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JPRS L/10003

22 September 1981

# South and East Asia Report

(FOUO 4/81)



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## SOUTH AND EAST ASIA REPORT

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KAMPUCHEA

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT VISITS DK-CONTROLLED AREAS

Tokyo HOSEKI in Japanese Jul 81 pp 102-113

[Article by Yoji Tani "Account of a Penetration Into a Kampuchea Guerrilla Region"]

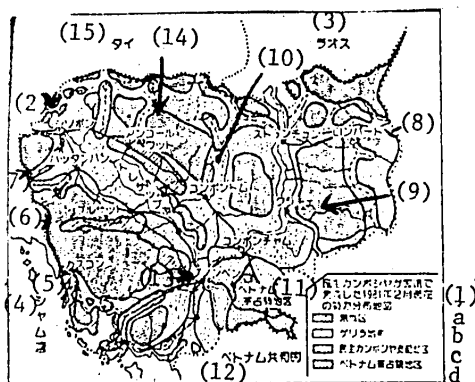
[Text] Commentary

The Situation in Kampuchea

"Kampuchean General Elections," (Heng Samrin government), "Democratic Kampuchean Forces" (The former Pol Pot government, the present Kieu Sam Phan regime) "Prince Sihanouk" (Former head of state), "Former Prime Minister Son Sann" (The Third Force-Kampuchea People's Liberation Front)--Recently, words communicating the situation in Kampuchea have again become noticeable in the newspapers. At the end of 1978 200,000 Vietnamese troops invaded the country, but in the more than two years since then what has the situation been like in Kampuchea?

(1) The Heng Samrin Regime: Pro-Vietnamese, Pro-Soviet. Supported by the 200,000 Vietnamese, it recently held a "general election." However, the area under Heng's domination is about one-fifth of the country(?). Recently the Soviet Union, aiming at propping up this regime has announced economic aid. Heng Samrin's forces number 30 to 50 thousand.

(2) Democratic Cambodian Regime: Anti-Vietnamese forces originally under Pol Pot, now led by Prime Minister Kieu Sam Phan. They have recently attacked areas under Vietnamese control and have established many "Liberated Zones."



[key on following page]

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Key:

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Map of the distribution of forces as of Feb. 1981 as reported to the United Nations by Democratic Kampuchea | 4. Gulf of Siam                      |
| a. Liberated areas   | 5. Koh Kong                          |
| b. Guerrilla bases   | 6. Pursat                            |
| c. Areas under Democratic Kampuchean control   | 7. Battambang                        |
| d. Areas under Vietnamese occupation   | 8. (Stung Chun Long Pat?)            |
| 2. Sisophon  | 9. Kratie                            |
| 3. Laos  | 10. Kompong Thom                     |
|  | 11. Zone under Vietnamese occupation |
|  | 12. Republic of Vietnam              |
|  | 13. Phnom Penh                       |
|  | 14. Angkor Wat                       |
|  | 15. Thailand                         |

(3) Prince Sihanouk and Former Prime Minister Son Sann. Sihanouk's former head of Cambodia with Son Sann as his Prime Minister. In March Sihanouk announced the formation of the first "Unified Anti-Vietnam Line" with Prime Minister Khieu Jamphan at a meeting in North Korea. China's Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping announced military aid to the Prince and the activities of Son Sann are under attention as Kampuchea's "Third Force" (Buddhists) by the ASEAN countries.

The world press at present is focusing its attention on Kampuchea. The reasons for this are that the Democratic Kampuchea Army which had been preserved in the mountain zones has begun to shake the areas occupied by the Vietnamese forces and because a movement towards forming a "Unified Anti-Vietnam Front" has started among the Democratic Kampuchean forces, Prince Sihanouk and former Prime Minister Son Sann. However, one also cannot overlook the fact that, as with the Afghanistan issue, the shadow of the Soviet Union has begun to flicker, and if the Third World countries fight in quest of "independence," and are victorious, right afterwards the Soviet Union will enter the picture...hence Kampuchea is becoming a "focal point of modern history."

This report by the journalist Yoji Tani is a testimony to current conditions, coming from Kampuchea....

