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South and East Asia Report

(FOUO 5/82)



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SOUTH AND EAST ASIA REPORT

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CONTENTS

BANGLADESH

- Role of Violence in Bangladesh Politics Discussed
(Enayetullah Khan; FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, 2 Jul 82). 1
- Armed Forces' Role in National Affairs Elaborated
(S. Kamaluddin; FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, 2 Jul 82).... 4

KAMPUCHEA

- Military Conditions, PRK-SRV Relations Noted
(Rene Backmann; LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR, 8 May 82) 6

PAKISTAN

- Correspondent's Confrontation With Zia Reported
(ASIAWEEK, 9 Jul 82) 18

- a -

[III - ASIA - 107 FOUO]

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BANGLADESH

ROLE OF VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH POLITICS DISCUSSED

Hong Kong FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW in English 2 Jul 82 p 24

[Article by Enayetullah Khan]

[Text] The profile of Bangladesh is painted red with violence. The people of this land have lived with terror from colonial times through the genocide of 1971, the horrors of the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman era, and the subsequent mayhem of coups, mutinies and fratricide.

The face of terror chanted from the veiled to the bare while its application varied contingent upon the character and compulsion of the ruling establishments. The instruments, too, underwent changes, both qualitatively and quantitatively in direct proportion to the strength or otherwise of the mass base for social change.

But terror remained the chief weapon in the armoury of the ruling establishments. As such, it produced its own reaction of violence from the man in the street. From time to time in the nation's history, he would try to embody history in his own person and assert his inalienable right to live honourably. But things never happened the way he intended. His sovereign will and quest for freedom became casualties in the hands of successive ruling establishments. Violence and vengeance succeeded each other.

The scars of genocide, the brutal elimination of dissent by dictatorial regimes, the vicious class war glorified by some as the "unfinished revolution" and the slaying of two presidents at their posts seem to prove the dictum that no gentleness can efface the mark of violence: only violence itself can destroy violence.

Bangladesh has seen 11 tumultuous years of great aspirations and greater tragedies in which the ruling establishments never shirked from violence to repress the masses. The regimes of Mujib and Ziaur Rahman testify to this in different ways. The key questions with both the regimes and their helmsmen were how to use the sacrifices of the people to secure absolute power to themselves and how to satisfy the demands of the politico-bureaucratic class at the expense of the nation's labour. Both used charisma as a screen and fake ideologies as opium for the masses and both applied the instruments of terror to suppress or eliminate patriotic political dissent.

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Zia inherited these instruments of terror but took the process of violence a stage further. His one-man rule became the hub of gun-toting killers, muscle-flexing bandits and a motley crowd of political pirates. He incorporated violence into the body-politic with the active support of the state machinery. Zia's use of terror and violence was less institutional than under Mujib.

The spectre of violence cannot be contained like the mythical genie in the bottle. It also spilled over into the armed forces themselves. Thus over a period of six years between the slayings of Mujib and Zia, the nation went through roughly 18 coup bids and mutinies, 500 executions of mutineers and the lynchings of two generals.

Meanwhile, the plunder of resources by the politico-bureaucratic retinue of the regimes went unchanged. Mujib tribalised corruption and expropriation through his family group and a coterie of party faithfuls. The transparent greed of his new commissars would not even spare relief materials sent by various countries for the succour of the people of war-ravaged Bangladesh.

Zia, on the other hand, like a skilful surgeon with gloves on, kept his own hands and those of his immediate kin clinically clean. But he institutionalized corruption to cement his power structure. The massive edifice of his Bangladesh Nationalist Party was built brick by brick with the surpluses of a poor nation--the spill-over of aid and grant money and exactions from the public sector enterprises. Every sack of wheat or development dollar for the rural poor was subject to depredation. Power was used to acquire cash which bought more power.

Such exercises in accumulation of power and profits were bound to become antithetical to public order. The subordination of public institutions to personal authority or the creation of surrogate institutions to suit the designs of absolute power gave rise to chaos. Worst of all, it produced the phenomena of counter-violence and all-pervasive anarchy that ultimately led to the deaths of Mujib and Zia. This was the exact reverse of what a poor, war-ravaged nation needed--strong institutions and social consciousness among the leaders.

The violent ends of the two regimes, however unfortunate they might have been, proved the transitoriness of political power twice over. Now after 11 long years, the rule of violence and absence of order hopefully appear to have run their full course. The latest political change in which the military took over state power in a pre-dawn strike in March was at least bloodless--a fact that was so untypical of Bangladesh.

The recent emergence of the military as a countervailing force to personal and group aggrandisement is owed to its relative organisation and its involvement in various phases of the national struggle. The military faces the task of creating a new order to supercede the elective institution of the presidency which had been tailor-made for Zia alone and did not provide the democracy it promised. The military in Bangladesh did not exactly come riding on horseback as a disinterested, non-partisan saviour of the nation.

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But as Lieut-Gen H.M. Ershad said in November last year, barely 13 days after the election of Abdus Sattar as president: "What is important is the fundamental concept of recognising the politico-military problems and finding a permanent solution in a constitutional approach."

The statement put the subsequent coup into context. The coup differs qualitatively from the usual rhetoric of military takeovers with their copybook pledges of returning to civilian rule. The thesis is that military intervention in politics should be converted into military participation in politics. The aim: to contain both military and political violence and to create public order and stable institutions.

Thus the military is there not as the force behind personal rule but as the only body organised enough and broad enough in composition to form the basis for fair, firm and honest government and provide the stability necessary for political and social institutions to develop.

