



## A CAMBODIAN PEACE SETTLEMENT: GEORGE BUSH'S LITMUS TEST IN ASIA

### INTRODUCTION

The Bush Administration last year played a major role in bringing together the four warring factions of Cambodia. These are: the present government now called the State of Cambodia (SoC), the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF), the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), and the Khmer Rouge. At America's initiative, these contestants for power in Cambodia, as well as eighteen other countries, signed the United Nations-sponsored Paris Agreement last October.<sup>1</sup> To implement the agreement, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established. The world organization's largest peacekeeping operation to date, UNTAC's job is to monitor Cambodia's progress toward democracy until elections are held in the spring of 1993.

To back up UNTAC, Washington agreed to contribute \$516 million to its peacekeeping efforts, plus an additional \$135 million for reconstruction. Japan, the next largest donor, will contribute \$24.9 million.

**U.S. Prestige.** The United States has a sizeable financial stake in Cambodia, but more important, Washington has committed its prestige in Asia to bringing peace to this troubled nation. With the imminent departure of U.S. forces from the Philippines, and with traditionally close relations between America and Thailand strained by the Bangkok government's bloody suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators in May, Washington's willingness to complete the Cambodian settlement is likely to be seen throughout Asia as the test of America's commitment to the region's future.

However, with George Bush's attention focused increasingly on his reelection bid, Cambodia has dropped to near the bottom of the Administration's foreign policy priorities. One important result: Congress approved only 71 percent of the Bush Admin-

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1 United Nations Resolution 718 in 1991, United Nations Resolution 745 in 1992.

istration's request for UNTAC funding this year. Because America initially agreed to pay so large a portion of UNTAC's expenses, the Administration's failure to obtain full funding from Congress will have a serious impact this year on the most important phase of the peace process: disarmament of the four warring factions. The lack of money is not the only problem affecting Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge has failed to comply with the Paris Agreements and corruption is rampant in the Phnom Penh government. U.S. leadership can help weaken the Khmer Rouge if Washington continues to refuse granting the recognition this ruthless faction seeks until and unless it meets certain conditions. These are stripping the Khmer Rouge of its vicious leadership and Marxist ideology while forcing it to admit its criminal past and surrender its arms. By withholding financial assistance the U.S. can also limit corruption in the current Cambodian government. Unless the U.S. refocuses its attention on Cambodia, UNTAC will fall short of its goals, and Washington will have wasted its effort on another Indochina venture.

**Suspicious Rivals.** The Paris Agreements represent the most ambitious peacekeeping operation ever attempted by the U.N. Due to the bitter enmity among Cambodia's warring factions, however, there is a strong chance of failure if the complete deployment of the UNTAC peacekeeping mission is delayed. The FUNCINPEC, Khmer Rouge, KPLNF, and SoC span the ideological spectrum, each with its own agenda and military force, and each eyeing one another suspiciously. Limited fighting between SoC forces and the Khmer Rouge continues. The Khmer Rouge has prevented UNTAC observers from entering its regional strongholds in Kompong Thom and Battambang provinces and is balking at disarming its military. At the same time, SoC police continue harassing the non-communist KPLNF party in Phnom Penh.

