, for communist Kampuchea against communist Vietnam. Alsop, at least, was aware of the implications. "If all this seems bewildering," he wrote, "it is because a wholly new political game—begun soon after the fall of Saigon—is under way in Asia . . . we have now entered a quite novel, considerably more dangerous phase of world politics."

Three years have passed, a new administration is in office, and many of Alsop's predictions short of charges of Vietnamese expansionism, have been proven correct. The question then arises: is the U.S. today acting as China's "silent partner" in the dispute between Kampuchea and Vietnam? A look at the line-up of political forces in this country provides the basis for a strong educated guess that it is. Powerful elements in the Congress and the Carter administration are pushing for the alliance with China worked out by Kissinger and Nixon. A less influential grouping of politicians, dubious of the rapid tilt toward China, is pushing for U.S. relations with Vietnam. As it now stands, the group wanting to play the "China card" apparently has Carter's ear.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

The Carter administration has continued to move toward full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, a process begun under Nixon with the signing of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué. In the fall of 1977, Carter sent Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to China, but the talks actually seemed to set relations back. The pace picked up again in 1978. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, a much stronger



Only six years ago: U.S. Indochina policy.

advocate of close China ties than Vance, went to China in May. He reportedly listened with approval to China's version of the Vietnam-Kampuchea fighting. Brzezinski, to whom Carter seems to have given full control over U.S. Asia policy, told Chinese leaders at a banquet, "we recognize—and share—China's resolve to resist the efforts of any nation which seeks to establish global or regional hegemony." Nayan Chanda, the most seasoned and astute Indochina correspondent reporting today, noted that Brzezinski's reference to "regional hegemony" was aimed at Vietnam.³⁷ Strongly anti-Soviet Senator Henry Jackson, who visited China in February, urged rapid steps to normalize relations so that "strategic cooperation" could be promoted.³⁸ Carter himself, trying not to appear too eager, said on April 11 that he hoped "over a period of months—we're not in a big hurry, neither are the People's Republic of China leaders—we will completely realize the hopes expressed in the Shanghai Communique."³⁹

In July, a Congressional delegation headed by Rep. Lester L. Wolff, another advocate of close China ties, returned from China with word that China was willing for the first time to negotiate directly with Taiwan. This indicated that one of the major stumbling blocks to normalization might be removed.

Wolff was careful to add that the delegation had sensed the "sobering effects of the very real strategic and political problems facing China" in the form of the Soviet Union and "what the Chinese call the Soviet Union's 'Asian Cuba', Vietnam."⁴⁰ Meanwhile, White House leaks indicated that preparations are under way to send an ambassador to Peking by the end of 1979. The military implications are clear, since Carter has already approved the sale to China of U.S. technology with military applications, and has given the go-ahead to Western Europe to sell China actual weapons systems.⁴¹

U.S.-VIETNAM RELATIONS

Another group, representing liberal foreign policy views, challenged the administration's tilt toward China, advocating stepped-up efforts to establish U.S. ties with Vietnam as a balance to Chinese and Soviet influence throughout Southeast Asia. Although Carter had promised to pursue early normalization with Vietnam and talks were held between American and Vietnamese officials in 1977, the U.S. showed little flexibility and there was no real progress. The major government figures pushing for closer Vietnam ties include Senators George McGovern, James Abourezk, and Mark Hatfield, Representatives G. V. Montgomery, Jonathan Bingham, Ron Dellums, Tom Harkin, Elizabeth Holtzman, George Danielson, and George Miller. Before his death at the end of 1977, Hubert Humphrey was also a leading advocate of rapid Vietnam normalization. In August, Rep. Montgomery led an eight-member delegation to Hanoi which came back with MIA remains and a unanimous recommendation for early normalization.⁴² Members of Congress for Peace Through Law, a bipartisan body of 174 senators and representatives which opposed the U.S. war in Vietnam, released a policy paper in August which favored rapid



Rep. Lester Wolf [D-N.Y.] is a leading Congressional advocate of U.S.-China normalization.



"Kennedy does not mention Vietnam when he calls for relations with China. But he does mention China when he switches hats to promote relations with Vietnam."

normalization with Vietnam and expressed disapproval of Brzezinski's single-minded pursuit of a China link.

Senator Edward Kennedy has positioned himself quite carefully in the debate. While advocating an early normalization with Vietnam, he has also been active in the drive for normalization with China. Kennedy launched an unofficial trial balloon on Carter's formula for China normalization in an August 1977 speech.⁴³ Kennedy has indicated that he wants China ties so that the U.S. will have more leverage on the Soviet Union. U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union and China should aim at "cooperating where possible, but competing where necessary," Kennedy wrote last August. "Our objective should be to maintain closer and stronger relations with each country than they can have with each other."⁴⁴

Kennedy does not mention Vietnam when he calls for relations with China. He does mention China when he switches hats to promote relations with Vietnam, however. Apparently he hopes that U.S. relations with Vietnam will give the U.S. leverage on China and the Soviet Union, since both powers are deeply involved with Vietnam. In August, the same month that Kennedy offered his "divide and rule" formula for U.S.-China relations, he told the Senate Judiciary Committee it would be "a tragic lost opportunity" if the U.S. failed to normalize relations with Vietnam. "Indeed, we have arrived at an historic decision point in our foreign policy toward Southeast Asia—where we now have an opportunity to do through peaceful means what we sought to do for so long through war; to protect United States national interests in Southeast Asia by assuring Vietnam's independence from the domination of any outside power."⁴⁵

The only administration figure to identify himself clearly with this position is Andrew Young. In 1976, just before the Senate confirmed his appointment as UN ambassador, Young said, "I think it is in the United States' interest to have a strong Vietnam. Vietnam as an independent entity in Southeast Asia with some strength is one of the things that curtails the expansion of the People's Republic of China."⁴⁶

There are some indications that Richard Holbrooke, the State Department official who led the U.S. delegations in talks with the Vietnamese in 1977, favors a simultaneous normalization of relations with Vietnam and China. But neither he nor any other administration official has said so in public and no one, including Andrew Young, has repeated Young's strong 1976 pro-Vietnam position since that time.

The Vietnamese have made a number of gestures recently indicating their desire to normalize relations with the U.S. as soon as possible. They have issued numerous invitations to American business representatives to visit Vietnam, returned more MIA remains, and given permission for U.S. dependents to leave Vietnam. Most significantly, in August Vietnam dropped its demand for the reconstruction aid promised in the 1973 Paris peace agreement.

The State Department responded to Vietnam's dropping of aid demands coolly, arguing that the change in position had not been communicated "officially." The "ambiguity" in Vietnam's position on the aid issue is a "godsend" to the Carter administration, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, which says that the administration "appears to be deliberately avoiding talks with the Vietnamese, given the problems it already has with Congress and in normalizing relations with the Chinese."⁴⁷ The State Department backed Carter's decision to extend the executive embargo on trade with Vietnam when it expired on September 14, 1978. State Department officials acknowledged that fear of angering China had played a role in the decision.⁴⁸ Another indication of the State Department's position came in July, when U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Charles S. Whitehouse, who advocated normalization with Vietnam, was relieved of his post. His replacement, Morton Abromowitz, is a Pentagon China specialist. A Thai newspaper editorial commenting on the appointment noted that Carter was hoping Abromowitz's Chinese language skills would help him establish close contact with the Chinese ambassador to Thailand. "As his past activities indicate," the editorial explained, "Abromowitz is one hope of the United States in its effort to cooperate with China to block Soviet and Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia . . ."⁴⁹

THE CHOICE FACING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION

Clearly the future of U.S. relations with Vietnam is closely linked with the future of U.S. China policy. Hypothetically, Carter and his advisors have five options on the relative timing of normalization with Vietnam and China. They are to normalize with (1) both countries at about the same time; (2) China first, followed by Vietnam, a few months, perhaps a year, later; (3) China only, delaying action on Vietnam indefinitely; (4) Vietnam first, China a few months later; and (5) Vietnam only, putting off China indefinitely. The last two options can safely be ruled out, given the strong indications that normalization with China is the Administration's priority. Option four would probably be viewed by China as an insult, causing Peking to suspect Carter's intentions and pull back. The third option, putting Vietnam relations off indefinitely, might come about if Carter fails to act decisively to overcome Congressional hostility. Yet the recent signs of Vietnamese willingness to drop demands to which the U.S. had objected, together with the sizeable minority opinion in Washington favoring Vietnam ties, suggests that U.S.-Vietnam relations will be established within the next two years.

This leaves the first two options: roughly simultaneous steps toward normalization of relations with both Vietnam and China, or faster action on China, with Vietnam ties to follow.

Simultaneous normalization, or at least a serious U.S. effort to carry it out, would seem to indicate U.S. impartiality in the

China and Kampuchea versus Vietnam fighting. However, it would actually constitute a tilt toward Vietnam, since U.S. diplomatic and trade activity would weaken China's case that Vietnam is a Soviet puppet. Recognizing this vulnerability, the U.S. might pressure China, as part of the normalization bargain, to reduce or end support for Kampuchea. The recent signs that China's leaders are upset with the Pol Pot regime's domestic policies and its conduct of the war with Vietnam suggest that this might be possible. Kampuchea might then be forced to agree to a negotiated settlement, since it would be difficult to sustain military activity without Chinese support. The strains on Vietnam's economic reconstruction would be reduced, and this, together with U.S. trade, would help to speed up development. Because it would prefer to see Vietnam weakened as far as possible short of full dependence on the Soviet Union, China would probably resist this approach, favoring instead U.S.-Vietnam relations only after U.S.-China normalization.⁵⁰ In terms of U.S. public and Congressional response, however, simultaneous normalization might be the easiest path for the administration to follow.