Zia had used the check-and-balance strategy of keeping the military at bay. In doing so, he created jealousies and suspicions which resulted in the proliferation of military violence in the form of attempted coups and mutinies. These culminated in the mutiny led by the late major-general Abul Manzur and leading to the assassination of Zia at Chittagong in May last year and shook the very foundation of the military as an institution. But events also showed that existing political institutions including the ruling party, were in even worse shape, reeling in corruption.

Thus the recent military takeover was an almost inevitable result of the situation itself rather than a result of Bonapartist ambitions on the part of the generals. The military moved in by default to reclaim its vanguard role in the construction of the nation.

Violence still remains a psychic force in the Bangladeshi polity and the military. The creation of order remains a distant and difficult task. God speed to the military in its gallant attempt.

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BANGLADESH

ARMED FORCES' ROLE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS ELABORATED

Hong Kong FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW in English 2 Jul 82 pp 22, 23

[Article by S. Kamaluddin]

[Text] Dacca--Bangladeshi strongman Lieutenant Gen H.M. Ershad has hinted at power-sharing by the armed forces by bringing about "structural changes in the country's economic and social order," and said that his government will introduce a system to end people's sufferings arising out of what he called unfair politics.

In an hour-long interview on Bangladesh TV on June 20, Ershad said the long-term changes being contemplated by his government will be very different from those of previous martial law regimes. He discussed the government's policies at length, including certain basic structural and administrative changes which led many people to believe that these changes would be incorporated in the Constitution now suspended.

However, he did not elaborate on how these changes would be brought about or whether his government was going to frame a new constitution. All the same, he appeared to have firmed up his views on the type of political system which should be encouraged in Bangladesh. He said that while democracy as such had not failed, "imitation of foreign politics has failed in our country." Referring to Singapore, South Korea and Japan, he said these countries have developed their own political systems in accordance with their requirements.

"But," he went on, "unfortunately, we could not introduce the political system suitable to our own age which could take the nation forward...I consider democracy as a state system which will carry Bangladesh to the path of lasting progress."

Asked why martial law was imposed in March, Ershad said that it was inevitable. He added: "A great anarchy was prevailing in the administrative system... Nothing tangible for the improvement of the administration could be done because of the pressures of the ruling parties on various occasions. Fake industrialists were being given licences and permits because they contributed towards party funds.

4
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"Miscreants, masquerading as touts of political parties created a reign of terror in society. The parties in power actually used to appease these elements. That is why no political party after coming to power could bring about any meaningful changes. On the other hand, poor people had been enduring...silently...In fact, there was no way out of this situation [other] than imposing martial-law rule."

On the question of structural changes, he said: "In my opinion, the permanent changes that this regime is thinking about would distinguish it from the other martial law governments in the past." Comparing the political systems of the United States and Britain, Ershad said that no political party in Bangladesh had ever voluntarily abandoned power in the past and all of them had failed to realise that no party can remain in power without the support of the people.

He said that the major failure of the political parties was not building up an institution over the years which could have earned the confidence and respect of the people. "The Constitution introduced by the party in power was subsequently scrapped by another party after coming into power. Thus a total uncertainty prevailed in the politics of our country," he added.

On the question of the armed forces' direct participation in politics, Ershad, referring to the liberation struggle of 1971, said that the Bangladeshi armed forces were born to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people, which basically were political objectives. Apparently what he meant was that the armed forces should be given an effective political role.

This, however, is not a new development. In a controversial statement on November 27, Ershad outlined a similar role for the armed forces saying that they had fought a liberation war and thereby had become highly politicised. As they had a stake in the country they should be allowed to play an effective role in running it. He also thought that this participation would help build an institution which would also eliminate the possibility of any adventurism within the armed forces.

On the role of the armed forces, Ershad said in his TV interview that they could work as a balancing force. "With their skill and potentialities," Ershad said, "the armed forces could help replenish the shortfall in the country's administrative, technological and engineering sectors. They should naturally, be utilised for rebuilding an integrated powerful and unified nation."

He felt that the role of the armed forces would be accomplished when the programmes undertaken by the present government were implemented. Sticking to his earlier time-frame, he hoped that his government's responsibility would be met in about two years.

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KAMPUCHEA

MILITARY CONDITIONS, PRK-SRV RELATIONS NOTED

Paris LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR in French 8 May 82 pp 130-131, 136, 139, 143, 145, 147-148, 151

[Article by Rene Backmann: "Cambodia: The Price of a Liberation"]

[Text] Seven years ago, on the morning of 17 April 1975, thousands of little men dressed in black, their long plaid *krama* around their necks, went into Phnom Penh. Loaded down with cartridge belts and their AK 47's (Chinese combat rifle) over their shoulders, they looked exhausted. Seemingly coming out of the walls, they immediately took up positions at all the intersections, tense and indifferent to the uncertain smiles of the population. They were the Khmers Rouges. Five days earlier, American Ambassador John Dean, protected by 300 marines armed to the teeth, had fled the besieged city by helicopter, the Stars and Stripes folded under his arm.

The nightmare had begun in Cambodia. In that "China as Seen by Idiots," as Malraux called it, "it lasted 3 years and 8 months, 3 years and 8 months of exoduses, torture, massacres, madness. Over a million men, women and children -- 1 out of every 6 Cambodians -- were savagely sacrificed during the self-genocide, the first in the history of the planet.