[Author's report begins] The small truck that picked me up traveled south at high speed down the national highway along the Thai-Kampuchea border from the bordertown Aranyaprathet. I was not informed where we would cross the border, nor was I told where I was being taken. I was living in uncertainty not knowing what the extent of the war actually was in the forest zone, how safe it was, where we could stay. At the same time, I was naturally exhilarated by the thought that at long last I would be able to come in contact with soldiers of the Democratic Kampuchea government and the people of the liberated areas who shared their fate.

The invasion and occupation by Vietnam that has continued for more than two years, and the Kampuchean forces that are resisting these,--these touch my own feelings, since in the past I myself supported self-determination for the Vietnamese and had spent my youth in anti-war demonstrations. To me, the concerns of Kampuchea were my concerns.

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The truck has apparently veered from the main national highway to a side road. It runs along the bumpy road furiously kicking up clouds of sand and rocks. Even though it is high noon there isn't a shadow of a person anywhere around. It was a wierd feeling. Something looking like a person's shadow appeared in my field of visior in the thicket up ahead. The truck slowed down. The shadow came gradually closer. A man waved his hand, making some kind of signal. I guess it was a soldier of the Kampuchean Army,...a black uniform caked with dirt, which is unique to the Khmer people wound around his neck.

The truck stopped there. I was let off and according to his instructions, I was ordered to step through a thicket about a man's height. I don't know how many minutes passed. I came to a river about ten meters wide. It was the Thai-Kampuchea border. I had finally made it to Kampuchea.

I hadn't noticed, but when we began to cross the river, about ten Democratic Kampuchean Army troops appeared on the side, carrying AK rifles on their backs. I was relieved to see among them the smiling face of Lon-No Lin (age 38), a Foreign Affairs official of the Democratic Kampuchea Government. Last autumn he had visited Japan and I knew his face. He is fluent in English and was to serve as my host.

Again we entered the thickets, shrubbery areas and thick forest and walked for about three hours. We finally arrived at a cleared space in the forest. There were four relatively sturdy buildings thatched with grass, and in the opening in the center were long hand-made tables.

"This is a government facility. We will ask them to let us stay here two or three days," No Lin interpreted. This place, that he called "headquarters" is one of the base areas of the Democratic Kampuchea government and is reportedly used on occasion for cabinet meetings by government leaders.

The jungle was cleared for 50 meters in all four directions, with trenches dug in places. Anti-aircraft machine guns were also installed here, as if looking up at the tall trees growing next to each other. What I discovered the next morning on a walk, was that many barracks were placed around this government base area, and I was told that they normally accommodate around 300 men who stay here on an alternating basis.

The only seasons in Kampuchea are the rainy season (May through September) and the dry season (October to April), and there is no "winter." There are about two weeks when it is chilly in morning and evening, but it is hot the rest of the year, which probably makes this kind of jungle life possible.

From my second day, I walked to the neighboring "Liberated Zone" villages nearby, starting out from the "headquarters" and while moving through the jungle came upon several "liberated zones." Each village consisted of a row of houses on a river-bank selected because there was water there. In particular there were villages concentrated along the border, where there is water even in the dry season. These places were probably naturally selected for the water and because it is possible to escape by crossing the border in the event of a Vietnamese attack.

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The first "liberated zone" that I observed was a spot 60 kilometers southeast of Aranyaprathet in the jungle a few kilometers from the border. The settlement was reportedly begun there when they escaped into the jungle during the first Vietnamese invasion in 1979. At that time they felled trees, prepared the land and built a village, but many people died without food or medicine.

Even so, there are three liberated zones (homestead villages) enclosing the river, and the house in each are high-floored grass thatched homes beautifully lined up. I heard that about 10,000 people live there, two thousand of whom apparently had returned from a Thai refugee camp in June of last year, and some complained "we want to go to our home village but cannot, since we fear the Vietnamese."

In this vicinity there apparently are a considerable number of "liberated zones." However, for these liberated zones, a difference remains in the food supply situation, between the villages near the Thai border that receive international aid and the villages from which it is necessary to make a 2-1/2 day round trip walk to get such aid. Apparently representative members elected by their respective village people have been working very hard to eradicate the differences. The difference is particularly evident in medical facilities. It is common for there to be a lack of medicine everywhere, but there are some hospitals equipped with medical equipment through the International Red Cross, and some which must rely on primitive treatment.