Implementation of the second option, in which U.S. ties with Vietnam would not be established until months, perhaps more than a year, after China normalization, would for two reasons signal the strongest possible U.S. tilt toward China. As in the first option, it would strengthen China's budding alliance with the U.S., giving China increased leverage in its global rivalry with the Soviets. Secondly, this approach would put Vietnam in a very difficult situation, since it would signal tacit U.S. support for China and Kampuchea in their conflicts with Vietnam. With no strong incentive to reconsider its support for Kampuchea, China would likely continue it; since to do otherwise would damage its credibility as an ally. With no let-up in the fighting and the prospect of the continued economic drain necessary to maintain military mobilization, the Vietnamese could be forced

sent to Kampuchea to "knock this government out of power." McGovern based his suggestion on the charges that the Kampuchean government was committing what he called "systematic slaughter of people by their own country."

McGovern's intervention suggestion was quickly rejected by the committee, as he no doubt anticipated, but his statement could eventually cause Jimmy Carter discomfort when he takes the first concrete steps toward full diplomatic ties with China, Kampuchea's only major ally. It is likely that McGovern chose to speak when he did partly for this reason. As the most consistent official advocate of improved relations with Vietnam ever since the U.S. pullout, McGovern now has some moral leverage on Carter, who himself described the Kampuchean regime last April as "the worst violator of human rights in the world today."⁵¹

On August 24, a report entitled "Vietnam and China: An American Diplomatic Opportunity" by Members of Congress for Peace Through Law (MCPL) was printed in the Congressional Record. The report warned that allowing the "China card" global strategy to shape American diplomatic relations with Vietnam would endanger peace and stability in Southeast Asia. It argued that U.S. relations with Vietnam should proceed apace with U.S.-China relations, to provide Vietnam with the alternative it needs to maintain independence from both the Soviet Union and China. Taking aim at Brzezinski, the report asked: "Are we letting the Chinese determine our policy for us? Are we recognizing a Chinese 'sphere of influence' in the region? The United States does not now appear to appreciate either the dangers or the opportunities. The issue is not whether the U.S. should normalize relations with Peking. Rather, the issue is whether by rushing into China's arms the U.S. will forfeit its potential for influence on the mainland of Southeast Asia and give its de facto approval to Chinese policies which destabilize the old Indochina area. The unfortunate irony may



"Senator George McGovern now calls for an 'international force to knock the Kampuchean government out of power.'"

into greater reliance on Soviet support. But this would lessen Vietnam's hard-won political and economic independence, and would only worsen the tensions with China. Thus, U.S. relations, when and if they were established, might do little to improve the situation. By its very weakness in the face of great power manipulation, the inspiration to other Third World countries of Vietnam's earlier victory over the U.S. might be lessened, much to the satisfaction of Peking and powerful forces in Washington. Given the power represented by Brzezinski, Jackson, most of the Asia desks in the State Department, and Carter himself, in favor of playing the "China card," there is likely to be over the next year an attempt to implement the second option, favoring China over and against Vietnam.

This is not to say that the decision will go uncontested by the advocates of more equitable Vietnam relations. In fact, the fireworks may already have begun. On August 21, 1978, George McGovern, a firm advocate of Vietnam relations, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he thought the U.S. government should call for an international military force to be

be that the very Soviet influence which the 'China card' global strategy is designed to ward off will be increased in Southeast Asia by the shortsighted play of the card, vis-a-vis our relations with Vietnam." The MCPL membership, which represents one-third of the Congress, will be ready for a fight when Carter and his advisors take their first move.

THE U.S. AND THE FUTURE OF INDOCHINA

The U.S. may be able to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the Vietnam-Kampuchea conflict, and lessen Vietnam-China tensions, if it proceeds simultaneously and even-handedly toward normalization of relations with both China and Vietnam. This could be accomplished by seeking assurances from both governments that they will disengage from Kampuchea as a precondition of normalization. This, of course, would not put an end to the deep differences between the Vietnamese and Kampuchean leaders. The U.S. government is in no position to do so, especially after its recent aggression against

both countries, aggression which deserves a major share of the blame for pitting the revolutionary movements there against one another in the first place. It could, however, assist in removing the element of regional confrontation between major powers which has fueled the conflict.

For those who opposed U.S. intervention in Indochina and defended the rights of the three Indochina countries to non-interference and independence, this is the only principled position, and is one which can potentially influence the policy of the Carter administration.

It is likely that the Vietnamese would pull back into a strictly defensive posture if they had a U.S. guarantee that China was no longer supporting and encouraging the Kampuchean. This would leave Kampuchea to deal with its own internal problems. Such Vietnamese inaction would leave the Kampuchean regime without the threat of an outside enemy on which to focus widespread popular dissatisfaction and grievances. Judging by the nearly universal condemnation of the Pol Pot regime's internal policies, condemnation evidently now joined even by China's top leadership, the regime would then face a simple choice: change its policies, or be destroyed by its own people.

For the U.S. to choose a normalization strategy favoring China over Vietnam could lead to heightened tensions between Vietnam and China, continued bloody confrontations between Vietnam and Kampuchea, and a growing and dangerous Sino-Soviet face-off in Southeast Asia. It appears that Brezhinski and other presidential advisors may actually prefer this scenario. The turmoil it would set off would not be easy to control, however, even from their point of view. In the long run, everyone would lose. □

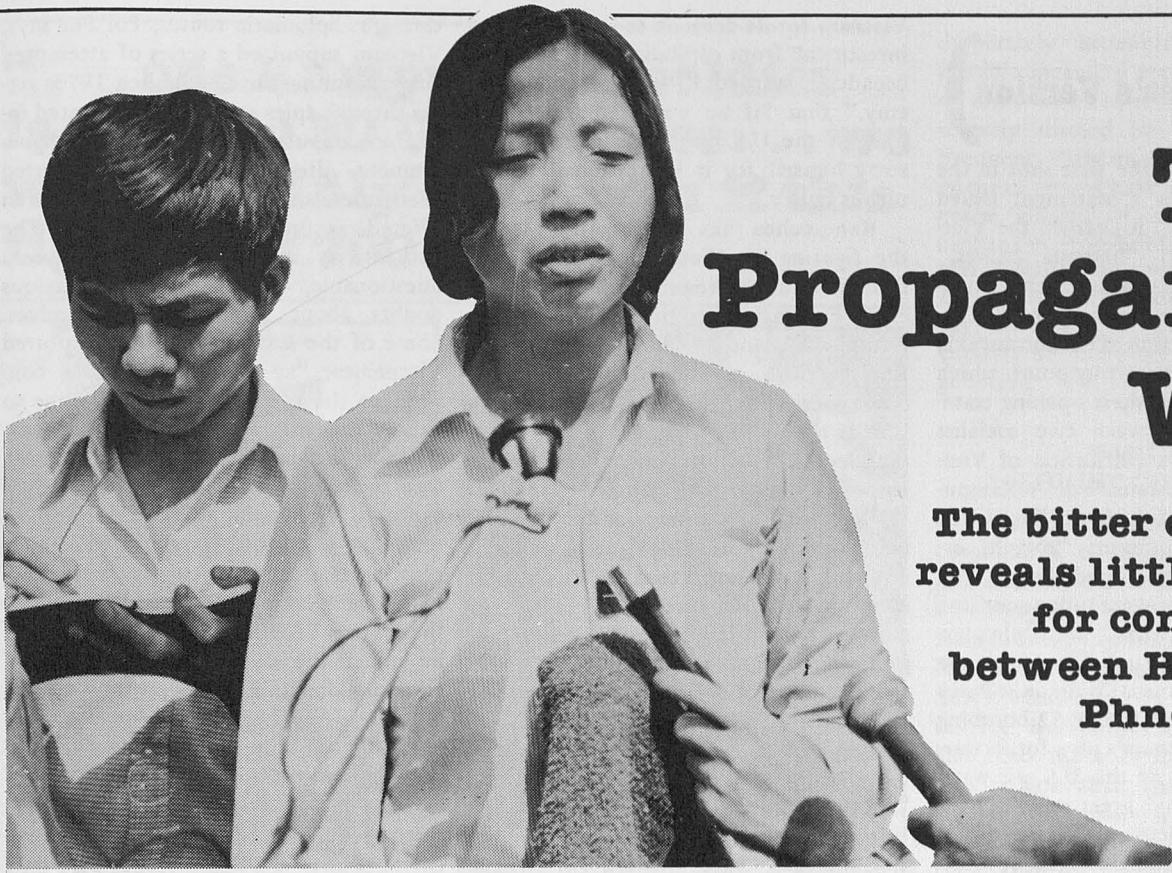


NOTES

1. *Peking Review*, June 23, 1978, p. 26.
2. *San Francisco Examiner*, September 7, 1978, p. 18.
3. David Bonavia, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 9, 1978, p. 10.
4. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 7, 1978, p. 8.
5. For discussions of the early 1960s disagreements over nuclear weapons and peaceful coexistence vs. armed struggle, see Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), pp. 307-27; and Donald Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle* (New York: Pegasus, 1967), pp. 109-10.

