

Beijing hosts superpower huddle on Cambodia

by Linda de Hoyos

During March 11-13, Beijing was the site of a hectic round of diplomacy concerning the Cambodian conflict, with the simultaneous, but supposedly uncoordinated, arrival in the Chinese capital of Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov; Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachov, Russia's point man on Indochina negotiations; U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern and Pacific Affairs Richard Solomon; and the leaders of the "resistance coalition"—Prince Norodom Ranariddh, KPNLF's Son Sann, and the Khmer Rouge's Khieu Samphan.

The frenetic pace of the bilateral meetings among all parties conjures up images of the Marx Brothers door-dodging scene in "Night at the Opera." Solomon met separately with Prince Sihanouk; Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Xu Dunxin, Beijing's chief negotiator on the Cambodia conflict (a reported three-hour meeting); with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqin; Soviet negotiator Igor Rogachov; and French Ambassador to Beijing Claude Martin.

Rogachov's Chinese interlocutors have not been named, but he is known to have conferred with Vietnamese Ambassador to Beijing Dan Nyem Hoan and French Ambassador Martin, at their request, according to TASS March 13. Joining the fracas, the Japanese Foreign Ministry announced March 12 that Tadashi Ikeda, adviser to the Japanese embassy in Bangkok, would soon arrive in Beijing to meet with the resistance coalition leaders.

The cause for the diplomatic scurrying is the fact that the agreement of the United Nations Permanent Five—the People's Republic of China, the United States, the Soviet Union, France, and Britain—on the Cambodian conflict, an-

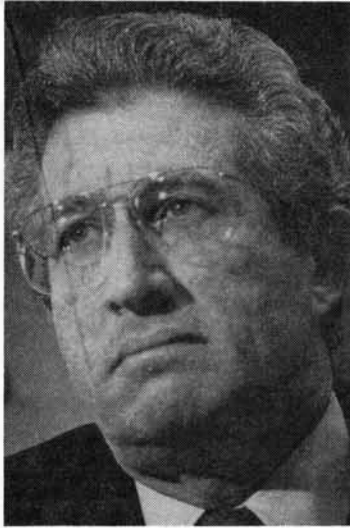
nounced in August 1990, has, as this news service warned, not advanced the "peace process" in Cambodia one step. The Permanent Five called for a U.N. administration to take over the affairs of Phnom Penh and for the Vietnamese-backed Phnom Penh government to self-dissolve, while the U.N. oversees a cease-fire agreement and the disarming of all parties in a process leading to national elections.

In October, as all parties were deciding who would sit where on the Supreme Council, the U.N.-designated new, titular government of Cambodia, the Phnom Penh government voiced its objections to its dissolution, saying that it would open the way for the Khmer Rouge's unhindered political and military penetration of the country.

Twenty-one years of war

The diplomatic impasse has hardened the Cambodia conflict, as the country this spring enters its 21st year of war, begun in 1970 when the Nixon administration pulled the plug on the Sihanouk government and launched its secret bombing.

In early February, *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported that Beijing was reopening arms shipments to the Khmer Rouge. Earlier reports had surfaced that China was supplying the Khmer guerrillas with tanks for the first time. The Chinese had claimed that they had not provided any military assistance to the Khmer Rouge since the August Permanent Five agreement. On March 1, Anatoli Ivanovich Valkov, Soviet ambassador to Thailand, announced in Bangkok that the Soviet Union would keep arming Phnom Penh. "A unilateral stopping of supplying of arms is not a solution," Valkov



Dramatis personae of the diplomatic deal in the works: The State Department's Richard Solomon; Son Sann of the KPNLF; Prince Norodom Sihanouk; and Khieu Samphan of the Khmer Rouge.

said. "We are for stopping the supply of arms but every side participating in the conflict must do the same."

On March 8, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Duan Jin finally made public Beijing's arming of the Khmer Rouge, reverting to the standard formula for such announcements: "The end of [military] assistance is a component of a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodian question."