To put an end to the horror, it took nothing less than a Vietnamese military intervention. And the Cambodians are now paying the price of that salvation: Over 200,000 Vietnamese, soldiers and civilian "advisers," are camped on their soil, as saviors and occupiers. In this convalescent Cambodia, torn from the grip of famine by international aid, mainly Western, Rene Backmann spent two weeks, traveling over 1,000 kilometers, from the Vietnamese border to the Thai border. Here is his travelogue:

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I. Vietnamese Everywhere

I met the first Vietnamese in Cambodia on the Air Vietnam Tupolev 134 that makes the flight from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh every Monday in 35 minutes. That weekly shuttle is a veritable symbol. Except for the planes of the International Committee of the Red Cross (CICR) and the British Oxfam organization, which make the connection with Bangkok and Singapore once a week, the Air Vietnam flight is the only link between Cambodia and the rest of the world. In other words, Ho Chi Minh City is a forced stop on the road to Phnom Penh. From time to time, an Aeroflot aircraft flies in from Moscow and a tiny Yak 40 trijet arrives from Vientiane: That is all.

That day, there were only about 15 of us on the Tupolev: a Mexican university professor, enormous and mustachioed, going to Angkor to continue his comparative study of the Aztec temples and the Khmer sanctuaries; a French businesswoman based in Bangkok, entrusted by the Arab oil-producing nations to negotiate with the Cambodian Government concerning construction of a new mosque in Phnom Penh -- there are 100,000 Muslim Chams in Cambodia; the wife of a Soviet diplomat who had gone shopping in Ho Chi Minh City and who was returning to Phnom Penh with her young son; and a dozen Vietnamese. There were two soldiers in green uniforms, with their kits and sacks stuffed with provisions. Then there were about ten "technical advisers" in their white shirts, short hair and businesslike look, also loaded with sacks and thick satchels.

Nearly invisible in the city, they are everywhere, these Vietnamese advisers who have taken up headquarters in the Cambodian administration. From agriculture to health, every Cambodian minister is aided by a team of experts who "guide" the high officials, as it is discreetly put in Phnom Penh. "Call it what you want," one of them told me, refusing to be identified but accepting my Lucky Strikes, bought on the black market in Vietnam. "We say that it is technical assistance or cooperation. This country has practically no cadres left. Those that were not killed left. When we arrived at the beginning of 1979, there was nothing left. We had to build a new administration. Now one exists. The institutions have been set up. The country is becoming stabilized. Our task now consists of helping the administration of Kampuchea to train cadres...."

Piece by piece, it is a kind of transfer of their political, economic and social system that the Vietnamese advisers are bringing about in Cambodia. The constitution of the People's Republic of Kampuchea is a copy of the Vietnamese Constitution. In its most minute details, the Vietnamese have imposed their model. The form for customs declarations that has to be filled out in duplicate upon arrival in Phnom Penh is the exact translation, in Cambodian, of the form distributed before landing at Ho Chi Minh City. Even better, when one leaves Phnom Penh, the document, stamped by the Cambodian customs officials, is picked up at the Tan Son Nhut Airport by their Vietnamese colleagues. "A simplification of relations between our administrations," explains a Vietnamese official.

The Vietnamese soldiers are as visible as the civilian advisers are discreet, in the city as well as the country. It is true that they in no way try to hide.

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How many are there? It is impossible to know. According to officials from international organizations based on Phnom Penh and circulating in the country, their number can be put at around 200,000. It is difficult to stroll around in the city without running into them, these *bo dai* dressed in olive drab combat uniforms, wearing the traditional helmets. They can be seen during the day, in pairs, walking along the sidewalks, squatting around the steaming cauldrons of the soup vendors, lost in the noisy market crowds. Or they are doing hard bargaining at the Hotel Monorom intersection over the price of a ride before piling three or four into the tiny rickshaws pulled by cyclists that are the taxis of Phnom Penh. I even ran into three of them one evening at the Vat Phnom, the oldest Buddhist temple in the capital and one of the only ones spared by the Khmers Rouges. After leaving their regulation Ho Chi Minh sandals on the first step of the sanctuary, they were silently looking at the naive frescoes, a bottle of Coca Cola in their hands. At night, it is the armed *bo dai* who take over for the Cambodian soldiers at the main cross-roads. The same thing happens as soon as an official delegation arrives at the airport: The road is jammed with green uniforms. They are not aggressive, these little green men who do not hesitate to hail you with a "Hello!" and use their rudimentary French or English when they spot a Westerner in order to trade a few Cambodian filtered Samaki for one or two American cigarettes.

Abundant in the city, the Vietnamese military presence is even more spectacular in the country. On the southern road that winds toward Takeo and the Vietnamese border, I found two major military camps in less than 15 kilometers. At the first, at the very gateway to Phnom Penh, groups of soldiers were finishing construction of wooden hangars that would house about 30 heavy American GMC trucks and about 20 M 113's, also American. In the other were some 30 tanks: half Soviet BMP 1's; half M 113's, camouflaged under branch shelters. Here also, soldiers were carrying tree trunks. Others, in blue shorts, were playing volleyball along the road. I also saw other camps while moving toward the northwest, near Kompong Chhnang, around Pursat. Everywhere were light tanks, troop transports, often American. Everywhere, soldier-carpenters were carrying beams, building barracks, shelters. Manifestly, the Vietnamese Army continues to establish its foothold.

Wherever one goes, when leaving Phnom Penh, one finds these rural camps near the road, housing one or two companies of infantrymen. But in practically every large village, smaller military posts were found: a few barracks covered with banana leaves or tin, chickens, one or two pigs, a tiny plot of vegetables, a dozen armed men with their Kalachnikovs, machine guns and Soviet RPG 7 rocket launchers. All along the 300 kilometers of rutted roads that run between the railroad and the banks of the Tonle Sap toward Battambang, Sisophon and the Thai border, one cannot go more than 5 or 6 kilometers without encountering a green helmet with the gold star against the red background. Every old Dodge or DeSoto bus that speeds through the potholes carrying nearly as many passengers on the top among the bundles as in the seats hauls its little group of *bo dai* on leave going to Phnom Penh or to their units in the combat zones in the northwest.