6. Donald Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle*, p. 109.
7. Ibid., p. 43.
8. Ibid., p. 50. 9. Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, pp. 346-47.
10. Edwin W. Martin, *Southeast Asia and China: The End of Containment* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), p. 2.
11. Joseph Alsop, "Showdown Over Southeast Asia?", *Reader's Digest*, December 1975, p. 138.
12. Usha Mahajani, "Sino-Soviet Conflict and Rivalry in Southeast Asia in the Post-Vietnam Phase," *London Yearbook of World Affairs*, 1978, p. 169.
13. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 25, 1977, pp. 18-20.
14. Ibid.
15. *Paris Le Point*, December 26, 1977, p. 25.
16. *Militant* (New York), July 21, 1978.
17. Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 118.
18. Stephen R. Heder, "The Historical Bases of the Kampuchea-Vietnam Conflict," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, forthcoming.
19. Roger M. Smith, op. cit., p. 117.
20. Ibid., p. 121.
21. Timothy Michael Carney, *Communist Party Power in Kampuchea (Cambodia): Documents and Discussion*, Data Paper No. 106 (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, January 1977), p. 14. See also "Underdevelopment in Cambodia," *Indochina Chronicle*, No. 51-52, September-November 1976.
22. Usha Mahajani, op. cit., p. 167.
23. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 8, 1978, pp. 11-12.
24. *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1978; excerpted from *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*.
25. Usha Mahajani, op. cit., pp. 158-59.
26. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 13, 1975, p. 25.
27. Usha Mahajani, "Sino-American Rapprochement and the New Configurations in Southeast Asia," *London Yearbook of World Affairs* 1975, p. 114.
28. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 25, 1977, pp. 18-20.
29. Ibid.
30. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 11, 1977.
31. Interview with Kampuchean Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary, *The Call* (Chicago), August 28, 1978, p. 9.
32. Usha Mahajani, loc. cit.
33. Usha Mahajani, "Sino-Soviet Conflict and Rivalry in South-east Asia," p. 167.
34. Banning Garrett, *Indochina Chronicle*, No. 45, December 1975.
35. The significance of the Alsop article was first recognized by Usha Mahajani, op. cit.
36. *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1975.
37. Nayan Chanda, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 7, 1978, p. 9.
38. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 26, 1978.
39. *New York Times*, April 27, 1978.
40. *Baltimore Sun*, July 20, 1978.
41. Banning Garrett, *International Bulletin*, July 31, 1978.
42. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 28, 1978.
43. *Asia Mail*, April 1978.
44. *Asia Mail*, August 1978.
45. "Report of the Study Mission to Vietnam," *Congressional Record*, August 22, 1978.
46. *Washington Post*, December 19, 1976, p. A-20.
47. *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 1978.
48. *Christian Science Monitor*, August 29, 1978.
49. Bangkok *Ban Muang*, August 3, 1978; cited in *FBIS Daily Reports*, APA, August 3, 1978, pp. J-1, 2.
50. *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 1978.
51. *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1978.





The Propaganda War

The bitter exchange reveals little ground for compromise between Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

(Above): Mrs. Nguyen Thi Cu tells a press conference of the Sept. 1978 Kampuchean raid on their village, four miles from the border in Vietnam's Tay Ninh province. She says she and her nephew were the only survivors of the attack which left 463 people massacred.

(Below): A January 1978 press conference in Ho Chi Minh City. (photos: VNA)

BY LOWELL FINLEY

Most Western news reports of the conflict between Kampuchea and Vietnam have focussed mainly on foreign diplomatic and intelligence observations. Listening directly to what the combatants themselves have to say provides some keys to understanding the conflict, keys that are often neglected by outsiders. There is no shortage of material; since the conflict was first aired, at the beginning of the year, an increasingly all-out war of propaganda has filled the airwaves of the official radio stations in both Vietnam and Kampuchea. Both governments have distributed their own versions of the story at the United Nations and to the international press. They have produced films, white papers, photographs, confessions of captured soldiers, and eyewitness accounts of peasants and visiting foreign delegations.

(con't)

(Kampuchea's Version)

Kampuchea fired the first shot in the propaganda war. In a statement issued December 31, 1977, it charged the Vietnamese army with "heinous crimes," worse than the mercenaries of the Thieu-Ky government, comparing Vietnam's actions to Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939.¹ From this starting point, which must rank as the harshest opening statement in a feud between two socialist states, Kampuchea's vilification of Vietnam has steadily intensified. A Kampuchean broadcast on July 31, 1978, labeled the Vietnamese communists "rotten, corrupt, shameless beggars" and charged that northern party cadre were ruling southern Vietnam as "oppressors" and "plunderers." It also made the unbelievable charge that corrupt Vietnamese Communist Party members had guided U.S. B-52 bombing attacks against Vietnam's own forces during the eight years of the U.S. air war.² Other broadcasts and press releases have condemned the Vietnamese as revisionists, placing "Socialist Republic of Vietnam" in quotation marks. Denouncing

Vietnam for its decision to accept aid and investment from capitalist countries, one broadcast warned "the Vietnamese enemy," that "if he wants to follow the road of the U.S. imperialists he will destroy himself for it is a deadend, adventurous policy."³

Kampuchea has consistently blamed the fighting on Vietnamese attempts to force it into a Vietnam-dominated "Indochina Federation" comprised of Vietnam, Kampuchea, and neighboring Laos. The Kampuchean government has, on infrequent occasions, also explained the conflict as the result of Vietnam's attempt to plunder Kampuchean grain stocks to meet its post-war food crisis.

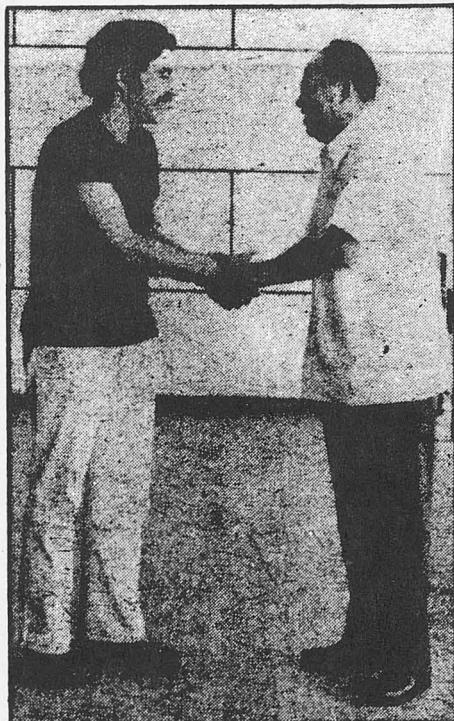
Kampuchean Communist Party Secretary Pol Pot, the leading figure in the government, has charged that the Vietnamese communists, ever since the founding of their party in 1930, coveted a federation joining the three countries into "one party, one people, one army and one country." He claims that since 1975 Vietnam has hidden these ambitions under the guise of advocating a "special friendship" and "special solidarity," formalized through treaties governing all aspects of each nation's affairs. Such treaties, Pol Pot believes, would destroy Kampuchean autonomy. He has charged that the Vietnamese drive for domination of Kampuchea, and Vietnam's relative shortage of arable land, has even led it to make plans for moving millions of Vietnam settlers onto Kampuchean soil, assuring Vietnam's control by having Vietnamese residents outnumber Kampuchean.⁴

Because it failed to secure these aims

through diplomatic routes, Pol Pot says, Vietnam supported a series of attempted coups beginning in September, 1975, acting through spies and agents infiltrated into the Kampuchean army, party, and government. Alleged confessions of captured Vietnamese soldiers and agents have been offered as proof of these claims. The authenticity of the confessions is very questionable, however, raising serious doubts about the charges themselves. Some of the statements of the captured Vietnamese "agents," for example, conform to the official Kampuchean line so closely that they appear to have been written for the prisoners by their captors. One confession read over the radio by a captured Vietnamese soldier purported to recall the words of his training officer explaining Vietnam's strategy: "If we can take over Kampuchea, we will become the owners of Indochina. Indochina must be under the domination of the Indochinese Communist Party, with Vietnam as its leader. After we take over Kampuchea, we will be renowned in the areas of state administration, economy, [and] influence in Southeast Asia, which we will further dominate. Vietnam Radio's broadcasts about peaceful negotiations are only a political trick."⁵

OMINOUS POPULAR APPEALS

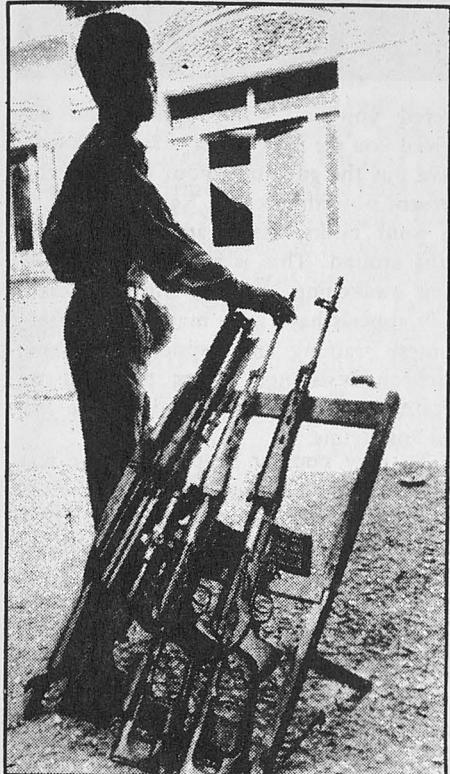
The Kampuchean people have received a steady stream of exhortations to vigilance, continued sacrifice, and absolute obedience to the Party's directives in the effort to ward off Vietnamese conquest. The exhortations have dwelt on popular fears of national extinction, the memory



The only U.S. journalist allowed to visit Kampuchea since 1975 represented the U.S. Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). Dan Burstein, Editor of the CP-ML's newspaper *The Call*, toured the country in April 1978. He met with Kampuchean leader Ieng Sary (above) and held a press conference upon his return to the U.S. (right). (photos: *The Call*)



“. . . one Kampuchean soldier is equal to 30 Vietnamese . . . we will certainly win, even if this fight lasts 700 years.”