In every village hospital there are always exhausted-looking patients stretched across bamboo beds. A young doctor who says that he received medical schooling in Phnom Penh pointed out "lack of nutrition brings on disease and delays recovery"; while a doctor in another village related "In the places here that people have escaped to, there are no wards, so they have to sleep on the ground and every day tens of people die off." These words match the conditions that I heard about in the Thai refugee camps, and I have no reason to doubt them.

I remember that Prime Minister Samphan once told the world that this was a "battle for continuation of the race" against the starvation strategy of the Vietnamese forces, but the jungle was really a hell for them. The number of ill persons reportedly increases threefold in the rainy season. Even so, it appeared that efforts were being made to build new wards and train nurses in each village.

There are schools in every village in the "liberated zone" and it was apparent that efforts were being expanded on education of the children. Since there were no textbooks or stationery, they followed the method of learning by raising their voices according to the teacher's instruction, facing a hand-made blackboard; but the faces of teachers and students alike were serious. The subjects taught are Kampuchean, arithmetic and music, but high school students are also taught political education that teaches the significance of the united front in order to overcome the present adversities, and methods of preventing and treating malaria.

In spite of such terrible conditions the expressions on the innocent looking children running around barefoot are always cheerful, and one can constantly hear the cries of newborn babies, all of which testifies to the robust quality of the

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strength for human survival. The villages in the liberated zones appear to have returned to a peaceful state--at times they erect stages in each village, put on dramas and folk dances using hand-made musical instruments.

A few days later I observed a village meeting at which I was able to see clearly the bond between the Democratic Kampuchea Government and its people. Scanning the village square I could see 2000 people, who enthusiastically applauded the speeches of the government and village representatives that were delivered over loud-speakers. Their spirits were raised by shouting in chorus "The Democratic Kampuchean Army and the People Forever" and "Down with the Vietnamese Invaders."

The meeting on that day was to celebrate victory in battle in the Phnum Malai Mountains (an area in northwest Kampuchea). It communicated to the villagers the state of development and the significance of the unified front being promoted by the government. The meeting stimulated people to cooperate in a spirit of democracy and harmony, to improve and elevate life in the liberated villages.

Such meetings apparently are held from time to time in the "liberated areas." As far as I could see in Battambang Province, which I had penetrated, there was a considerable number of people who shared their fate with the Pol Pot army and were waiting out the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces. I don't have accurate figures, but according to estimates of the Thai military, the number of Kampuchians living in the border areas is 430,000. The population in regions dominated by Democratic Kampuchea, according to its own figures, is 150,000.

The people in the "liberated" areas have planted vegetables and corn in the fields, and bananas and papayas around the fields. The latter are apparently consumed not as fruits but as vegetables, and while they rely on rice supplied through international aid, I was impressed with the vitality of their efforts to be self-sufficient.

A feature which distinguishes these people from those in the Thai refugee camps is their self-revitalization and their planned village construction. However, to the people driven out of the rice paddies into the "liberated" areas, the latter are nothing other than refugee villages. Recently, apparently many people have escaped to the "liberated areas" from the flatlands, to avoid the terrorism of the Vietnamese soldiers and government oppression. However, the Democratic Kampuchean Government reportedly is advising people to move their dwelling places rather than increasing the population in the jungle, where food is in short supply, and to remain in the flatlands and await the right moment.

There Was no Difference Between Men and Women among the Soldiers Fighting at the Front

There was considerable traffic along the roads connecting the villages in the "liberated" areas, no matter where one went and sometimes one would even encounter bicyclists ringing their bells as they went along. In places there were small huts, apparently relay posts with soldiers guarding them with rifles, but there was not much psychological tension.



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A few days later I resolved to ascertain what Prime Minister Samphan calls the dry season offensive and to live with the Democratic Kampuchea forces in the field, so I requested by all means to be allowed to travel to the front. The Foreign Office official, No Lin told me "It takes five days round trip to the heavy fighting, and there is no water along the way," but he apparently contacted the front regimental commander Nikhom and brought me an "OK" to go to the front. I was prepared for a rigorous march and was firmly resolved to face danger, since if I hadn't done so, my trip all the way from Japan would have been a waste.

On the first morning, an elephant was prepared from the base area. I was mounted on one and I headed east into the jungle accompanied by about fifty soldiers. The speed of the elephant making wide strides is equivalent to that of a person walking fast. Even so, no matter how much we traveled, there was no end to it. With a noon break sandwiched in between, the journey extended to nine hours and by night fall we arrived at a supply base to the front lines.