It is difficult, when one does not speak Khmer and when one is generally accompanied by an official guide-interpreter, to evaluate the real nature of the

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relations between the Cambodians and their "liberators." One thing is certain: The historical heritage of Cambodia, the collective memory of the Cambodian people are not inhabited by serene memories. Between the year 1000, when the Khmers built their empire on the land which the Vietnamese considered as their steps to the south, and the 19th century, when the emperor of Hue, Minh Mang, sent Gen Truong Minh Giang to Cambodia ordered to "cut recalcitrant Cambodians into pieces," the history of relations between the two countries has been woven of more hatred and defiance than reciprocal gestures. Moreover, Lon Nol and Sihanouk have never hesitated, when they needed to, to awaken and exploit the hatred of the Youns (Vietnamese), which lies dormant in their fellow countrymen. As for the Vietnamese, as a former National Liberation Front cadre who had returned to civilian life told me, they have "never had a high opinion of those ignorant peasants, whom you in the West consider to be peaceful people, when they are capable of being more cruel than we are."

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that relations between the Vietnamese and Cambodians are not overly warm. One would have to be of bad faith not to observe that the Cambodians congratulate themselves for having been delivered from the Khmers Rouges. But one would also have to be blind not to see the weariness, resignation and anxiousness that veil some looks.

II. Return to Phnom Penh

The Khmers Rouges wanted to empty the cities, which they considered to be hotbeds of perversion, and scatter city dwellers who could be rehabilitated in the rice paddies. And they nearly succeeded: Between 1975 and 1979, Phnom Penh went from over a million to nearly 30,000 inhabitants. Today, there is a reverse movement. Over three-fourths of the city dwellers are people from the rice paddies. Most of them had never before lived in a cement house. Some had never even seen a large city.

They have brought their customs to the commercial streets in downtown Phnom Penh, once lined with shops, restaurants, open air displays. Hammocks are stretched under the arcades on what was once Monivong Avenue, now Son-Ngoc Minh. The women, surrounded with half-naked children, light charcoal fires on the sidewalks to prepare their soup. Families have filled the old shops, piling their store of wood, a few jars and three or four kettles on the empty shelves. It is a poor capital, mutilated, disfigured, pock-marked by the bombs, rockets, shells, grenades, machine-gun bursts, the looting and systematic vandalism of the Khmers Rouges. In the final analysis, except for the big concrete bridge over the Tonle Sap, destroyed before the arrival of Pol Pot's troops, and a few buildings on the periphery, the victims of bombs or shells, the "American war" of the Lon Nol period did much less damage in the city than the "Khmer Rouge peace." Two or three old Phnom Penh natives, still dumbfounded, waivering between pain and relief, told me what their city looked like "before": sidewalk cafes, Cambodian, Chinese, Vietnamese, French restaurants, showcases overflowing onto the sidewalks, shaded, flower-lined boulevards, the pagodas, the crowds milling around the Old Market built in 1937 by the French, the promenades along the river, near the Palace.

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The Khmers Rouges had tried to make an agricultural production center out of this beaten, empty city. In the schoolyards, public parks and around the houses in the residential section, fruit trees were planted. Sidewalks were dug up to make room for banana and mango trees between the old palms. Vegetables grew among ruins of pagodas, churches, in the middle of lawns, between sidewalks and roadways. Houses and buildings were looted, the furniture thrown out windows onto the sidewalks to supply wood for construction or heating.

Today the schoolyards are once again schoolyards; the public parks public parks. The Old Market is back in place and the vegetable plots are now flowerbeds. But the city is still in a pitiful state of decay. Buildings hit by shells and half standing have not been cleared away and debris and piles of old furniture block the sidewalks. Everywhere between the trees one sees the pitted facades of buildings. Sewers are clogged and garbage piling up all over. Around the markets, one wades in layers of rotten fruit and vegetables. For 500,000 inhabitants, fewer than 300 employees work for the streets and roads department. There is a curious system of priorities: A few weeks ago, a little group of municipal road workers spent hours righting a palm tree buffeted by the wind, while 200 meters away, rats as big as cats foraged in an enormous garbage pile right in the middle of the street. It is true, however, that the palm tree was on the Avenue de l'Union des Republiques Socialistes Sovietiques!

In many districts, water does not reach the second floor. The electric powerhouse, repaired by Vietnamese technicians, operates only a few hours a day. According to French engineers sent to Phnom Penh by the Order of Malta, 25 percent of the electric power distributed is lost in countless short-circuits to illegal connections. After filling the city's buildings haphazardly, the new inhabitants of Phnom Penh have hooked up to the municipal system, hitching wires to the electric cables with bamboo poles.

A crowd of free-lance businesses has appeared. Inner tube repairmen have set up shop on a mat at the main intersection downtown, with a few cans of rubber patches, a pot of solvent and a tiny press. A little further on, an "independent" mechanic mends a bicycle chain. Over his head, tires, pedals, mudguards, rims and frames hang from the branches of a mango tree resembling a surrealistic plant. Hairdressers, barbers and dentists have taken up residence in the empty downtown shops. But the handymen are king. Some collect the lead from the batteries found everywhere. Others use pieces of foam to make motorcycle seats. Old wrecked furniture is turned into new. A photographer has opened up a shop near the Hotel Monorom. He takes black-and-white photos with an old camera and in a few hours, gives you a version in Hollywood technicolor, done in gouache. Tailors, vendors of soup, fritters, spiced pineapples, cigarettes and flavored ice cream fill the downtown sidewalks. It is formidable and moving, this capacity for improvisation, this vitality of the new residents of Phnom Penh, who have transformed a skeleton city into a convalescent one crisscrossed by hundreds of tiny rickshaws pulled behind motorcycles or scooters.