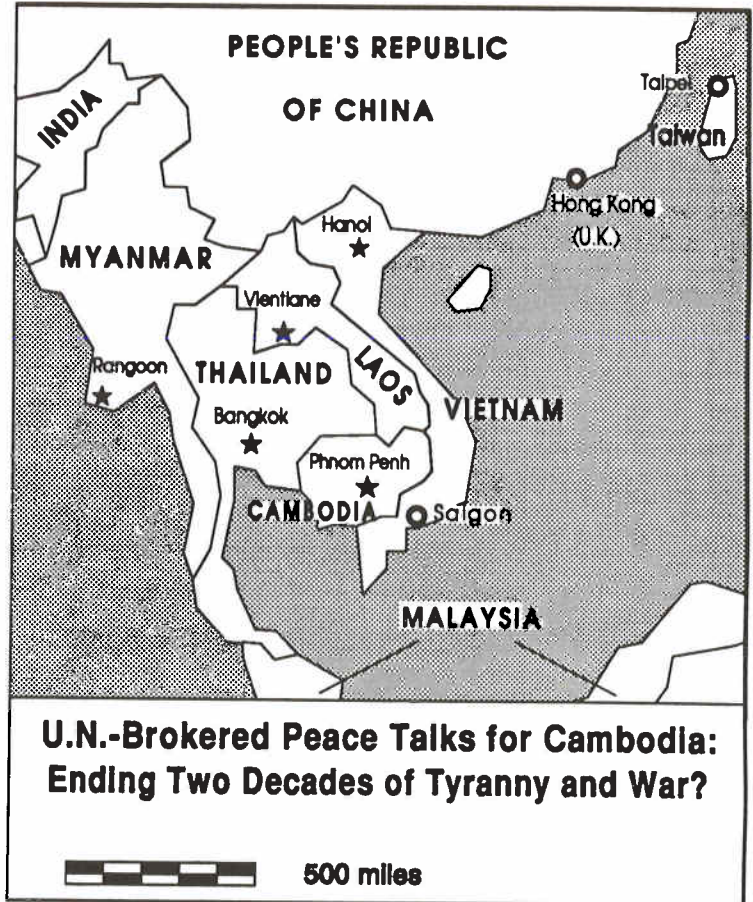
The U.N. admittedly is a flawed organization, but no other outside party has stepped forward to help resolve Cambodia's problems—nor will one. To ensure UNTAC's success in bringing peace to Cambodia and provide sufficient U.S. representation on UNTAC to reaffirm America's role as an honest broker in keeping the peace in Asia, the Bush Administration needs to reverse its inattention to Cambodia which resulted in Congress's failure to support U.S. commitments to U.N. peacekeeping efforts. Specifically, the Administration should:

- ✕ Seek full funding from Congress for U.N. peacekeeping operations in Cambodia.**
- ✕ Satisfy UNTAC's request to increase the number of U.S. military observers.** In addition, to increase its influence and thus the chance of a successful outcome to the settlement of Cambodia's civil war, the U.S. should increase the number of American personnel on the UNTAC staff.
- ✕ Press UNTAC to allocate financing from UNTAC's budget for new democratic parties, and continue support of Cambodia's non-communist factions, the KPLNF and FUNCINPEC.**
- ✕ Refuse any contact between Administration officials and the Khmer Rouge until stringent conditions are met.**

- ✗ Insist that UNTAC monitor state-owned property sales in Cambodia to prevent SoC government officials from stealing the proceeds.
- ✗ Encourage free market reforms in Cambodia by requiring that any international aid be given to private enterprises.

## CAMBODIA REVISITED

Shifting alliances have been the hallmark of Cambodia's recent political history. When France ended its colonial rule in Cambodia in 1953, Prince Norodom Sihanouk became head of the government. After the Vietnam War broke out, Sihanouk adopted a foreign policy that tried to please both the U.S. and North Vietnam. In the early 1960s Sihanouk began to lean increasingly to the left. He renounced U.S. economic and military aid in 1964 and severed all relations with the U.S. a year later. The North Vietnamese took advantage of this development by marshalling more than 50,000 troops inside Cambodia.



### U.N.-Brokered Peace Talks for Cambodia: Ending Two Decades of Tyranny and War?

In 1970, Cambodia's Prime Minister, General Lon Nol, replaced the prince as chief of state after Sihanouk had been unanimously voted out of power by the National Assembly. Lon Nol's U.S.-supported reign lasted until 1975, when he was overthrown by Pol Pot, leader of the communist Khmer Rouge, who immediately set about murdering over one million Cambodians in an attempt to create a utopian peasant society.

The Khmer Rouge held power until December 1978, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia, changed its name to the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), and installed two ex-Khmer Rouge commanders, Heng Samrin and Hun Sen, as president and foreign minister respectively. The Khmer Rouge, backed by China, returned to the jungles and has, since 1979, continued an effective guerrilla warfare campaign against the Phnom Penh government and its Vietnamese backers.