Kampuchean troops display Vietnamese weapons captured during Sept. 1977 fighting. (photos: *The Call*)

of the fallen Khmer empire, and the successful struggle against the U.S. Racial hatred towards all Vietnamese has been emphasized and encouraged. In an astonishing and ominous exercise in cold mathematic calculation, a May, 1978, government broadcast reviewing the 1977-1978 “defense effort” appeared to call for an all-out war of annihilation against the Vietnamese people. “In terms of numbers,” the broadcast said, “one of us had to kill 30 Vietnamese . . . So far, we have succeeded in implementing this slogan of 1 against 30 . . . Using these figures, 1 Kampuchean soldier is equal to 30 Vietnamese soldiers. Then how many Vietnamese are equal to 10 Kampuchean soldiers? The answer must be 300. And 100 Kampucheans are equal to 3,000 Vietnamese; and 1 million Kampucheans are equal to 30 million Vietnamese. If we have 2 million troops, there should be 60 million Vietnamese. For this reason, 2 million troops should be more than

enough to fight the Vietnamese, because Vietnam has only 50 million inhabitants. We do not need 8 million people. We need only 2 million troops to crush the 50 million Vietnamese; and we still would have 6 million people left. We must formulate our combat line in this manner in order to achieve victory . . . If we can use one against 30, we will certainly win, even if this fight lasts 700 years or more.”⁶ It should be noted that the Khmer empire was at its peak of power 700 years ago, reigning over most of the southern part of present-day Vietnam and Thailand. More seriously, the assertion that the 30 to 1 kill ratio had been maintained through May is completely implausible if it is meant to apply only to military engagements. If the Kampuchean leaders are actually claiming that their forces have outfought the much larger, more experienced Vietnamese military on a 30 to 1 ratio, it indicates that they are either seriously out of touch with reality or

desperately attempting through every possible means to maintain the morale of an army which by most accounts had been severely mauled by Vietnamese forces. Frequent Vietnamese charges that Kampuchean troops have systematically killed entire villages of unarmed Vietnamese civilians in cross-border raids, if true, suggest a second interpretation. If such killings are in fact part of Kampuchean strategy, the slogan of “1 against 30” may accurately be interpreted as a literal call for genocide.⁷

CHARGES OF SOVIET COLLUSION

In addition to accusing the Vietnamese communists of harboring ambitions to dominate their country, and relying heavily on popular anti-Vietnamese sentiment, Kampuchean communist leaders also charge that Vietnam is colluding with the Soviet Union in a global expansion scheme. Kampuchea’s views on this subject echo those of China, Kampuchea’s only major ally. Kampuchean Foreign Minister Ieng Sary has used the claim, with little success, in seeking support from skeptical capitalist regimes in the rest of Southeast Asia and non-aligned nations around the world. He has claimed that by fighting Vietnam, Kampuchea is defending the interests of all non-aligned governments against designs for world domination by the Soviet Union and the United States.⁸ Here again, the scant “evidence” offered by Kampuchea to support these claims is questionable. For example, Kampuchea’s charge that Vietnamese troops are assisted by Soviet field advisors has been universally scoffed at by foreign diplomats and military observers, who point out that Soviet advisors were never used in the field during the long war against the much more powerful U.S. military forces.

(Vietnam’s Version)

Vietnam’s version of the conflict differs sharply from Kampuchea’s, but the basic charges are on similar themes. Reversing Kampuchean accusations, the Vietnamese point to past Kampuchean designs on Vietnamese territory. Vietnam has also played up internal contradictions and weaknesses in the Kampuchean Communist Party to explain Kampuchea’s provo-

cation of a war Vietnam claims it did not want. Photos of massacred Vietnamese villagers, captured documents and alleged confessions of Kampuchean soldiers have been offered as evidence that Kampuchea covets the Mekong Delta land it lost to Vietnam prior to and during French colonial rule. A Vietnamese correspondent reported finding leaflets dropped by Kampuchean troops during the December, 1977, fighting in Vietnam's Tay Ninh province, which read: "You should bear in mind that this is Kampuchea's land. Kampuchea's border extends as far as Saigon."⁹

For the most part, however, Vietnam, like Kampuchea, has maintained that the basis of the conflict is not a simple dispute over borders or territory. Vietnamese accounts have blamed the fighting on the Kampuchean leaders' desperate need to divert domestic and international attention from serious internal problems caused by the Kampuchean regime's extreme repressive policies against its own people.

INTERNAL STRIFE AND DAILY PURGES

Countless articles and editorials have appeared in the western press charging the Kampuchean regime with extreme human rights violations, often comparing post-1975 Kampuchea to the Nazi holocaust. Condemnations of the regime by various U.S. political figures including President Jimmy Carter and Senator George McGovern have been widely reported, yet the press has made almost no mention of the frequent official Vietnamese statements echoing these same themes.¹⁰ This omission is surprising, since Vietnam has argued that Kampuchea's internal conditions are a key to understanding the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries. "The internal strife and daily purges and cases of savage bloodshed in Kampuchea are being exposed one after another," read a Vietnamese magazine article broadcast in Khmer by Radio Hanoi in May. This broadcast was monitored by the U.S. government, passed on to the press — and ignored. "Many Kampuchean have died because of the utterly savage barbarism of those executing the orders of the present powerholders in Phnom Penh," the article said. It went on to summarize the drastic changes which had been ordered by the Kampuchean authorities: the forced evacuation of cities, abolition of personal property and money, dismantlement of the school sys-

"Those who have plundered and massacred you are none other than those who have put the guns into your hands—the present powerholders in Kampuchea!"

tem, suppression of the family and religion, and mistreatment of foreign nationals. The Vietnamese article noted that "all of this has been exposed daily in the international press." The fear that their own people might rise up and rebel against these drastic policies, the article concluded, led Kampuchean leaders to foment an external conflict as a diversion that would focus the people's attention outward — on Vietnam. "In pursuing the policy of fanning national hatred and enmity against Vietnam, it is clear as daylight that the Kampuchean authorities are attempting to divert the attention of the Kampuchean people from the actual problems that have to be solved at home and to confuse world opinion with regard to the utterly ferocious regime in Kampuchea."¹¹

This article, like many other official statements, insists that it is the "unswerving policy" of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam never to interfere in the internal affairs of any country. In April, however, along with reports on Kampuchean internal conditions, the Vietnamese began to call for the Kampuchean people, especially the army, to overthrow the Pol Pot regime. Apparently this was prompted by Kampuchea's refusal of a Vietnamese proposal in February for a negotiated, internationally supervised settlement of the dispute. The escalation of Chinese military aid to the Kampuchean regime in March further hardened Hanoi's attitudes. A Radio Hanoi "Station Talk" on April 3 addressed to "Beloved Kampuchean Soldiers" was a clear call for rebellion: "You have been told that Vietnam has attacked and pillaged Kampuchea because Vietnam is plagued by famine. For goodness sake! If you look at the life of the people in your homeland you will realize who is responsible for the killing, pillage, confusion and complete change in the normal way of life in your homeland.

"Those who have plundered and mas-

sacred you and your families and deceived you are none other than those who have put the guns into your hands — the present powerholders in Kampuchea! . . . In your ranks, many are turning their guns around. This is a manifestation of their awakening."¹² Since this broadcast, such appeals have been matched by Vietnamese training and support for Kampuchean resistance forces prepared to return to their country and oppose the Pol Pot regime.

To rally popular support for the war effort against Kampuchea, the Vietnamese government has reported frequently on atrocities committed by Kampuchean soldiers against Vietnamese civilians living in border areas. It has not resorted to the overtly racist appeals made by Kampuchean leaders, and has instead consistently expressed the desire for the return of friendship and solidarity between the two peoples. Vietnamese radio stations frequently broadcast Vietnam's version of the conflict in Khmer to convince Kampuchean that their government's policy is wrong. Kampuchean stations, by contrast, broadcast only in Khmer.

Vietnam's leaders deny the charge that they are trying to force Kampuchea into an "Indochina Federation," and have offered a detailed history of the federation idea, which they say was abandoned years ago. Vietnam's only aim, they insist, has been a friendly relationship based on mutual benefit and the agreement of both countries to renounce aggression, interference, and force in their dealings with each other. Vietnam points out that it has not used the term "Indochina Federation" since 1954, and charges that Kampuchea has used this "historical matter" only to "arouse national hatred and enmity." If it is really the Indochina Federation question that stands in the way of better relations, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry pointedly asks, then why should the Kampuchean

not agree to treaties proposed by Vietnam that would guarantee their independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, laying to rest the disputes over border demarcation and fears of annexation.¹³

SIDESTEPPING A DIFFICULT PAST

The Vietnamese have offered a somewhat rose-colored version of the often strained relations between the Vietnamese and Kampuchean communist parties in the past. Vietnamese accounts paint a picture of relations that remained "wonderfully pure" until "the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary opportunist elements" returned from Paris in the early 1950s and eventually took control of the Kampuchean revolutionary movement.¹⁴ Independent histories of the relationship between the two parties show, however, that the Vietnamese party's ties to the Kampuchean revolutionary movement were never as strong or "pure" as they were with the communist movement in neighboring Laos. Pol Pot came on the scene just before the 1954 Geneva Agreement, but the agreement led to disaffection among many veteran Kampuchean communists, not just returning students. Kampuchean communists saw terms accepted by the Vietnamese communists for the political future of Kampuchea as threatening the survival of their movement.¹⁵ Vietnam tends to gloss over this difficult history including serious differences over strategy in the 1960s. This makes it easier for Vietnam to portray as totally irrational the current Kampuchean regime's apparent ingratitude toward Vietnam's wartime assistance, and its vehement opposition to any cooperation with Vietnam today.

The specifics of Kampuchean objections to current cooperation proposals favored by Vietnam, make the logic of Kampuchean sensitivity and resistance at least plausible. For example, Vietnam has scored Kampuchea for having a "closed-door foreign policy, enhancing narrow nationalism and rejecting international cooperation."¹⁶ More specifically, Kampuchea is criticized for refusing to take part in the proposed Mekong Development Project, a huge system of hydroelectric and flood control dams involving Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, and Vietnam. Thailand and Vietnam would be the major beneficiaries of the project, while ecological alteration, and population displacement would take place in Kampu-



This Kampuchean schoolteacher recounts for Vietnamese and western journalists her Jan. 1978 escape to Vietnam after her father, a rickshaw driver, was killed by the Kampuchean regime. (photo: VNA)

chea. Even in Thailand the plan has been opposed by peasants who argue that their livelihood would be destroyed when dams designed to produce electricity for far-away Bangkok flooded their fields and communities.

Kampuchea is resistant to the plan, developed by the UN with heavy U.S. and French backing, on grounds of fundamental political principle. The large inputs of foreign investment and aid required to build the system, the dependence of Thailand and Vietnam on installations deep inside Kampuchea country, and the substantial alteration of farming techniques and social organization the project would dictate would deeply compromise Kampuchea's frequently declared efforts to achieve economic and political self-reliance at any cost.¹⁷ The Kampuchean government's reluctance to join Vietnam in the Mekong Project along with negative experiences in other cooperation attempts may explain the origins of its exaggerated charges that Vietnam is plotting to force it into a formal federation.