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Entertainment is rare, however. Movie theaters still open show films sent by friendly countries -- that is, essentially the Soviet Union. From time to time, a soccer game is organized on the field of the National Sports Complex, where De Gaulle delivered his famous speech. On the first floor of the School of Fine Arts, between rehearsals of a militant ballet evoking Cambodian-Vietnamese friendship and the victory over imperialism, students of the dance have regained the fluid gestures of the Angkor bas-reliefs in an Apsara exercise. In the street, passers-by stop when they hear the forgotten sounds of the kong, the roniet and the sko, the cymbals, xylophone and drum that accompany the traditional dances. The music of yesterday. And of hope?

III. War Not Over

Along the vital Phnom-Penh-Sisophon road, as everywhere else in Cambodia, every bridge is guarded. Most were demolished or damaged and have been replaced or reinforced by metal beams. On this rutted road cut by tens of rivers, streams and canals, protection of the bridges and footbridges is of cardinal importance. Sometimes the guard is symbolic: a young militiaman about 15 years old armed with an M 16 or an old Kalachnikov. That was the case north of Pursat, where the country seems calm. The plain, covered with rice paddies, does not lend itself well to infiltration and guerrilla warfare.

Further south, between Pursat and Kompong Chhnang, where the road goes through an area of thin forests and runs along the Cardamomés Mountains, the traditional haunt of the Khmers Rouges, things are more serious and reveal the hand of the guerrilla -- and counter guerrilla -- experts which the Vietnamese are. Every bridge, no matter how small, is protected by a veritable anti-sabotage fortification: a double row of pointed posts between which thorn branches are piled and in which "we buried a few surprises," as one Vietnamese soldier whom we met over a dish of chicken stew in the village of Kroko explained.

"The country is peaceful, but you have to be very cautious. Avoid traveling at night. If we leave, the Pol Pot people will be here the next day. The inhabitants of this region have hesitated a long time before coming back. Six months ago, you did not see a house along the road." This information was supplied by a bus driver who spoke a hilarious, chaotic "pidgeon French." Here, in the tiny bridge guard towers made of dirt and tree trunks, there are always at least two or three *bo dai* among the Cambodian militiamen and soldiers. The threat is deemed to be so real that for 200 meters, on both sides of the road, all the trees have been cut down and the brush burned in order to facilitate surveillance. The patrols that leave the main road are made up of about 20 powerfully armed men: rocket launchers, machine guns, light machine guns, and this about 100 kilometers from Phnom Penh.

It is not easy to learn about the military situation in Cambodia. The official line goes something like this: "Most of the country is calm. Along the Thai border, there are always raids by Pol Potists and bandits against which our armed forces, aided by our Vietnamese comrades, are pursuing cleanup operations."

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By putting together information gathered throughout the country by representatives of international organizations who are authorized to move about, by questioning military cadres in the field, cadres better trained in the use of rocket launchers than in conventional language, one nevertheless finally fits together another picture. Serious military problems exist in Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Odar Mean Chey, Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Kompong Thom, Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces, forming a kind of horseshoe around Tonle Sap. Threats remain in the provinces of Kampot, Kompong Speu and Takeo. The great offensive of the dry season, launched in December by the Vietnamese expeditionary corps, was still not completed a month ago along the Thai border.

By the end of the month of March, the guns were sounding constantly, day and night, around Siem Reap, near the Angkor temples. During the same period, one representative of an international organization who was to go to the north-eastern region of the country was asked to make a detour through Vietnamese territory in order to avoid problems. Only a few weeks ago, a bridge was blown up near Kompong Thom, less than 200 kilometers from Phnom Penh. A group of doctors from the French Red Cross who were to set up at Pursat between Tonle Sap and the Cardamomes Mountains was finally replaced by a Bulgarian team and the International Red Cross received an important shipment of medicines and medical equipment for Pursat from the Ministry of Health.

"There are wounded men in the hospitals of practically all provinces," one foreign technical assistant says. "Except along the Thai border, the Khmers Rouges do not mount real operations and are content with individual attacks on the roads aimed at Cambodian civil servants or Vietnamese soldiers. Above all, they try to blow up the bridges in order to upset the country's economic life."

Sisophon: To get there from Battambang, one had to obtain a special military pass. On that nearly rectangular road that runs between the rice paddies, traffic is limited for reasons of security. Sisophon is only about 30 kilometers from the Thai border. There are small groups of Khmers Rouges scattered throughout the region, which does not prevent horrendous smuggling. Everything can be found at the Sisophon market, from quartz watches to the 125 cm³ Hondas and including medicines stolen from UNICEF, tents stolen from the High Commission on Refugees (HCR), clothing, shoes, canned goods, cosmetics, calculators, transistors, pirate cassettes of Thai and disco music, Thai and American cigarettes. Everything comes from Thailand after having escaped the antipersonnel minefields, the Thai rangers, the Khmers Rouges and the Vietnamese soldiers.

A little ways from the market, the staff is set up in a lovely traditional house perched on brown wooden pilings. Lt Pich Ruolos, 31, is sitting on the balcony at a big table. While one soldier serves tea, he goes through his report notebook, taken from a leather briefcase: "13 March, enemy shelling of the village of Kop, 45 kilometers from Sisophon, toward the northwest. The gunfire came from Thai territory. Three shells fell on the village. The same day, a Thai reconnaissance plane flew over the region. On 1 February, about 100 Khmers Rouges attacked the village of Bosbov, 19 kilometers from Sisophon.