Meanwhile, the official Vietnamese daily *Nhan Dan* warned on March 2 that the Khmer Rouge was using the Persian Gulf war as a veil to "intensify their sabotage activities in northwestern Cambodia." With the beginning of the dry season, the tempo of military actions is increasing. Phnom Penh forces reportedly retrieved a ruby-mining town on the Thai border from the Khmer Rouge in early March. On the other side, Khmer Rouge radio broadcasts claim that the Khmer Rouge carried out grenade attacks against the central market and Defense Ministry in Phnom Penh itself, and launched attacks in the suburb of Stoeng Meanchey, according to the March 11 *Bangkok Nation*.

That report, if verified, would indicate a high level of Khmer Rouge penetration in the country, as charged in November by Raoul Jennar, a consultant to the Belgian Senate who surveyed Cambodia in October under the auspices of the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations in Cambodia. In his report issued Nov. 6, 1990, Jennar wrote: "The Khmer Rouge have succeeded in reestablishing themselves deep into the country and can in future undertake the encircling and strangulation of cities as they did in November 1974 to April 1975, which resulted in the fall of Phnom Penh."

There are two axes of resistance penetration of the country, reported Jennar, one running from the camp of O'Trao on the northern border with Thailand, where Khmer Rouge leaders Ta Mok and Khieu Samphan are based, which runs

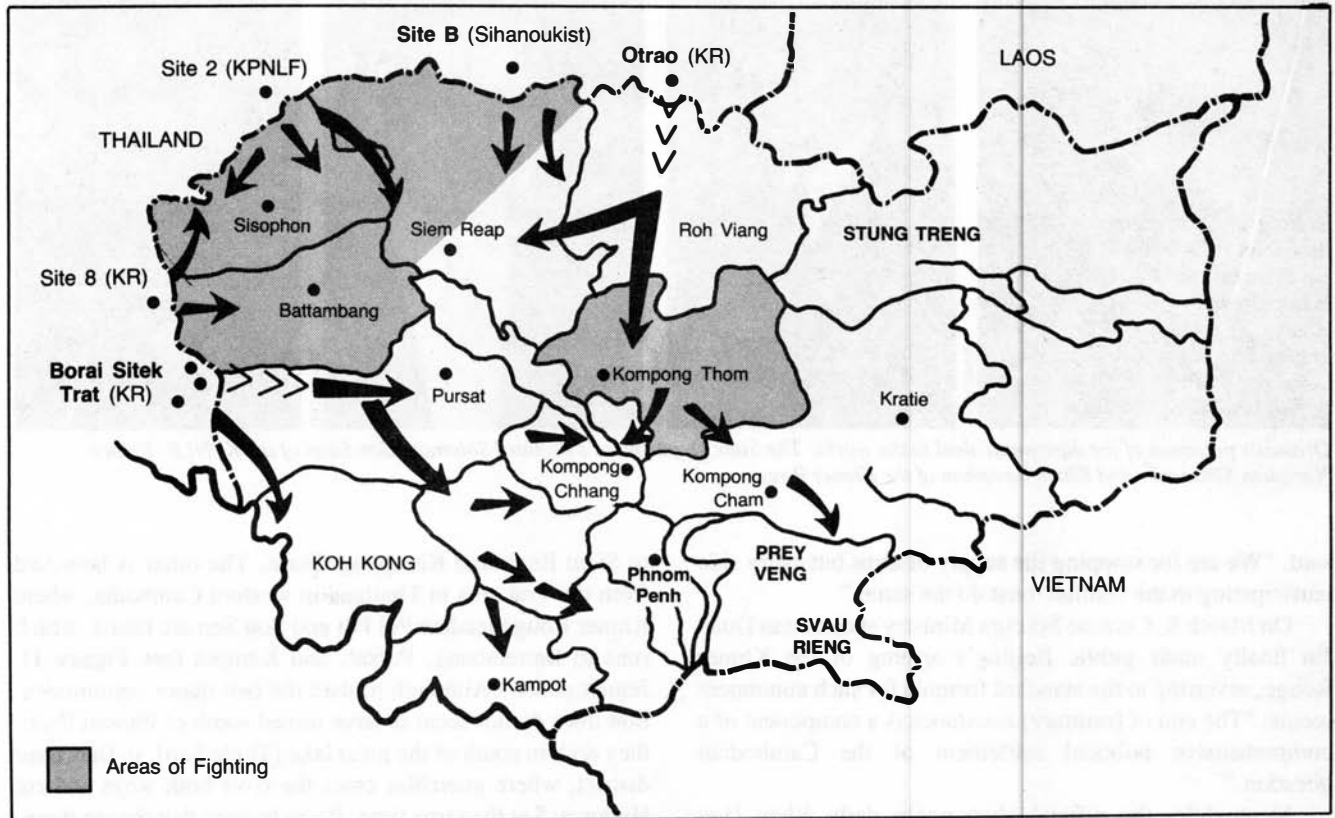
to Siem Reap and Kompong Cham. The other is launched from the Trat area in Thailand in western Cambodia, where Khmer Rouge leaders Pol Pot and Son Sen are based, which runs to Battambang, Pursat, and Kampot (see **Figure 1**). Jennar notes: "Although to date the two major communication lines do not seem to have joined south of Phnom Penh, they do join south of the great lake [Tonle Sap], in Bari Baur district, where guerrillas cross the river both ways and cut Highway 5 at the same time. It can be seen that the southernmost points of the axes are situated 25 miles southwest and 60 miles southwest of Phnom Penh. These two points are 140 miles apart."