Great masses of soldiers were camped as if drawn into the jungle on both sides of the road, with a considerable number of women among the supply unit. It was a noisy spectacle, like a colony of sparrows.

We were to camp together with them. In the surrounding jungle, it is reported that there are places where large quantities of weapons and ammunition were buried at the beginning of 1978 in anticipation of a Vietnamese offensive. It is said that these are dug up and used in attacks, but apparently there exist a lot of weapons lost when those responsible for burying them died in battle. Mines have been placed around them, so as long as there are no surviving members to serve as guides to their location, they cannot easily be found.

The meal that had been prepared for us consisted of stir fried vegetables with chicken, and soup. The rice was reportedly bought from Thailand with currency provided by aid from a friendly country. The rice grains were dry and meal was not delicious to me so I ate it by pouring the soup over it and drinking it. I suddenly noticed a group of four or five people necking at the rice in their pot, and was embarrassed to discover that the only things that they ate with it were powdered fish and salt.

The night soldiers were sleeping like insects, hanging in their hammocks. Also, some soldiers were sitting around the campfire listening to folk music and news on portable (Japanese made) radios reporting the results of battles from each area, since even in the jungle broadcasts of Democratic Kampuchea could be heard very well.

It is rumored that the broadcasts originate from a transmitter placed in Yunnan Province in China, but this is not confirmed. In any case, as long as one has a radio, Democratic Kampuchean broadcasts can be heard anywhere in the country.

The next morning at 7:30 it was decided that I was to go on foot to the next relay post, and I joined about 300 soldiers heading towards the front. After going beyond the supply base, I saw that large trees had been felled everywhere, laying across the road. This was done reportedly to prevent the invasion by Vietnamese tanks. I began to get somewhat tense. A large group of soldiers who were on

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their way to the front as replacements joined in, so suddenly the size of the Kampuchean troops swelled considerably. For myself, who was born right after World War II, there was no way of knowing the feelings of these young soldiers who might die on the battlefields, but the appearance of these young troops silently marching on, with AK rifles and anti-tank guns on their shoulders was truly majestic.

After coming this far, I realized that it was not only men who were fighting against the Vietnamese troops. This is because I encountered even young women carrying ammunition or rice on their heads while gritting their teeth, walking in file on the long journey to the front. The women in the supply unit accompanied the soldiers, just as the combat nurses did, and supported the Democratic Kampuchean forces in the rear.

We suddenly stopped while I was marching along lost in thought, and the command came "We will camp here for the night." I was told that this place was about 15 kilometers before reaching the village called Takon where 1200 Vietnamese were reportedly building a camp. When I settled into the spot indicated to me, at the camping point, two or three soldiers who were on the side began suddenly to dig holes. When I stood up I was told something that meant "if a fire fight breaks out please get in this hole." I spent a sleepless night laying next to that hole.

I reached the attack zone on the front the next day, which was the third day of the march. It was five kilometers this side of Takon. On this day, on the way, I heard that we passed through a camp abandoned by the Vietnamese in retreat and that the Kampuchean forces had been making sporadic attacks twice a day for the past two weeks in order to keep up the pressure.

The attack on this day was one of these. When radio contact was made with units on three sides who had sneaked up as close as possible to Takon an all-out attack began, coordinated with the signal from big guns. 107mm mortars spewed forth fire and the enemy was attacked by these, and by 75mm mortars that boomed out. The quick maneuvering of the Kampuchean soldiers, the impact of the rockets...I discovered that I was tense with fascination. Shortly, I was warned of the danger of a counterattack by the Vietnamese and was ordered to retreat, but the mortar attack continued for about one hour.

Later I noticed that the radio broadcast that the "Vietnamese camp on National Route 5 had been brought under control through a fierce attack by Kampuchean forces," and also learned that the Kampucheans had retaken Takon.