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They used 60-mm and 82-mm mortars and B-40 rockets, all Chinese-made. They wounded eight villagers, took away the young people between the ages of 14 and 15 and stole all rice reserves in every house, some 15 to 20 kilograms per house. When our troops arrived, they fled toward the Thmor Pok district. Also on 1 February, shells were fired on the village of Mka, along with 107-mm and 122-mm rockets. On 5 February, a truck carrying rice was attacked near Mka. The Khmers Rouges, who could not carry off its load, burned it. The next day, we launched a big sweep that is still continuing. We seized AK-47 rifles and M 16's, along with antitank mines and Chinese rockets." While the lieutenant read his notebook, soldiers went to get the spoils of war. The AK 47's were practically new. The mines and rockets were made in 1978 and 1979. Everything was from China.

"We spotted 12 camps of Khmers Rouges in the region," Lt Pich Ruolos continued. "All are in Cambodian territory except for one, Kok Khnhung, which straddles the border. Phnom Chat is the logistical camp. We learned from prisoners that Pol Pot himself recently went to Phnom Chat. Dien Del, chief of staff of Son Sann,¹ is also at the border. There are three distinct zones here. First of all, north of Poipet, there is a strip of land about 60 kilometers long, where you will find both the people of Son Sann and those of Sihanouk. To the north, around Phnom Chat is the first Khmer Rouge zone. And, south of Poipet, there is a second Khmer Rouge area in the Phnom Malai brush. You in the West tend to forget it, but the Khmers Rouges still exist!"

IV. Pol Pot: the Exterminator

Adding up the bodies, subtracting the refugees and totaling up the survivors: Such bookkeeping is somehow nauseating, as if the reality of the Khmer Rouge holocaust were based solely on the balance sheet of the massacre and not on the political and ideological delirium that led to the nightmare. The deportation and extermination of the Jews was an integral part of Naziism. The deportation and extermination of those who had been in contact with foreign cultures were the foundations of the Khmer Rouge "ideology."

At the end of the "American war" in 1975, Cambodia had nearly 7 million inhabitants. According to one member of the government questioned in Phnom Penh, there are now 6.8 million. According to the UN High Commission on Refugees, 220,000 Cambodians who fled to Thailand under Pol Pot have returned to their country since 1979. Over 110,000 more returned from the western provinces of Vietnam. The population balance sheet for the past 3 years shows between 600,000 and 900,000 births. In other words, the Khmers Rouges eliminated between 1 million and 1.3 million of their fellow countrymen. In 1979, the American State Department put the number of victims at about 1.2 million, which seems to be a reasonable figure.

The traces of the massacre are everywhere: "Out of the 38 members of my family," Huor, a civil servant in Battambang, explains, there are only 13 left. I must now support 10 nieces and nephews, plus my father. Three of my 5 children died of starvation." Every province has its charnel house. I saw the one in Khum Ruolos, about 10 kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh. Nearly 9,000 persons were murdered and buried there, in 129 common graves.

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Bones are still scattered all over. One walks among tibias, wrists tied together by wire or electric cable. From a distance, as I approached the narrow little dusty path lined with sugar and areca palms that winds between the rice paddies, I thought that the big wooden frame ahead contained coconuts, but the round forms were actually skulls. "Exactly 8,982," the militiaman walking with us, his M 16 in his hand, explained. "We counted them when we dug them up." The site had once been a little park. There was even a cement kiosk with benches in one corner. Behind a curtain of banana trees, one could hear children laughing. "That is Choeng Ek School," he explained. "It was reopened in 1980. Before that, there was no school in the village. The Pol Potists did not like schools."

"Weren't the villagers curious about what was going on here?"

"Under Pol Pot, the peasants worked from 4:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night, watched over by armed guards. They could not come and go as they wished. And even if they suspected that something terrible was happening here, it would have been very unwise for them to ask questions."

Most of the men and women killed and buried at Khum Ruolos came from Tuol Sleng Prison in Phnom Penh. Before the Khmers Rouges came to power, Tuol Sleng had been a lycee, the Tuol Svay Prety Lycee. The new masters of Cambodia turned it into a center of detention and torture. It was left as the Vietnamese found it when they entered Phnom Penh, with the traces of blood under the beams used for torture, the places of torture, bathtubs, little wooden cages where the tortures raised the scorpions they put on the female prisoners' breasts. Some 16,000 prisoners had been there. How many escaped? The classrooms had been divided up into tiny cells 1 by 2 meters by brick partitions. Rings were attached to the ground to hold the prisoners. In one room, the filthy, blood-stained clothing found in the prison was piled up. Four or five more rooms were papered with photos of the men, women and children murdered here. In the courtyard, the gymnastics apparatus turned into an instrument of torture rises like a threat. Here, the victims were hung by their feet and their heads plunged into a huge bucket of water and excrement. I could not stay over a half hour in such surroundings. As I left, I met the director of the lycee-prison-museum. He had been a prisoner there. He had no fingernails left: They had been torn out by his tormentors.

Kraing Ta Chan: a little village near Takeo in the southern part of the country. Here also, near a thicket of sugar palms, is another cemetery. It was not discovered until 1980 and the graves have still not all been emptied. An atrocious stench hangs over the little mounds of earth. The village chief, an old man without teeth wearing the black pyjama, his *krama* wound around his neck, had coconuts brought to us. The village was peaceful: about ten wooden houses mounted on stilts in the middle of the banana and coconut trees. The chief's wife was weaving a beige silk sarong on an old patched up loom. "We knew what was happening there," the chief said, pointing to the charnel house 300 meters away, "because one night, the teacher Sak On climbed up into a coconut tree to see where all those trucks we could hear arriving went. He saw soldiers beating people to death with iron bars. In January 1979, after

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the Vietnamese came through, we found one of the Khmer Rouges heads of the sector. His name was Cheng. We killed him, but we did it cleanly."