"WE KNOW WHO THE HUNTER IS"

Kampuchea has not been the only target of Vietnam's verbal attacks. First in veiled references which by mid-year

gave way to open, strongly worded statements, Vietnam has charged that the Kampuchean regime provoked the conflict at the urging of the People's Republic of China. As early as January, only weeks after the conflict had come out into the open, a high Vietnamese official told a visiting American television journalist, "the situation is a trap, but we know who the hunter is."¹⁸ In late February, Vietnam began making direct references to the role of China as Kampuchea's main backer.

It was only much later, when the dispute with China over treatment of ethnic Chinese residents in Vietnam had become serious, that Vietnam explicitly charged Kampuchea was serving China's foreign policy aims. Vietnamese Party officials claim that the real root of Chinese charges that Vietnam has persecuted its ethnic Chinese (Hoa) population is China's "dark schemes" of expansion and its fears that the Kampuchean regime, its ally in these plans, might be overthrown. "The Chinese have deliberately cooked up the story of Vietnam's so-called ostracism, discrimination, persecution and expulsion of Hoa people . . .," said one Vietnamese official. "This is a calculated move aimed at causing difficulties to socialist construction in Vietnam, sabotaging the long-standing friendship between the peoples of Vietnam and China and directly breathing life into the reactionary Kampuchean henchmen."¹⁹ If China's real concern was the welfare of overseas Chinese, the Vietnamese wondered aloud, why didn't they protest Kampuchea's harsh treatment of its own Chinese residents? Rather, the Vietnamese argue, the Chinese are using the issue out of concern for the weakening Pol Pot regime. The Vietnamese charge collusion between the Chinese and Kampuchean dating back to the 1960s.

"In the 1960s Pol Pot found his way to Peking," reads a July 15 *Nhan Dan* editorial, "to meet with the Chinese leaders at a time when the 'Cultural Revolution' was raging in China. And since 'birds of a feather flock together,' collusion and betrayal began then. The Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique became a reserve pawn of the Chinese leaders' strategy of expansion down to Southeast Asia."²⁰

Propaganda is a tool of persuasion. In time of war, it is a weapon equal in importance to guns and ammunition, especially when victory relies in part on the

judgment of "world opinion" or major outside powers. The result is that statements made by each side in the dispute often oversimplify complicated situations, exaggerate charges against the enemy, and avoid facts which contradict claims to absolute righteousness. But while such propaganda does not reveal many hard facts, it does convey important attitudes. Kampuchea and Vietnam are no exception. What emerges from their propaganda is a strong sense that there is little common ground for compromise and settlement between the current leaders in Hanoi and Phnom Penh. The harsh invectives which have been hurled back and forth and the serious threats each has made against the other have been matched by actions on the battlefield. Meanwhile, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States are maneuvering in the background. And once again, it appears that the outcome of a war in Indochina hangs in the balance. —L.F.

NOTES

1. "Statement Issued by the Government of Democratic Kampuchea for the Attention of All Friends, Near or Far, in the Five Continents and of the World Opinion," December 31, 1977, p. 3, p. 8.

2. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*; Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, August 3, 1978, p. H-5.

3. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, January 3, 1978, p. H-2.

4. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, April 13, 1978, pp. H-1, 2. See also "Statement" cited in footnote 1.

5. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, May 4, 1978, p. H-3.

6. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, May 12, 1978, pp. H-2,3.

7. In a similarly unlikely statement January 6, Kampuchea claimed to have "put out of action 29,200 enemies, killed or wounded" between September 1977 and January 1978. *Voice of Democratic Kampuchea* broadcast, January 6, 1978, transcript supplied by the Peking embassy of Democratic Kampuchea.

8. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, May 17, 1978, p. H-4.

9. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, February 13, 1978, p. K-6. Former Head of State Sihanouk demanded the return of most of present-day south Vietnam, including Saigon, in 1948 and 1949. At the Geneva conference on Indochina in 1954, the Kampuchean foreign minister reserved the right to make future claims to the territory. Thus, the last official Kampuchean claims to Vietnamese territory

were made at about the same time as Hanoi's last official advocacy of an Indochina Federation. See Roger M. Smith, *Cambodia's Foreign Policy*, pp. 154-55.

10. George McArthur of the *Los Angeles Times* has been an exception. See his story of March 25, 1978.

11. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, May 11, 1978, pp. K-18, 19. See also *Kampuchea Dossier* (Hanoi: Vietnam Courier, 1978), pp. 15-16. Vietnamese propaganda portrayals of repression in Kampuchea must be viewed with some caution, however, since no protest was made until this late date when it served to strengthen international support for Vietnam in the fighting. Also, some of the evidence offered by Vietnam to back up the charges is questionable. *Nhan Dan* on July 15 published a set of photographs purporting to show brutal executions, forced labor, and other examples of CPK-inspired repression. These same photographs have been given wide circulation by the Western press over the past two years; there is strong evidence that the photographs were faked for anti-communist propaganda purposes in Thailand. Also, a recent Hanoi broadcast cited Robert Dole, Gerald Ford's 1976 running-mate, and right-wing *Reader's Digest* author Anthony Paul (*Murder of a Gentle Land*), as credible authorities on the situation in Kampuchea. See *FBIS*, July 31, 1978, p. K-8; also *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, No. 58-59, December 1977, for a critical analysis of the sources and the evidence that have been advanced to prove charges of mass executions and repression in Kampuchea, including the photographs and the Paul book mentioned above.

12. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, April 5, 1978, pp. K-1,2.

13. Foreign Ministry Document on Indochina Federation, cited in *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, April 7, 1978, p. K-22.

14. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, July 17, 1978, p. K-8.

15. See the article by Stephen R. Heder in this issue; also Heder, "The Historical Bases of the Kampuchea-Vietnam Conflict," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, forthcoming.

16. Foreign Ministry Document on Indochina Federation, loc. cit.

17. Apparently concerned that Vietnam was scoring points with its portrayals of Kampuchean isolationism in the fierce competition for support from Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries which are close observers of the dispute, Kampuchea announced July 5 its willingness to join the Mekong Project sometime in 1979. This surprising announcement could be only a diplomatic ploy, but it reverses the government's previous refusal even to discuss the project. See *Bangkok Post*, July 16, 1978. For a longer discussion of the project and earlier Kampuchean objections, see Lowell Finley, "The Hidden Stakes in Indochina," *In These Times*, May 3, 1978.

18. Personal communication from Jon Alpert, Downtown Community Television Center, New York.

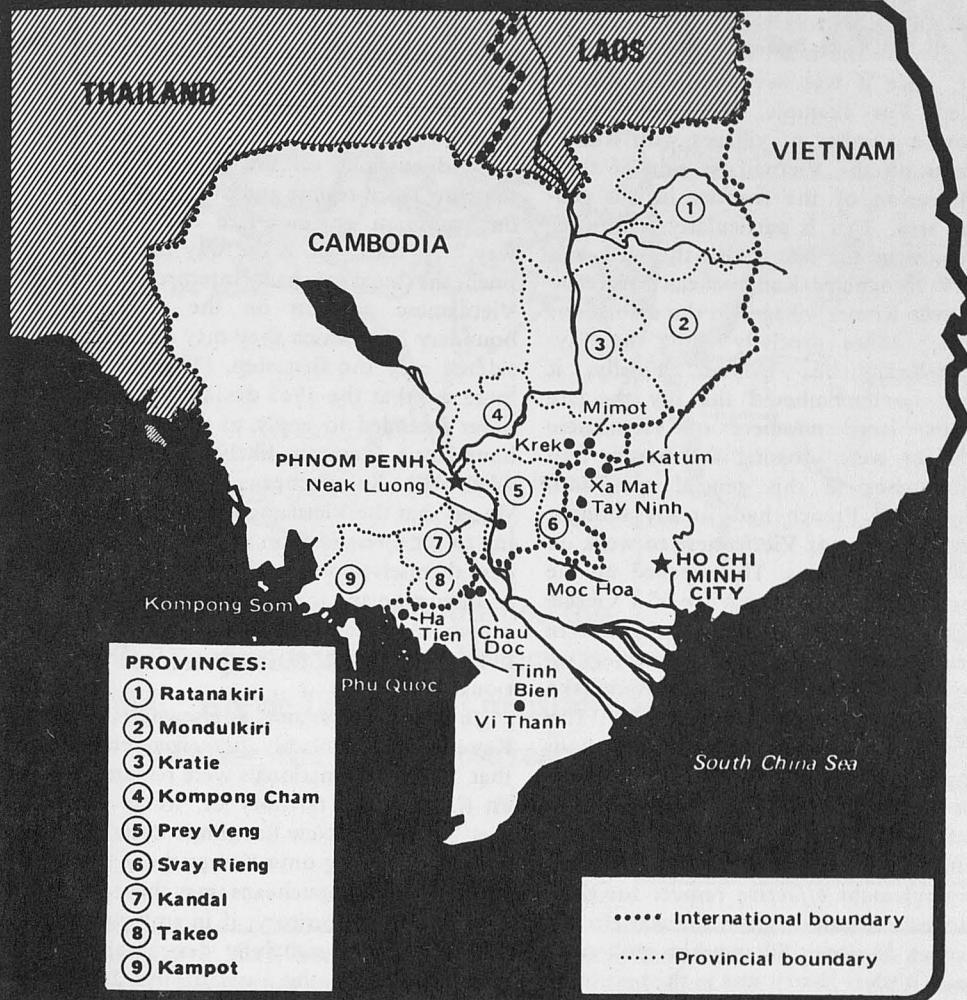
19. Speech by Mai Chi Tho, member of the Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee, at Ho Chi Minh City ceremony to send off troops to the Kampuchean border. *FBIS*: June 12, 1978, p. K-3.

20. *FBIS*: Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, July 17, 1978, p. K-3.

The war between Kampuchea and Vietnam has revealed such serious, long-standing disagreements between the two neighboring governments on so many fundamental issues that it can no longer accurately be described simply as a border conflict. It was, however, a series of disputes over the border which started the fighting. A look at how the modern boundary between the two countries was established and the history of earlier disputes over it helps to explain why.