Japanese Canned Goods were Scattered About the Fallen Vietnamese Camp

I again returned to "Headquarters," where I met Regimental Commander Nikhom who I thought was at the front. When I asked him when he had returned from the front, he said he walked back, marching through the night. That evening I had dinner with Nikhom and told him that I would like to meet Pol Pot, and if this was difficult, at least to know where he was operating. In reply the regimental commander explained with great self-confidence "I can't tell you, since his location is a military secret. However, he sends us information and instructions by radio every day. We know everything about the location of the Vietnamese forces, without

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which our attacks would bring no results. Of course, we also know in detail what is going on in Phnom Penh." He also informed me that the Vietnamese camp at O la hon fell three days ago. He said that the freshness of battle still remained at O la hon. The next day I set out for the field, dragging my corn-blistered feet.

The route to O la hon was narrow and there were more mountain passes than I expected, added to which there was the danger of mines. I therefore skirted the trail and walked where there was no road, and finally arrived at the area totally exhausted.

The Vietnamese base at O la hon was on a high point with a commanding view. The jungle was cut away on all four sides for about 300 meters but the camp structures themselves were scattered about, probably as preparation against attack. Deep ditches were dug around each building, and there were many trenches deliberately constructed by ditches with logs and dirt piled on top, and I could see why the Vietnamese forces had been several times stronger than the Kampuchean side. Scattered about were ammunition, Vietnamese army caps, and cooking utensils testifying to the horror of war, but what really surprised me was the large number of empty cans of Japanese goods scattered about, designed with the "Rising Sun" and "Mount Fuji."

To the best of my knowledge, the Japanese government sent to Phnom Penh as aid canned goods worth 800 million yen through UN organizations. However, it is reported that some of these ended up on the black market in Vietnam, and here we have confirmation that they were brought by the Vietnamese up to the front lines.

In a granary built by the Vietnamese about three bags of rice still remained. Thinking it was precious booty, when I pointed it out to a soldier with whom I had become friendly, he frowned and shook his head "No." It turned out that the Vietnamese may have poisoned it, so on no occasion should it be eaten. Up to this time, there had been cases of people dying from drinking water that they did not know the retreating Vietnamese had poisoned, and cases of mass dysentery, so the troops were very serious about such "booty."

(Hopu) (age 27) the commander of the O la hon district, described the battle to drive out the Vietnamese. "In the first week, we wore down the enemy by surprise attacks, finally went around behind them, cut off their supply route and made a concentrated attack from three sides in the jungle." He said they also concealed themselves along the retreat route and fired at the retreating Vietnamese. He added "It is an iron rule of diversionary warfare for a company to wipe out a regiment and route the enemy without making any sacrifices."

Walking along in pitch darkness, I was slated to return to "headquarters," but by accident I came across soldiers heading towards the front along with women carrying supplies. They were to chase after the Vietnamese towards Pailin in the south."

Prime Minister Khieu Samphan Described Conditions at the Front This Way

I was to move from "headquarters" to the "liberated area" in the vicinity of Phnum Malai. I took leave of the soldiers, mounted an elephant, and headed north. Phnum

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Malai is a major point in northwest Kampuchea and since last year the Vietnamese have repeatedly attacked it, but were repulsed each time. They say that this was because the Vietnamese were unable to use tanks in the fighting, since the bridge near the supply base at O-Chareu on the Vietnamese forces' side for the attack on Phnum Malai was detonated four times by Kampuchean guerrillas. At any rate the fighting spirits of the Kampucheans is high. It is reported that the fierce attack on the Vietnamese last December was especially terrible.

I heard the following evidence about the situation at that time. "The Vietnamese forces poured soldiers drafted in the south into the fighting like human bullets. The Kampuchean forces made repeated surprise attacks on them from the jungle and wiped them out. The road going from O-Chareu to Phnum Malai was covered with the corpses of Vietnamese soldiers." The number of Vietnamese soldiers that died in battle on that road, which is now nicknamed "Cemetery Road" reached 1,400 according to Kampuchean reports.

I had an unexpected meeting in the liberated zone near Phnum Malai. It was the son of Prince Sihanouk who has been in the public eye regarding the issue of an Anti-Vietnamese Unified Front. His son, Norodom Narindarapon (age 26), returned from France last December. I had dinner with him, and he related to me the following.

"I am a Buddhist, but feeling that I wanted to fulfill a political role to do something to solidify the people against Vietnam, I returned home to answer to the call for a unified front. I have seen the brave posture of the soldiers on the battlefield, and would like to undergo military training myself, if possible. I cannot believe that my father could retire from politics. Now, when it is necessary to save our country from invasion, I hope that he will join us in the Ethnic Patriotic Front that the government is calling for.