V. Money Pumped In

During the year 1980 alone, \$500 million were spent to keep the country alive. It was the first time in history that such a sum had ever been spent by the international community for an aid operation. One can now say that international assistance saved Cambodia.

In 1979, after the Vietnamese military intervention and the establishment of the Heng Samrin regime in Phnom Penh, aid first came from Vietnam, the Soviet Union and "friendly countries." The first UN plane landed in August. In November, a program of massive assistance was set up. A few weeks later, 19 barges began to go up the Mekong, loaded with rice, medicines, trucks.

Today, one has but to open one's eyes to see that while Cambodia is under the tutelage of Vietnam militarily and politically, it is also the charge of the international community. The Land Rovers and Toyotas housed in the Hotel Samaki (Solidarity) garage bear the initials of UNICEF, the World Food Program, the World Health Organization, the FAO, the HCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the British humanitarian organization Oxfam, the Ecumenical Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Service, the French Committee of Medical and Sanitary Aid, the Church World Service, the American organizations CARE and World Vision, the American Quakers and the CIDSE (International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity).

The big Isuzu trucks that one sees everywhere, loaded with bags of rice supplied by the European Community, were given by the Japanese Government. Swiss doctors work at the Kompong Cham Hospital. In Svay Rieng, they are Norwegian; in Prey Veng, Danish; in Kompong Chhnang, Swedish; in Pursat, Bulgarian; in Tak Mau and Phnom Penh, French; and in Kampot and Takeo, Czech. A French architect, Charles Fejto, was in Phnom Penh a month ago to study the construction of a hospital financed by the French Red Cross. A French doctor and technician have opened a workshop that makes prosthetic devices.

"Because of the mines and polio mainly," they explain, "there are about two handicapped persons for every 1,000. In a year and a half, we provided artificial limbs for 1,000 persons and at the same time, we are training Cambodian prosthetists." The Australian Government provided 40 powerful agricultural pumps which a technician is setting up in the rice paddies.

The Ecumenical Council of Churches delivered seed, fertilizer, trucks, bulldozers, agricultural machinery, tractors. "Since 1979," explains Pastor Jean Clavaud, its representative in Phnom Penh, "we have spent \$17 million. This year, we expect to have at least another \$2 million."

Vietnam has sent hydraulics engineers and meteorologists. The Soviet Union has provided trucks (civilian or military?) and aid for the establishment of pilot agricultural stations.

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The Soviet Union does not enjoy a sterling reputation in the corridors of the Hotel Samaki, where the little foreign community in Phnom Penh camps. "In 1980," explains one Western expert, "they promised over 120,000 tons of grain. They delivered about 90,000. And it was mainly corn, which the Cambodians do not like. That same year, Westerners supplied 250,000 tons of grain. In 1981, the Soviets promised 90,000 tons. They delivered 55,000. That year, the Westerners supplied 75,000 tons, plus 35,000 tons of seed. Beyond their official speeches on their unswerving friendship, these are the things that the leaders here will never forget. Despite a domestic situation that is not very good, the Vietnamese have made a greater effort."

VI. "Pay in Dollars"

I have under my eyes a 42-page document: "Reports to the party congress on work objectives for the years ahead and on the economic and cultural program for 1981." The document is dated 26 May 1981. At the bottom of page 8, I found the following phrase: "Immediately after liberation, we moved on to intensive preparations and in March 1980, the new bank note was placed in circulation in the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The circulation of bank notes was achieved speedily and with order throughout the country and the riel became the sole means of exchange in Kampuchea."

Actually, while the old 50-riel notes are turned into wrapping paper and bundles of 200-riel notes are sold, brand-new, as souvenirs, the new notes, decorated in the edifying socialist realist style, have been in circulation for 2 years. They were printed in the Soviet Union. It was also the USSR that promised to rebuild the Central Bank, an enormous reddish building blown up by the Khmers Rouges.

And yet, it was in American dollars that I was asked to pay my interpreter-guide from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and for the Soviet Lada 1500 furnished by the government. And also my hotel bill at the Monorom in Phnom Penh. Even in Battambang, where the hotel is an old girls' boarding school turned into a storage depot by the Khmers Rouges and then very summarily converted into a hotel after the fall of Pol Pot -- there is not even any running water -- I had to pay in dollars.

The official exchange rate is 4 riel for a dollar when entering Cambodia, but upon leaving, one has to pay 8! On the black market, one can even get up to 22 riel for a dollar. It is impossible to live without the black market. The average salary of a government employee is around 120 riel (180 francs). A kilo of fresh fish costs 4 riel; a kilo of dried fish, 6 riel; a kilo of beans, 5 riel; a cauliflour, 4 riel. On the average, a Cambodian family with 5 or 6 children spends nearly 30 riel a day. There is no other solution, consequently, but to add an additional and illegal job: driver, porter, soup vendor -- to one's official job and engage in trafficking. One example of the lucrative trafficking is gas. There are practically no more service stations operating in Phnom Penh. The gas, strictly rationed, arrives from Vietnam by barges that come up the Mekong. Naturally, there are few automobiles and trucks -- in addition to those of the government and international

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organizations, which have their own supply -- but there are many lightweight motorcycles and already a few small Japanese motorbikes (10,000 riel at the official price; \$450 on the black market). The gas, stolen from government depots or those of the Vietnamese Army, is sold by the liter openly, on the sidewalks, at 11 riel (about \$3) a bottle.