## THE FACTIONS INVOLVED IN THE TALKS

There are four Cambodian factions in the U.N. talks. They are:

**FACTION #1: The National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia ( FUNCIPEC).**

Prince Sihanouk formed this anti-communist group in 1981 to advance his political ambitions. Over the years, the prince has shifted alliances and formed coalitions to remain a key player in Cambodia. Today, this pattern persists. Content with chairing the Supreme National Council until next year's elections, the prince has distanced himself from his FUNCIPEC supporters. His son, Prince Ranariddh, has stepped in to head FUNCIPEC and represents the party on the SNC. As a result of this maneuvering, Sihanouk has increased his influence in Cambodia's pre-election politics, preserving the option to embrace either FUNCIPEC or any other faction that develops popular support.

**FACTION #2: The Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF).**

Owing to its lack of financial resources and political in-fighting, this faction is considered the weakest of the four. Strongly anti-communist and pro-U.S., the KPLNF is calling for an end to the widespread corruption in the Phnom Penh government. This is an extremely popular theme among the peasants and merchants, who are powerless to prevent ministry officials from looting state property. The KPLNF's longtime political leader, Son Sann, publishes a popular independent newsletter that reaches an enthusiastic audience, but his supporters' political force is diminished by internal divisions within the faction's own ranks.

**FACTION #3: The State of Cambodia (SoC).**

Formerly the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the current government of Cambodia, which is an independent negotiator in the talks, was placed in power by Vietnam after its 1978 invasion. Fourteen years later, the SoC remains devoted to its communist ideology and dedicated to staying in power. Led by Hun Sen, the SoC is likely to do well in the urban areas during 1993 elections, mostly by purchasing votes with illicitly gained funds. Government officials, for example, now are seizing state-owned buildings in Phnom Penh and leasing them to UNTAC officials or foreign businessmen at inflated prices; the profits go straight to the officials' private bank accounts. These illicit monies are a major source of Hun Sen's strength.

**FACTION #4: The Khmer Rouge.**

The biggest threat to peace today, the hard-line communist Khmer Rouge, controls most of Cambodia's rural areas. Although the Khmer Rouge terrorized Cambodia and murdered over one million of its own people from 1975 to 1978, the leaders of the three other Cambodian factions stipulated that the Khmer Rouge be involved in the peace process. Prince Sihanouk stated in 1990 that "only on the day the Khmer Rouge joins" will the Supreme National Council symbolize sovereignty in Cambodia.<sup>2</sup> Sihanouk's statement articulated what the three other factions believe, although it is

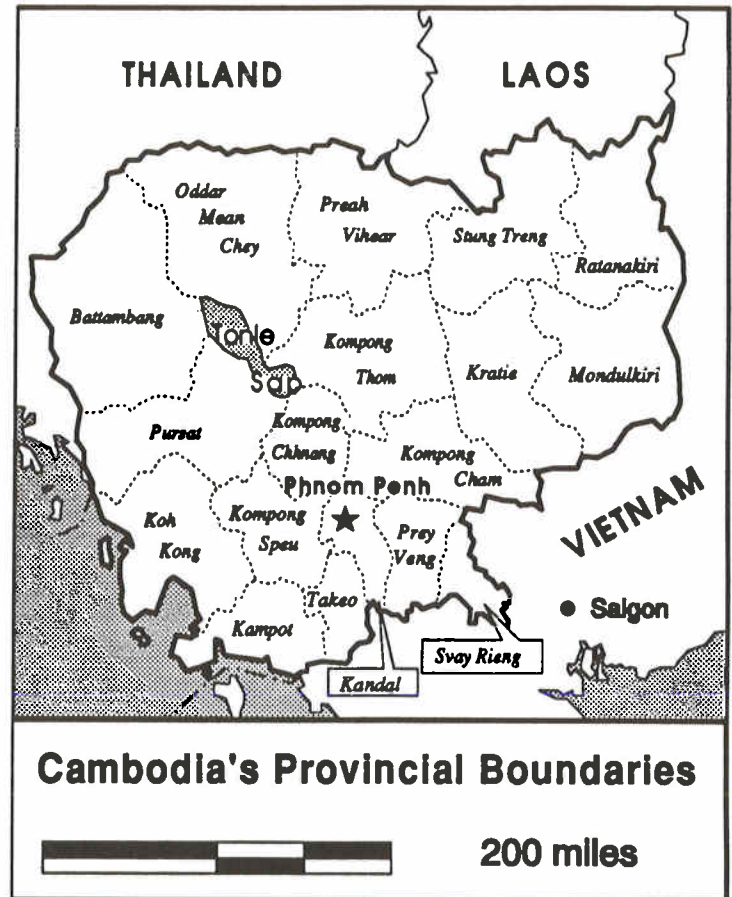
not accepted in many Western countries: The Khmer Rouge is a necessary part of a peaceful solution in Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge's leaders control rural strongholds in Kompong Thom, Battambang, and Koh Kong provinces, as well as numerous isolated refugee and military camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. The Khmer Rouge recruits troops in these areas for its 15,000-18,000 man military force, the second largest in Cambodia after the SoC.