This "liberated area" appears to be a window for diplomacy opened by the Democratic Kampuchean Government towards Thailand, and visitors from foreign countries are apparently generally received here. Near here there is an advanced form of liberated area village called a "new village," in which efforts have been expended to improve the environment, and is being used as a model for other "homestead villages." It is about three kilometers from this liberated area to Phnum Malai. I could thus well understand why Kampuchea defended it "to the death."

I must report that here I also met with Prime Minister Khieu Samphan. The cabinet that accompanied the Prime Minister included Secretary General Khet Chhon and Social Welfare Minister Ieng Thirith. These important people appeared out of the blue, and when the interview was over they again disappeared into the jungle. I have no idea where the facilities for the high ranking cadre are located. They are probably moved about constantly in the jungle.

However, in December 1979, I heard that when a delegation of Japanese newsmen met with Pol Pot at a base area in Northern Kampuchea, they crossed the border under cover of night and were led to the meeting place in blindfolds, but I could now understand the expression of their confidence in the "liberated areas" and the change in the war situation from my interview with these officials.

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My interview with Khieu Samphan lasted from 4 pm to 9 pm with dinner in between. The Prime Minister, who served as Minister of Trade during Sihanouk's regime is known as the only person in the cabinet at that time who rode to work on his bicycle. Perhaps because of his present ordeal, he had much more white hair than he did in his (earlier) photographs.

The dauntless face of the Prime Minister who, in his younger days studied Marxism in France, as had former Prime Minister Pol Pot, who now occupies the position of highest military commander, appeared even to reflect the mentality of this country, although I heard that he has a light case of malaria. He answered each of my questions crisply, to the point and with clarity. Here I will present only the characteristics of the war situation as the Prime Minister related them to me.

Prime Minister Samphan and his party, filled with confidence explained: "In 1979 when the Vietnamese invaded, we were forced into a bitter struggle, with a dead-lock state continuing into 1980. The two years up to now we were in a defensive posture, but the war situation now has taken a dramatic and favorable turn and our forces are now on the offensive in each area." Their analysis as to the cause behind the change in conditions was (1) lowering of fighting spirit of Vietnamese troops, (2) the military strength of the Vietnamese forces had reached its ceiling, and (3) supply has become difficult owing to the economic collapse inside of Vietnam.

Next, in regard to how the people are accepting the war as a resistance to invasion, they told me, showing considerable power, that "At the time, in '79, there were people with various ideas, but those who were fighting against the invasion were Kampuchean government forces, and support for them has spread widely through their results in combat and through political knowledge." They also said that even though the Prime Minister is in the jungle, he knows the situation throughout the country in considerable detail.

"Those who support the Vietnamese troops amount to only one percent of the population (60,000, assuming a population of 6,000,000?). Even among the vigilante groups that they established, there are some who will harbor political officials and poor farmers will offer supplies to the guerrillas, so that in some form they can maintain relations with the people."

Later, when I asked a Western correspondent in Bangkok how he perceived these facts, I was able to hear an interesting explanation that was quite similar. "Heng Samrin's regime is just a billboard for the Vietnamese, and his so-called army has practically no fighting men. It is not appropriate to think that they are fighting together, rather they serve as guides for the Vietnamese troops."

"Vietnamese officials have been assigned even to the rural villages, but the vigilante groups have been organized actually in order to expose people opposed to the Vietnamese, and sympathizers with the Democratic Kampuchean forces."

There are people who walk for several days from inside the country to the Thai-Kampuchea border to receive supplies from international aid. It is through the mouths of such people that one gets a vague profile of what is going on inside of Kampuchea, one that is different from that shown to foreigners.

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Prime Minister Samphan continued "Vietnam has sent 250,000 troops and 50,000 government officials into Kampuchea, but they have complete control of only one area, and guerrilla warfare is continuing sporadically throughout the country." Also, regarding the strength of the present Democratic Kampuchean Army, he explained "There are 60,000 regular troops (the Thai Army estimate is 40,000). In addition, there are 70,000 guerrillas" and he reported "The scale is expanding even more, since we have volunteers.