Nor is this the only contradiction in Cambodia. In this convalescing country, where the Khmers Rouges tried to abolish money and where the government stores are empty and pitiful, one can find everything or almost everything at the markets: agricultural products and handicrafts, rice, vegetables, fruit, dried fish, sarongs, mats, baskets, vegetable dyes, soap, palm sugar and even ganja, the local marijuana, which is sold freely. But in addition -- and this is even more surprising -- there is a whole host of goods smuggled in across the Thai border or by sea to the island of Koh Kong, northwest of Kompong Som, which has become a kind of "wildcat" mini Hong Kong. A goodly share of such merchandise: concentrated milk, flour, oil, rice, canned goods, medicines, notebooks and pencils, was furnished free by UNICEF or various humanitarian organizations to the governments of Thailand, Cambodia or Vietnam. Some of the crates and packing materials still bear the names of the donors and the warning "Not For Resale." The rest: tape cassettes, clothing, shoes, tools, soap, toothpaste, cosmetics, fabrics, watches, American and Thai cigarettes, radio parts, electronic components (and how!), film, Polaroids, cooking utensils, detergents, whisky, delicacies, is smuggled in from Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam.

The authorities avert their eyes from this vast network of trafficking and smuggling that covers the country. "What do you expect?" one official says. "Until the government has set up the distribution systems, the people have to get what they need. And furthermore, after 4 years under the Khmers Rouges, the Cambodians have the right to a little leniency." But how long will the Vietnamese go along?

FOOTNOTES

1. The military opposition to the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia is made up of three groups: the Khmers Rouges, the National Liberation Front of the Khmer People (FNLPK), headed by Son Sann, prime minister under Sihanouk, and Sihanouk's forces, united around the FUNCIPPEC (National Unity Front for an Independent, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia).

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PAKISTAN

CORRESPONDENT'S CONFRONTATION WITH ZIA REPORTED

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[Text]

Since Pakistan's military strongman Gen. Zia-ul Haq imposed tough censorship on his country's media in October 1979, dozens of newspapers and periodicals have been forced to fold up and scores of journalists have served jail terms. Indeed, the gagging of the press has largely reduced the nation's once lively journals to stale chroniclers of government handouts. But despite the government squeeze, there seems no shortage of individual crusaders among Pakistani scribes who are campaigning for more freedom for the country's "fourth estate."

Back in March, an airport press conference given by Zia in Lahore, capital of the country's most populous province Punjab, ended in a verbal duel between the president and Nisar Osmani, a veteran newsman who heads the outspoken Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. Though the event went unreported in Pakistan's censored press, cassette recordings of that impromptu debate have been circulating recently and are causing jitters up and down the country.

By the sound of it, reports Correspondent Zafar Samdani, it isn't anything like the cassette recordings of Ayatollah Khomeini that ushered the Islamic revolution in Iran three years ago. Still, months after the dramatic press conference the cassettes' popularity is still soaring. Elsewhere, a recording of a press conference would be of little significance to anyone but journalists covering the story. But in the political stillness of Pakistan's martial law, the verbal sparring

made an audible thud. Never officially banned, the cassette has been playing to packed audiences in the social circuits of major cities like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad.

It all started when Zia opened the conference with a remark that he was upset at the way the press was behaving since the lifting of pre-censorship a fortnight before. Osmani, a lean, lanky man who was the long-time Lahore correspondent of *Dawn*, Pakistan's biggest English-language daily, immediately jumped up to challenge the president. Though he wasn't trying to defend the press, the newsman told Zia, he thought the president of a country should be accountable for his deeds. Indeed, said Osmani, quoting the first caliph of Islam Said Abu Bakar, the rulers were as accountable as anybody. If rulers did anything wrong, citizens had the right to correct them.

In a long-winded question that sounded more like a political speech, Osmani told Zia that there were "four or five methods" of making rulers accountable. The parliament, the judiciary, the political parties, the administration and the press all play a part in the democratic process of accountability of rulers, Osmani ostensibly said. "Unfortunately, in this country there is neither a parliament, nor a judiciary. There are no political parties." While the press was trying to play its part, the government wouldn't let it do anything. For 27 years, Osmani told Zia and the assembled audience, the press had been gagged in Pakistan. "Our condition is that we are turning in to third-generation slaves. If you want to [gag the press even further], there is nothing new in it. God has given you the authority. Do what you will."

While Osmani's outburst enraged the president's men, Zia seemed prepared to let him have his say. At one point the president tried to cut off the monologue

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but Osmani continued talking, raising his voice. "Why don't you react to the formation of a national government so that there could be some kind of unity in the country?" he asked. In the national government that some politicians were proposing, Osmani said, "the people of Baluchistan, Sind, of small provinces [would be able to participate]." Pakistan, the outspoken reporter reminded the president, "is a very delicate federation in which the population of one province [Punjab] is larger than [the other] three provinces. This province has the capital. [The] bureaucracy [and the]

Army [are] from this province."

To be sure, nothing that Osmani said was new. Many of his sentiments had been aired by politicians and newspapers for years. What was new, however, was the fact that somebody had finally mustered enough courage to stand up and say it publicly in front of President Zia. Though Osmani, unlike other government critics, hasn't been jailed or even officially scolded for his "act of sedition," the martial law government has begun to mount other kinds of pressure on the journalist. Recently, his name was struck from the list of senior Lahore newsmen invited for a dinner with the president. And last month, the government refused to give him an exit permit when his newspaper nominated him as a correspondent to cover the Nonaligned foreign ministers conference in Havana. □

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