The current problem has its roots in the original delineation of the border by French survey expeditions in the late 19th century, and in the early 20th century "readjustments" of this delineation. The border line thus established by the French and bequeathed to Kampuchea and Vietnam in 1954 was grossly disadvantageous to Kampuchea. There were two main reasons for the French territorial discrimination against Kampuchea: 1) Cochinchina (approximately the southern third of today's reunited Vietnam) was a full colony of France whereas Kampuchea was only a protectorate. Cochinchina was thus viewed by French colonists as literally French territory whereas Kampuchea still had a form of nominal independence. In order to ensure the fullest possible collection of taxes and greatest possible extent of arbitrary direct colonial rule, there was a tendency to push Cochinchina's borders north and west. 2) The commercial agricultural interests of the French colonists in Cochinchina were much stronger and much better organized than those in Kampuchea. Thus the Cochinchinese "lobby" in Indochinese and Parisian colonial offices was much stronger than that of Kampuchea. This lobby's desire to obtain the maximum possible area for commercial rice culture (especially in the area bordering Svay Rieng, i.e., the western border of Tay Ninh, the "Parrot's Beak" area, and rubber plantations (especially in the rich "red earth" zones bordering Kampong Cham, i.e., the northern borders of Tay Ninh), reinforced the tendency to annex Kampuchean territory to the colony of Cochinchina.

As a result of the French favoritism toward Cochinchina, their 19th century delineation already included within Cochinchina large areas that were ethnically Khmer and generally still administered by Khmer officials appointed by or



The Border Dispute on the Land

loyal to the court in Phnom Penh. The early 20th century border "readjustments" only made things worse, because they brought about further losses of territory by Kampuchea.

Outright fraud, contravention of internal French law, and negligence in fulfilling moral and legal obligations entailed in France's "protectorate" relationship with Kampuchea might be argued to render the original border delineations and subsequent readjustments null and void. However, since the beginning of the 1960s, it has been Kampuchea's consistent foreign policy position that it accepts the final French frontiers if its

neighbors, especially Vietnam, agree to their inviolability, immutability, and intangibility (i.e., that the borders can never again be "touched" by negotiations for further readjustments). In other words, Kampuchea has been willing to permanently shelve all protests against the unfair frontiers established by the French colonial regime in Indochina and permanently abandon all ethnic and historical claims on the "lost territories" if Vietnam is willing to agree never again to challenge the delineation of the French or to demand negotiations concerning this delineation.

This policy was designed to put a de-

finitive end to what were perceived as Vietnam's (and Thailand's) "traditional" salami tactics of making a series of ostensibly reasonable demands for minor readjustments that ultimately add up to major territorial losses. It was increasingly well articulated by Sihanouk and his foreign policy advisors throughout the 1960s. Kampuchea's insistence upon establishing the principle of the non-negotiability of its frontiers was tied to its apparently eternal geopolitical position of being sandwiched between more powerful and influential neighbors that seemed to have, no matter what their politics and international political affiliation, more assured international diplomatic support. They would thus always tend to have the edge in negotiations. Sihanouk's policy of freezing the frontiers established by the French and refusing to negotiate their delineation was thus seen as a response to a situation where negotiation only led to renegotiation and loss of territory.

This insistence upon non-negotiability, however, has always made it easy to present Kampuchea as an intransigent and even irrational nation. This appearance has been a problem for Kampuchea since the Sihanouk era, that is, long before the Communist victory in 1975. One Sihanouk era editorial in an official magazine explained it this way: "Most foreign governments consider that Cambodia is not very sane because she grants an importance which they lack to 'several little uninhabited islets,' to several acres of forest, and even to some old stones [Preah Vihear, a temple on the border with Thailand]. Why not abandon these to those who want them, or at least enter into discussions with them, for is this not the price, at minimal cost, of reestablishing good relations with neighbors? The Thais and the Vietnamese . . . never cease to avow their good intentions toward Cambodia, their desire to settle once and for all this frontier problem in a friendly spirit . . . The point at issue is not the value of the land claimed but much more. In Saigon as in Bangkok, [they] would only consider the most minimum satisfaction resulting from these claims as a sign that Cambodia is beginning to 'unbend' . . . The actual claims are 'modest and reasonable' . . . , but we know from experience that methods begun in this manner lead inevitably to the annexation of the areas, then the provinces, and eventually of all of the left bank of the Me-

continued

kong . . . The actual frontier itself is the Khmers' last line of resistance. To accept proposals to negotiate . . . would be a tacit acknowledgement of eventual defeat . . ."

It was from this self-consciously skeptical position that Sihanouk demanded that Kampuchea's neighbors and all countries that wanted to have diplomatic relations with Kampuchea make *unilateral* declarations of respect for and recognition of Kampuchea's "present frontiers." Thus although neighbors would recognize Kampuchea's present frontiers, Kampuchea would not recognize its neighbors' present frontiers. This had the effect of reserving to Kampuchea the right to resolve any ambiguity in the French delineation of the frontiers. These resolutions could be expected to be in Kampuchea's favor, but would necessarily be minor, since the French delineation in most areas was quite clear. In return for this concession, of course, Kampuchea felt that it was making a much greater one by renouncing its claims on "lost territories."

The American-backed governments in Saigon and Bangkok refused to make the kind of unilateral declaration demanded by Sihanouk. However, in the period between 1964 and 1967, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam gradually accepted the Sihanoukist position on Kampuchea's land frontiers. In May 1967, the Front issued a three point communique that met Sihanouk's conditions; in June, the DRV issued a similarly worded statement. As Sihanouk was quick to point out, Kampuchea took the declarations to mean that the Vietnamese had formally recognized the existing frontiers not only for the present but the future as well.

Moreover, the Vietnamese on several occasions came out with full support for Kampuchea's interpretation of sovereignty questions in specific cases where delineation and demarcation of the land border were ambiguous or unclear. As Sihanouk explained, the NFL recognized that villages in ambiguous zones claimed by the American-backed Saigon government were in Kampuchean territory if they had historically been under Kampuchean administration and were ethnically Khmer.

With all the above in mind, it is possible to look at the area where some of the heaviest fighting broke out in late

1977, the Tay Ninh-Svay Rieng frontier. This is an area where different maps disagree on the exact location of the border, since it was never properly demarcated. For example, U.S. Army maps show a number of villages with Khmer names on the Vietnamese side of their delineation of the frontier in this general area. This is particularly significant because in the late 1960s the NFL and DRV recognized Kampuchean sovereignty over Khmer villages in the ambiguous border zones precisely along the Tay-Ninh-Kampuchea frontier. Finally, it must be remembered that by the late 1960s, large numbers of Vietnamese refugees were crossing the border into Kampuchea in this general area, into which the French had already brought large numbers of Vietnamese to work on rubber plantations. This opened up the possibility of the emergence of a Vietnamese majority population in the eastern areas of Kampong Cham province, which are (because of the rubber plantations) a key part of Kampuchea's economy. This refugee movement, plus continuous uncontrolled migration of non-refugee Vietnamese into Kampuchean territory, was viewed by Sihanouk as an understandable failure on the part of the NFL to implement *effective* respect for Kampuchea's frontiers, given the war circumstances. However Sihanoukist spokesmen made it clear that it was in the best interest of Vietnamese-Kampuchean relations that the NFL strive to interrupt completely illegal immigration into Kampuchea.

Thus it seems that the situation in the area of the deepest Kampuchean incursion in the battles in late 1977 was a highly explosive one. The Kampuchean, perhaps with the perception that the Vietnamese had been dragging their feet on "effective implementation" of respect for the frontiers during the war years, had deported Vietnamese immigrants to their homeland at the end of the war. In the series of talks held between 1975 and 1977, the Kampuchean, basing themselves on the NFL and DRV communique from 1967, may have felt they continued to have the right to resolve (in their favor) ambiguities in the frontier. In the negotiations, the Kampuchean may have taken the position that the only topics of discussion ought to be Vietnamese recognition of their resolutions and strict Vietnamese implementation of ef-

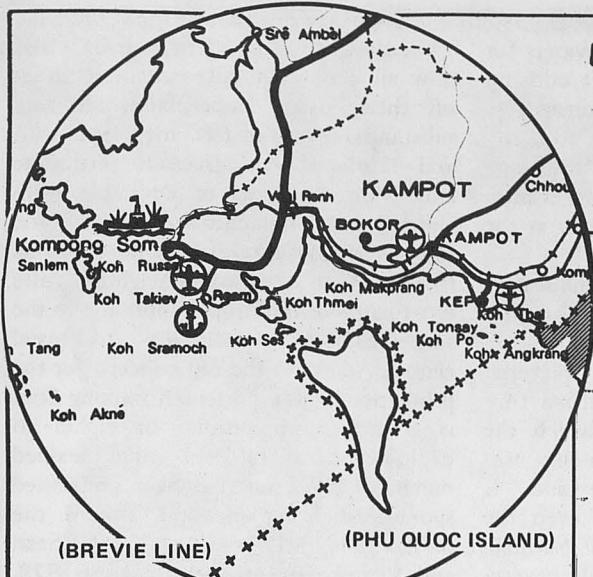
fective respect for the frontiers in the form of withdrawal from any remaining ambiguous zones claimed by Kampuchea and the prevention of migration into these zones. The Vietnamese may have taken a position closer to "let's hold joint discussions on the frontiers now that the Thieu regime and the Americans, our common enemies, are out of the way." At least, this is the way the Kampuchean seem to have interpreted the Vietnamese position on the maritime boundary line, which they may have considered only the first step. (The Vietnamese say that the 1967 declarations were never intended to apply to the maritime boundary.) It seems likely that it was when the Kampuchean became convinced that the Vietnamese were attempting to set up a situation in which the borders themselves were to be the real topic of discussion and that they would thus be subject to "readjustment," that the Kampuchean decided to break off negotiations.