Recently, it became evident that increasing numbers of Vietnamese who were sent into the invasion of Kampuchea fear dying in the jungles of a strange land and have been deserting into Thai territory. It seemed perfectly natural to me that the Vietnamese soldiers, constantly harrassed by surprise attacks, would lose their will to fight in a senseless war that is being protracted. Even in Battambang Province that I had infiltrated into the jungles cover a vast area and ones range of vision at best is ten meters. No matter how strong the Vietnamese may be, it is next to impossible to stamp out the guerrillas who know how to survive the jungle labyrinth, just as the U.S. forces were unable to deal with the Viet Cong. As for the recent strategy of the Vietnamese, it appears that they have already given up on advancing into mountain regions, perhaps because they have realized they have had more victims than successes, or because they lure the enemy into the flatlands and wipe them out there. At the same time, it is safe to say that one feature of the Kampuchean situation these days is that the Kampuchean forces are waging fierce attacks on the Vietnamese bases that have been stretched out across the flatlands.

The Young Female Democratic Kampuchean Soldier Smiled and Looked Down When She Faced the Camera

Now let me discuss the sober aspects of the soldiers of the Democratic Kampuchean Army, the former soldiers of Pol Pot. This may be a subjective opinion, but the impression I got from direct contact with them was not the "cruel, unjust gang" reported in the media in Japan. Rather they are a group of simple young people with surprisingly high moral standards.

Half of the soldiers are 18 to 25 years old, and many come from poor farmer households. What is striking about such young soldiers is that they become separated from the real fighting men when they get married, and that in Kampuchea, where the average life span has been about 45 years, at the same time, in Third World countries that are on the road of progress the size of the population under age fifteen is 45 percent (UN data), which testifies to the reality of the situation.

The young soldiers who were raised in a place having no connection with materialistic civilization are filled with the earthy innocence that still remains in the Tohoku region of Japan. I was impressed by the beauty of their clear eyes shining in the darkness of their sunburnt faces. This is not only true of the men. Even the women in the supply units were innocent young girls who would reply confidently they are serving "for our country's independence" and would smile and look down when in front of the camera.

An independence was evident among them. That did not match their youthfulness. During marches, if someone stood up, everyone would follow suit, people would prepare their two meals a day as they liked in groups of four or five, and when the

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Givovac site was selected people would sleep where and when they liked, and all life was carried on at the squad level. There were no orders or commands, and perhaps because they had been tempered in the many diversionary actions where they had to act according to their own judgment, it was unusual to see how disciplined they actually were.

There were fixed military rules among the soldiers. For example, "one must not deprive the people of even one grain of rice," in order to prevent soldiers armed with rifles from shooting, "There must be no arguments among the troops," and to guard against moral degeneration there was a rule between men and women "women must not be teased."

Such discipline in the Kampuchean forces was a legacy from the time of the fight against the Americans and apparently it now permeates them in the war against the Vietnamese. As far as I could see in their living and in their marches, conversation between the sexes was modest, and at night no one ever approached the women's camp. I was repeatedly struck by the kindness among people: lending one of one's sandals to a barefoot person, showing care to those with malaria, and the like.

As I discovered when I learned that an older man dressed in simple farmers' clothes and straw sandals was Regimental Commander Nikhom later assigned to defend Battambang Province, my honest impression was that the Democratic Kampuchean Army in a country where 90 percent of the population are farmers was none other than an "army of farmers," and the commanding officers in each area were "good natured peasants."

The Cambodian Conflict Must Be Reported from the Standpoint of the Side Being Invaded

To the Japanese, the term "Cambodian Army" raises a dark image. This is because it inevitably reminds them of the "atrocities problem." Therefore in Japanese public opinion, there are many who say "Of course, the Vietnamese were wrong to invade (Cambodia), but the Cambodians themselves (Pol Pot's army) were also cruel." But if we take the position "The invaders are wrong and so are the invaded," what can the people of the small country of Kampuchea hold on to in order to survive?

Isn't the current Kampuchean problem one of resistance to the independence of a small country being swallowed up by the military might of a large one (Vietnam)? After the Americans left Indochina, the Soviet Union is supporting Vietnam in order to encroach upon Southeast Asia, and didn't this same Vietnam invade the small country of Kampuchea in order to swallow it up?