The Khmer Rouge has abandoned for now the strategy of using military force to return to power. Its goal today supposedly is to win the allegiance of

Cambodia's peasants through political and social means. In a 1988 address to the Democratic Kampuchea Women's Association, a Khmer Rouge front organization, Pol Pot, who remains the most important Khmer Rouge chieftain, said that "the essence of our propaganda work [is] in the village...in the days to come, it will be necessary for the majority of our ranks to stick right with the people, stick right in the villages, and know how to build up popular strength, maintain a grip on popular strength, and disperse ourselves everywhere throughout the entire country to get a grip on thousands of villages and millions of people."<sup>3</sup> This policy is not an original one. It is the peaceful half of the classic tactics of an insurgency: feed the hungry, heal the sick, and supply such other genuine needs as police protection.

In contrast to these seemingly benevolent gestures, however, is the Khmer Rouge's treatment of refugees under its control. The Khmer Rouge administers nearly a dozen camps that house over 70,000 refugees created by a decade of war. Seeking to enlarge its voting strength in the countryside, the Khmer Rouge has tried to relocate refugees from camps along the Thailand border to the Battambang and Koh Kong provinces that form the core of the Khmer Rouge strongholds. These areas are littered with thousands of land mines, infested with malaria, and beset by hunger. The Khmer Rouge's



2 Charles Smith, "Disappointing Debut," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 14, 1990, p. 12.

3 Christophe Peschoux, *The New Khmer Rouge*, a 1991 study by French State Secretary for Humanitarian Action.

desire to move refugees into these miserable areas belies its leadership's populist sentiments and their efforts to establish international respectability.

So does the Khmer Rouge's failure this June to comply with Phase Two of the Paris Agreements, which would disarm 70 percent of each faction's military.<sup>4</sup> To date, the Khmer Rouge has refused to allow its troops to lay down their weapons and move to UNTAC-controlled cantonment camps.

Notwithstanding these signs of a dangerous, ruthless faction in their midst, Cambodians, from Prince Sihanouk to Prime Minister Hun Sen, believe that any attempt to reconstruct their nation without Khmer Rouge involvement will not bring lasting peace and could bring worse. They believe that if the Khmer Rouge walks away from the Paris agreements, then Cambodia comes one step closer to returning to long-term conflict and possibly the "killing fields."

## THE UNITED NATIONS' PEACEKEEPING ROLE IN CAMBODIA

The U.N.'s ability to act as an effective force for peace will be tested in Cambodia. UNTAC is the U.N.'s largest such undertaking in its history. Headed by a Japanese U.N. official, Yasushi Akashi, UNTAC will require approximately 26,000 administrative and logistical personnel, including 16,000 multinational troops to implement the Paris Agreements.<sup>5</sup>

UNTAC plans to conduct a wide range of unprecedented functions. For the first time, a U.N. coalition will act as the primary administrator of a sovereign nation state. UNTAC will have authority over the twelve-member Cambodian SNC and direct control over the country's five top ministries: defense, foreign affairs, information, finance, and public security. In addition, UNTAC will organize and oversee the national elections scheduled for May 1993 and clear the countryside of thousands of landmines.