In the Tay Ninh area, as elsewhere, the Kampuchean probably perceived either that Vietnamese nationals were remaining on Kampuchean territory or, worse yet, that Vietnamese New Economic Zone settlers were moving onto Kampuchean Territory. The Kampuchean may have believed that this territory, if in ambiguous zones, had been rightfully designated as Kampuchean on the basis of the 1967 communique. The Vietnamese may have seen such designations as arbitrary. If the situation that developed along the Thai-Kampuchean frontier is any example, after the Kampuchean became convinced that the Vietnamese were not negotiating in good faith, they ordered their troops to circulate in zones they considered their territory. The Vietnamese (and the Thai) see this as outright aggression and consider clashes with villagers simple massacres. In these diametrically opposed points of view lay the seeds of the full-scale conflict in which the two sides are now entangled. —S.R.H.

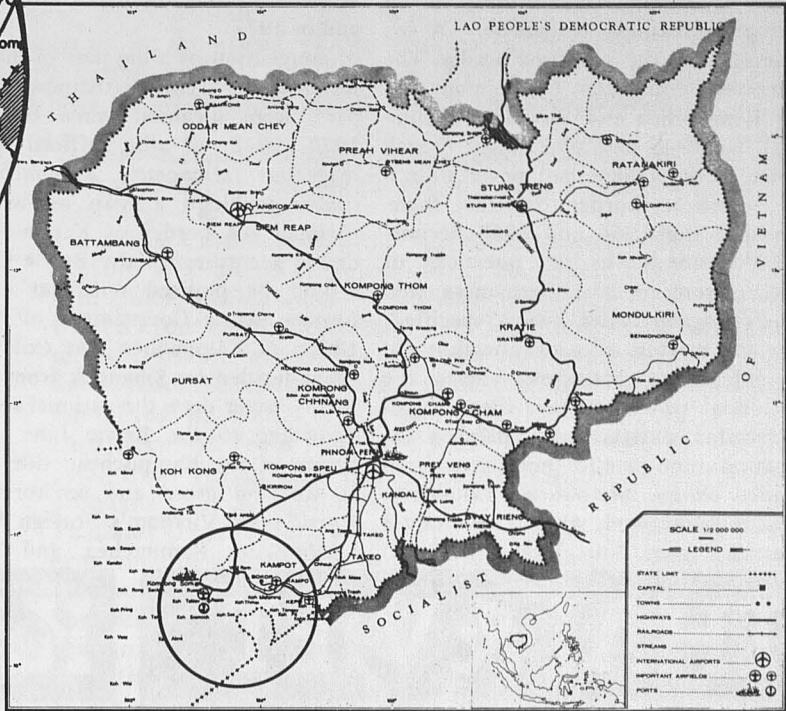


The Border Dispute on the Seas

Official Kampuchean map



When Kampuchea published this 1977 map indicating the French colonial "Brevie Line" as its maritime border, the Vietnamese reacted sharply.



On May 4, 1975, weeks after the CPK victory in Kampuchea and only days after the liberation of Saigon, Kampuchean forces invaded Vietnam's Phu Quoc and Tho Chu islands. Vietnamese forces drove the Kampucheans off the two islands, pursuing them as far as Kampuchea's Koh Way, the island from which the initial Kampuchean attack had been launched. According to a recent Vietnamese account of the episode, which the Kampucheans have not denied, Kampuchean Communist Party Secretary Pol Pot apologized for the initial Kampuchean attack at the time, explaining that the Kampuchean troops involved had simply been "ignorant of local geography." The Vietnamese later returned Koh Way to Kampuchean control, after a series of meetings with Kampuchean officials.

The apparent source of the disputes over these islands is their strategic location in the vicinity of the Kampuchean port of Sihanoukville. Sihanoukville, or Kompong Som, Kampuchea's only deep-water port, was constructed in the mid-1950s for the express purpose of

reducing Kampuchea's dependence on the port of Saigon. In 1956, the Diem government attempted to occupy a number of the islands near the new port, and in 1960 demanded that Kampuchea renounce claims to other nearby islands over which Phnom Penh had always exercised control. Kampuchean leaders saw these acts as confirmation of their suspicions that the south Vietnamese were intent upon keeping Kampuchea in a subordinate position by keeping it economically dependent upon Saigon. In the spring of 1960, Sihanouk said "the loss of the islands and the territorial waters surrounding them would lead to the stifling of the port of Sihanoukville . . . and very soon to the end of our independence."

The disagreement over ownership of the offshore islands stemmed from the failure of the French to establish a clear maritime border between Kampuchea and Vietnam before the two countries won independence. The only maritime boundary left by the French was the Brevie Line. Established by the French colonial

governor-general of Indochina in 1939 to resolve disagreements over offshore island administration and police jurisdiction, the Brevie Line begins on the coast where southern Vietnam (at that time Cochinchina) and Kampuchea meet, and angles off into the Gulf of Thailand. The line is broken at one point to skirt the edges of Phu Quoc, the largest of the islands, which Brevie awarded to the control of Cochinchina.

According to the Vietnamese, Kampuchea rejected the Brevie Line as a sea border in August 1966 negotiations with the Saigon government because Kampuchean leaders would not accept Vietnamese control of Phu Quoc. These early negotiations were suspended without agreement. When representatives of the communist parties of Kampuchea and Vietnam met two years ago, from May 4 to May 18, 1976, to resume discussions on the maritime border, Kampuchea gave up its claims to Phu Quoc and called for recognition by the two countries of the Brevie Line as a full maritime border. The Vietnamese agreed to use the Brevie Line

to determine sovereignty over islands, but not to accept it as a border on the sea itself. The Kampuchean saw this position as a violation of declarations that the DRV and NLF had made in 1966 and 1967 promising to respect Kampuchea's existing frontiers. These earlier declarations, the Kampuchean claimed, constituted a Vietnamese recognition of the Brevie Line as the maritime border. The Vietnamese countered by arguing that since Kampuchea and Vietnam (Cochinchina) had been part of a single French colonial entity, there had never been a legal maritime border between them. Therefore, the 1966 and 1967 declarations did not cover the questions of maritime frontiers. The Vietnamese cited Brevie's original order, which specified: "only the matters of administration and the police are considered here, the question of whose territory these islands are remains outstanding." Brevie's demarcation line could not have been intended as an international boundary, Vietnam maintained, since it was only 3 kilometers from Phu Quoc Island, and

French law of the time required a 5.556 kilometer margin of territorial waters for an international border. Still at odds on this question, the 1976 meetings were "temporarily" adjourned, never to be reconvened as fighting along the land borders intensified, leading to the eventual break in all diplomatic contact at the end of 1977.

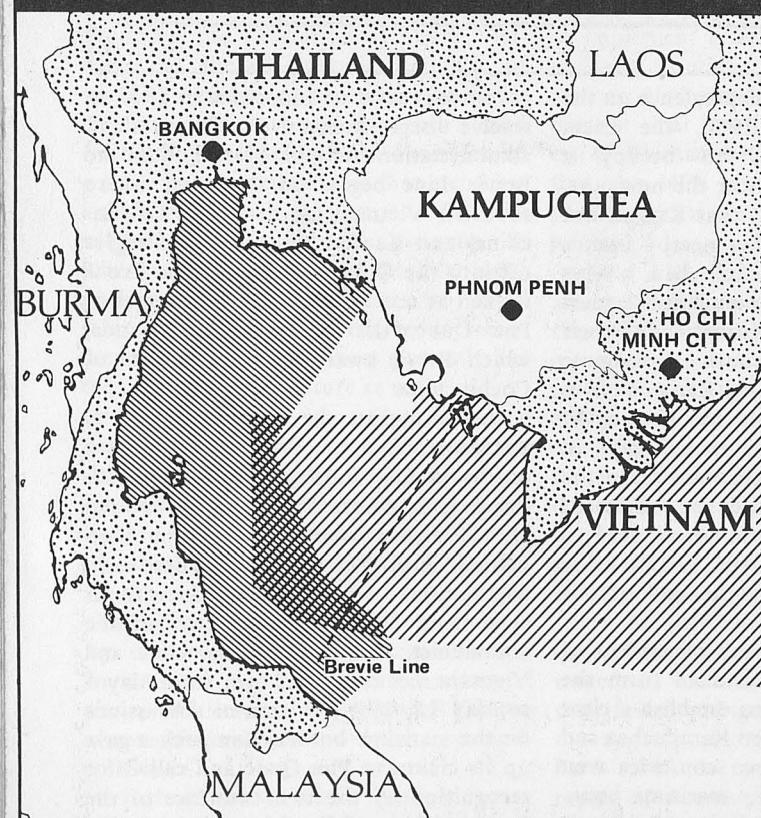
of annexation of a big part of the seas of Kampuchea." The Vietnamese, for their part, were incensed when the August 1977 issue of the official pictorial magazine *Democratic Kampuchea Advances* included a map on which the national sea border of Kampuchea was drawn according to the Brevie Line. "It should be pointed out that even the former Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea [the exile government headed by Sihanouk from 1970 to 1975] never drew the national sea border according to the Brevie Line ... This action of the Kampuchean side testified to its land greed and territorial ambitions," said Vietnam's Foreign Ministry.

Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Thailand

Kampuchea now charges that the talks broke down because Vietnam had "plans now all claim 200-mile economic zones off their coasts. These claims result in substantial overlaps (see map). Vietnam and Thailand have agreed to settle the issue "on the basis of equitable principles." In Kampuchea's case, however, the government's refusal to negotiate its frontiers with either of its neighbors rules out this more traditional approach to the settlement of conflicting territorial claims. Added to the old concern for the protection of the port of Kompong Som is a new competition for rights to exploitation of oil and other sea-bed minerals. The result has been continued sporadic fighting on and around the offshore islands between Kampuchean and Vietnamese forces throughout 1978. As in the fighting which erupted along the land border, the murky history of the sea border has produced a seemingly irreconcileable conflict unless one of the governments makes major concessions.