If we follow the thesis of the Shoichi Honda school of journalism that taught us that "the issues must be examined from the side of those being invaded" during the Vietnam conflict, two prerequisite conditions are missing in reports on Kampuchea up to the present time. One is that the Democratic Government of Kampuchea, which was founded in 1975 by evading the struggle for ethnic liberation, was under conditions of economic hardship that were more severe than those of Vietnam. The scale of the bombing raids by American forces was not the same ratio as in Vietnam for example the all-out bombing of the entire country for 200 days in succession brought destruction unprecedented in the history of this small nation.

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One other factor was that the Kampuchians were also fated to deal with ethnic liberation, i.e., at the same time as they were liberated, they had to deal with Vietnam's policy of incorporation (the plan for an "Indochina Federation"). Japanese think that the invasion of Kampuchea was a sudden blitzkrieg, but this is not so. Until the large-scale invasion by the Vietnamese at the end of 1978, various schemes were carried out to overthrow the regime of Pol Pot, who would not agree to the "Indochina Federation" being advocated by Vietnam. The idea was similar to the Soviet principle of limitation and was intended to bring the military forces of Laos and Cambodia under the direction of the Vietnamese.

The Kampuchians chose to advocate non-alliance and neutrality, and follow a course of independence separate from Laos not because of an ethnic confrontation, but because there was an undercurrent of self-reliance, a desire not to entrust again the liberation gained by the flow of blood, to the domination of a neighboring country. The border conflict that broke out soon after liberation was not an issue as to who was the aggressor. It was nothing than a political confrontation and political discord over whether to be subordinated to Vietnamese control or follow the path of independence, taking the form of a border conflict.

Inside Kampuchea, as the Vietnam factions were purged and operations designed to overthrow the government ended in failure, it was decided to throw the Vietnamese Tank Corps into an all-out offensive as a means of last resort. The Heng Samrin regime was set up one month prior to the offensive. It was a mere "decoration" designed to hide the Vietnamese aggression from the eyes of the world.

At the center of the Cambodian "atrocities issue" are punishment of the Vietnam faction during the turmoil and unrest right after independence, and instances of bloodshed that took place as retributions against members of the old regime and the Vietnam faction at the local level. Of course, there were many deaths from starvation and disease, but they do not exceed the number of deaths in societies after revolutions that have occurred up to the present--a fact which is gradually becoming apparent.

I think it is necessary to focus attention on the fact that the source of the "mass atrocities issue" is Vietnam, the country that was the aggressor at the time. Just because piles of bones were shown in the environs of Phnom Penh that was under Vietnamese control at the time does not allow us to judge whether these resulted from atrocities, illness, or starvation. Burial of the dead after liberation changed from individual to mass graves, and if they were disinterred, any number of human bones could be dug up.

Is it too far-fetched to think that it was only natural for them to set these up as "places of atrocities" and show them to foreign newsmen? (Even if these were "great atrocities," this is for the Kampuchians, not the Vietnamese, to judge.) These words keenly represent the anger of the Kampuchians on this issue.

Another Kampuchian has said that Vietnam, which has tens of thousands of boat people abandoning their homeland, is not qualified to judge Kampuchea. It is more appropriate for them to be concerned with finding means to supply food to the starving people in their own country, than to send their armies into foreign lands. I don't think that any solution can be found by complaining about an unconfirmable



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"mass atrocity" unless attention is paid at the same time to the problem as to why hardships and tragedies continue to plague the many refugees and people in the "liberated areas."

Regarding the "mass atrocity issue," Prime Minister Samphan openly acknowledged that there were cases of persons who were put to death without warrant due to misunderstandings in the process of uncovering Vietnamese spies and disruptive elements bought by them, and to excess alarm, but at the same time he stated "if the atrocity reports were true, we and the people probably could not continue this bitter struggle," and expressed self-reproach and regrets, saying "our being too late in opening a diplomatic window was a decisive failure for Kampuchea and made the Vietnamese slander possible."

I cannot forget the words of Ms Ieng Thirith "It is the Vietnamese who are committing the atrocities. I cannot understand why we, who are the victims of aggression, are being criticized."

The UN resolution demanding that all foreign troops be withdrawn from Kampuchea is still being ignored by the Vietnamese aggressors. Reverting to the principle of self-determination of peoples, isn't observance of this resolution itself the first step towards solving the Kampuchean issue?

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