The estimated price tag for these services is \$1.7 billion.<sup>6</sup> Another \$900 million is required for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to repatriate 370,000 refugees who are now living in refugee camps along the Thailand and Cambodia border and for initial efforts to reconstruct the war-torn land. In sum, Cambodia's transition to peace and towards a fledgling democracy will cost \$2.6 billion, making it the U.N.'s most expensive peacekeeping operation to date. The U.S. has agreed to pay 30 percent of UNTAC's \$1.7 billion share or \$516 million. Washington is not obligated to contribute to the \$900 million U.N. refugee fund.

While UNTAC is expensive, particularly for the U.S., failure in Cambodia would cost more: a likely return to wholesale violence in a region whose economic success remains a beacon for the rest of the world.

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4 William Branigi, "Khmer Rouge Balks, Halts Peace Process," *The Washington Post*, June 13, 1992, p. A15.

5 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 21, 1992, p. 461.

6 United Nations Report of the Secretary General, *Financing of the UNAMC and UNTAC*, A/46/903, May 7, 1992.

**Pressure on Washington.** A U.N. failure to bring peace to Cambodia is likely as well to increase long-term pressure for America to become involved in squabbles around the world where its economic, military, and diplomatic interests are affected only marginally. As is demonstrated by the pressure Washington feels to address Yugoslavia's internal bloodbath, several months of media-communicated brutality against an unarmed civilian population cannot simply be overlooked. The U.S. could avoid deep entanglement in Cambodia by using the U.N. as the leading instrument to help keep the peace. The U.N. is no panacea, indeed its record of solving international dilemmas is poor. But the only alternatives to U.N. efforts today are anarchy or the intercession of a major military power. The U.S. has no interest in filling such a role.

Cambodia is a clear test of Washington's ability to make good on a commitment it made to a U.N.-brokered effort to settle a regional conflict. The murderous legacy of this conflict traces back to the 1970s and is precisely the kind of gruesome spectacle which civilized nations are not likely to stand by and see repeated. Washington can both carry out its duty as a civilized nation and advance its influence in Asia by supporting the U.N.'s peacekeeping efforts in Cambodia.

## **REACHING A SETTLEMENT IN CAMBODIA**

George Bush's administration must tear a small part of its attention away from Europe and its efforts to solve the Middle East's ancient enmities. The Administration's concentration on these areas has diluted its focus on Asia in general and specifically on the effort to resolve Cambodia's civil strife, which has been side-lined and thwarted by congressional inaction.

Although the U.S. is paying over half a billion dollars for UNTAC, it is vastly underrepresented in the administration of the organization. The U.S. has only two Americans on the UNTAC staff and three military observers attached to the military command. The U.S. requires a strong voice in UNTAC. Without an increased American presence on UNTAC, the U.S. stands to lose control of how its money is spent, what tasks U.S. military personnel are to be given, and how to direct the needed democratic reforms.

Strong U.S. support is needed also to fulfill America's promises, remind friends in Asia of Washington's continued commitment to the region's tranquillity, and ensure the success of the multinational UNTAC force. A modest increase in U.S. participation now will boost American credibility in Asia and, in turn, will solidify Southeast Asia as a base for American economic interests.

To honor its commitments, ensure U.N. success in ending Cambodia's civil strife, and increase American influence in Asia by taking an active role in the Cambodian settlement, the Bush Administration should:

**✕ Seek full funding from Congress for U.N. peacekeeping operations in Cambodia.**

The Bush Administration should press Congress to fulfill the U.S. promise and approve the U.N.'s 1993 peacekeeping request for \$350 million, in which over \$250 million is earmarked for UNTAC. However, funding should be released only as UNTAC objectives are met. These include the total deployment of U.N. peacekeeping force in

Cambodia, disarming of the four factions, repatriation of 350,000 refugees, and democratic elections to be held in 1993. The State Department should continue to monitor the progress toward peace in Cambodia and recommend to the White House and Congress a freeze on payments if the Paris Agreements collapse.