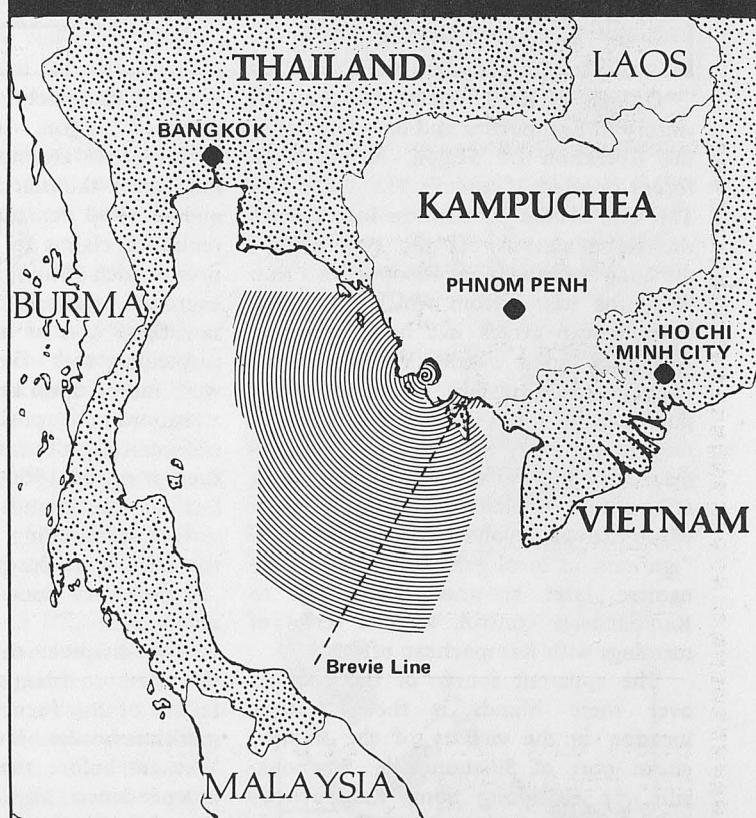
—L.F.

THAI & VIET

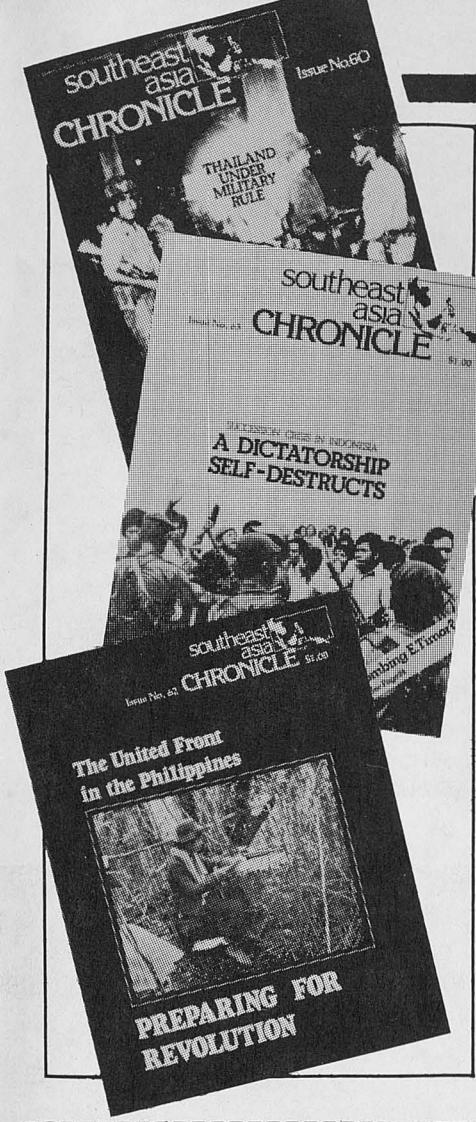


SEA CLAIMS

KAMPUCHEAN



SEA CLAIMS



Back Issues...

Six times a year, the Southeast Asia Chronicle provides a thorough background and documentation for the events making headlines in Southeast Asia. It is also an inexpensive resource for classroom use. *Bulk prices:* 10 or more 40% off. 100 or more, 50% off. *Single copies* are \$1.25 each, including postage.

Issue 64 **Vietnam-Kampuchea War** A complete historical study together with an analysis of the role the major powers are playing in the conflict. (Sept-Oct 1978)

Issue 63 **Succession Crisis in Indonesia** Cornell University's Ben Anderson explains why Suharto's power base is crumbling. **Also:** Resistance in E. Timor, and Indonesia's new Student Movement. (July-Aug 1978)

Issue 62 **United Front in the Philippines** Dr. Joel Rocamora examines the united resistance to martial law—and how the front achieved its unity. **Also:** the first publication of the Nat. Democratic Front's 10-Point Program. (May-June 1978)

Issue 61 **Laos Recovers From America's War** Church activists report in detail from Vientiane on Laos' tremendous economic and political problems. (March-April 1978)

Issue 60 **Thailand Under Military Rule** A close look at the Thai junta's programs, plus interviews with the new student guerillas who fled the junta's violence. **Also:** Thailand's place in current US strategy. (Jan-Feb 1978)

Issue 58-59 **Human Rights in Southeast Asia** A comprehensive look at Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and what is (and isn't) known about Kampuchea. (Dec 1977)

Issue 56-57 **Vietnam: Rebuilding the South** An eyewitness account by Center staff. **Also:** A first-hand report from the US-Vietnam normalization talks. (July 1977)

southeast
asia
CHRONICLE

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCE CENTER
P.O. Box 4000-D
BERKELEY, CA 94704
(415) 548-2546

Issue No. 64

Subscribe.

PLEASE ENTER MY SUBSCRIPTION

\$8 regular

\$6 low income

\$10 foreign

\$15 foreign airmail

\$12 libraries, institutions

NEW

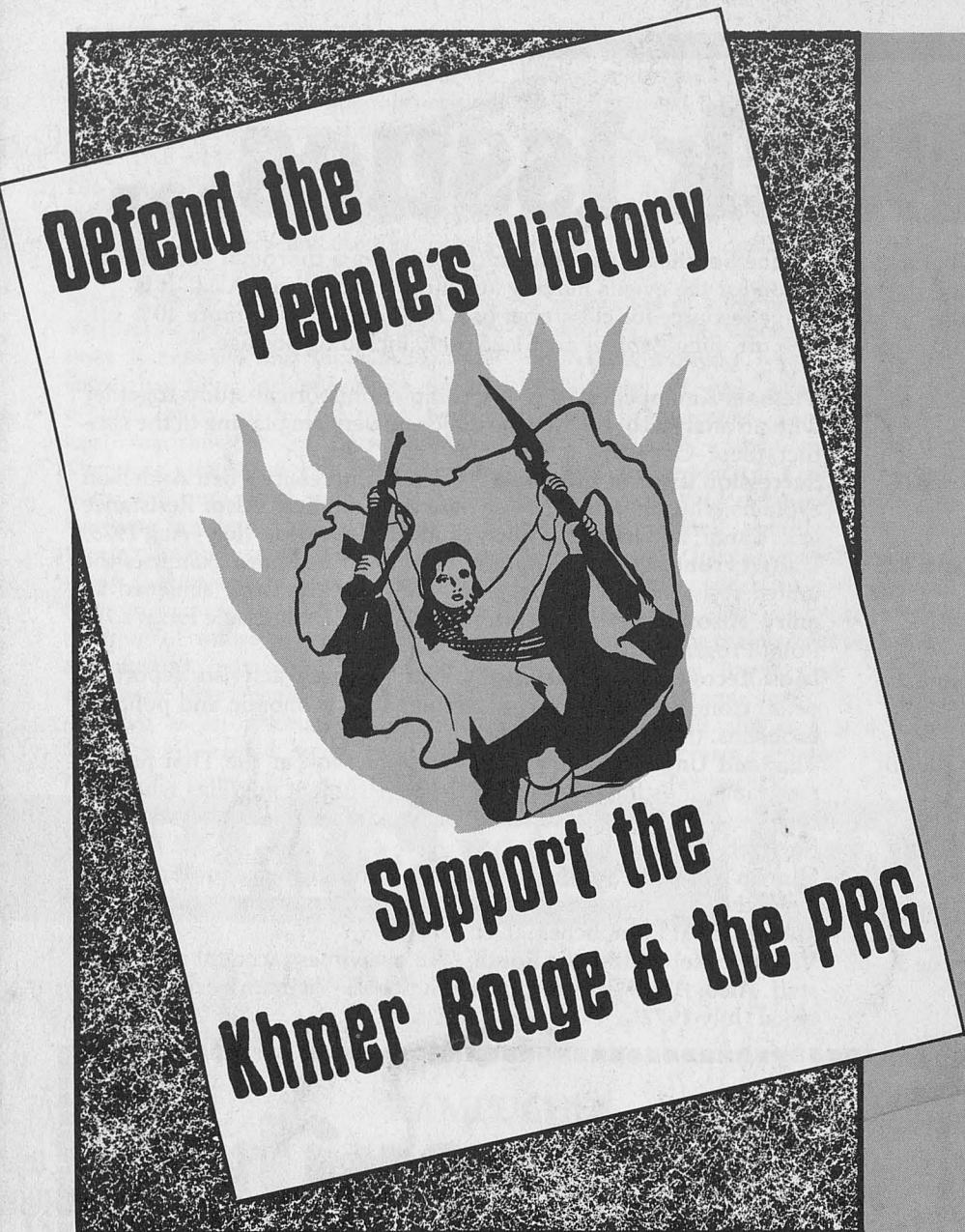
RENEWAL

Reprints of this Issue

Single Copy \$1.25 Ten or more .65/ea.

100 or more .50/ea.

PLEASE SEND A FREE CATALOG



By the time this American poster appeared in 1975, Kampuchea and Vietnam were fighting each other.

PO BOX 4000D Berkeley, Calif. 94704 (415) 548-2546

southeast
asia
resource
center



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BERKELEY, CA.
PERMIT NO. 1213

PRINTED MATTER

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Prof. John D. Donnell
Political Science Dept.
Temple University
Philadelphia PA 19122

68