Jennar reports that the behavior of Khmer Rouge troops coming from Trat is "subtle. Terror and massacres are combined with purchases of rice at higher than the market price and other similarly attractive practices." There are reports that the Khmer Rouge have moved refugees into the "liberated" areas of Cambodia by force. "The resistance wants to populate the liberated areas with the refugees, not only to control the areas but also to keep their hold on the people," said Jean-Jacques Fresard, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Thailand, as quoted in the *Bangkok Nation* Jan. 15. In early 1989, for example, the Khmer Rouge moved 4,000 refugees across the border into Cambodia.

Militarily, there is continual fighting in 14 out of 19 provinces of Cambodia. Analysis of the Khmer Rouge's military activities, Jennar said, "indicates that the operations now involve the mobilization of increased manpower (sometimes 200-300 men). This means that they are able to transport reserves of weapons and ammunition deep into the country. . . . Finally, this means that from now on they can do without their bases back in Thailand and would not suffer from a possible closure of the frontier if Bangkok decided to do this."

FIGURE 1

Khmer Rouge penetration of Cambodia



The possibility of options

Although no word has yet emerged on the results of the meetings in Beijing, on March 13, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin pointed the way to a possible superpower compromise, assuming that what pleases Beijing also pleases Washington. Churkin reported from Moscow that the Soviet Union was in agreement with proposals made by Vietnam Feb. 28 for an immediate cease-fire in Cambodia and resumption of activities of the Supreme National Council, reported TASS. The cease-fire is the precondition for ensuring that the Khmer Rouge operations are stopped, under conditions in which Phnom Penh is supposed to give way to U.N. administration.

The call for reviving the Supreme National Council would, at least on the surface, appear to be a concession from Phnom Penh and Vietnam, that the Khmer Rouge—which is seated on the council—is indeed a party to any settlement. And to underscore the point, Churkin stated that “it is important that peace initiatives should be in tune with the known plan put forth by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council”—the plan heartily endorsed by the P.R.C. and rejected by Vietnam as a violation of the U.N. Charter and of Cambodian sovereignty.

A more interesting initiative is on the way from Japan, whose Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama will visit Beijing and Hanoi for talks on Cambodia. Although the Japanese proposal is not yet disclosed, according to a March 13 Agence France Presse wire, it centers on increasing the role of the United Nations. According to Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Taizo Watanabe, the plan includes “concrete measures on the implementation of the suspension of war” and to “prevent the revival of genocide.”

Last month, then-Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan had floated a Japan-backed plan which calls for the rehabilitation of Cambodia’s infrastructure—roads, railways, and airfields—in both resistance- and government-controlled areas, even before a peace settlement is in place. Chatichai proposed that the construction plans be carried out by the all-party Supreme National Council, using the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok as a base of operations. “Thailand would serve as a ‘coordinator’ with the U.N. and with donor countries, particularly Japan, which has offered to finance the rehabilitation scheme,” reported the Bangkok *Nation* Feb. 12. The plan has been endorsed by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, son of Prince Sihanouk, but has been greeted with silence by the other Cambodian factions so far.