**X Increase the number of U.S. military observers and civilian personnel on the UNTAC staff.**

The five permanent members on the United Nations Security Council—the U.S., Britain, China, France, and Russia—traditionally do not send personnel to U.N. peacekeeping operations. Nevertheless, France has pledged 1,500 troops, police, and administrators; China has sent a 400-man construction battalion to Cambodia. Though the U.S. is footing the largest portion of UNTAC's bill, \$516 million to date, it is represented by only five people. Three are unarmed military observers. This number should be increased to 47, the number requested by UNTAC. Similarly, there are only two Americans on the UNTAC administrative staff. The number of Americans on the UNTAC staff should be increased to a minimum of twenty. Proper U.S. representation on UNTAC will protect American interests, demonstrate Washington's commitment to Southeast Asia, and provide valuable experience to U.S. personnel in the region.

**X Increase support of Cambodia's non-communist factions, the KPLNF and FUNCINPEC, and allocate financing from UNTAC's budget for new democratic parties.**

UNTAC's chief, Yasushi Akashi, has asked the international community for \$111.8 million in voluntary contributions to ensure the stability of Cambodia's current government. Regrettably, these funds also will help to prop up a corrupt and unrepresentative faction in the peace process, the State of Cambodia. The U.S. should use increased representation at UNTAC to ensure that one-fourth of the funds Akashi has requested, or \$27.9 million, be given to the two anti-communist factions, KPLNF and FUNCINPEC. They represent a better future for Cambodia than either the corruption of the SoC or the dangerous fanaticism of the Khmer Rouge.

The U.S. should also carefully examine its own direct contributions to Cambodia. Section 559 of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 1993, earmarks \$10 million for administrative support of the corrupt and Vietnamese-backed SoC regime. Instead, this money should be earmarked for KPLNF and FUNCINPEC. Otherwise, it should be stricken from the bill.

Cambodia's progress towards democracy and human rights can be assisted by funding private newspapers, covering start-up administration costs for new political parties, and increasing air time of the KPLNF's radio station, the Voice of Khmer. UNTAC has over \$52 million budgeted for public information and training programs. The Bush Administration should use its influence to see that this money and funding from such organizations as the National Endowment for Democracy, a bipartisan U.S. program for assisting democracies around the globe, is allocated to finance private media ventures and the administrative costs of Cambodia's pro-democratic parties. Initial U.S.



backing of Cambodia's fledgling democratic parties will spawn new democratic parties and form closer ties between them and with America.

**X Refuse to begin direct talks with the Khmer Rouge until strict conditions have been met.**

Washington has forbidden U.S. officials from nearly all forms of direct contact with members of the Khmer Rouge. The U.S. special representative to the SNC, Charles Twining Jr., has said, "the bottom line is that we will not deal in any way with the Khmer Rouge."<sup>7</sup> This policy, the result of the Khmer Rouge's genocide in the 1970s, is understandable. America rightly has avoided direct contact with a group that in the past has proven to be genocidal and untrustworthy.

However, Pol Pot's strength lies in the countryside where he can restrict his followers' access to outside influences and bombard them with Khmer Rouge ideology. A 15,000-18,000 strong military and tens of thousands of civilians under their control enables the Khmer Rouge leaders to abandon the agreements they signed in Paris and cut off the prospect of peace.

U.S. contact with the Khmer Rouge would assist them in gaining greater international recognition. Therefore, the U.S. should consider a dialogue with the Khmer Rouge only after stringent conditions are met. Adherence to strict enough conditions would help hasten the unraveling of the Khmer Rouge. The resulting, increased exposure of lower level Khmer Rouge members and civilians under their control to such outside, democratic influences as can be brought to bear by the U.S. and other interested nations could ease the Khmer Rouge's vise-like grip on the knowledge its followers possess of the outside world and erode their all-important power base.

Conditions for direct U.S. contacts should be that the Khmer Rouge:

- ✓ admit their crimes against the people of Cambodia;
- ✓ install new leadership to replace the old guard which was responsible for the slaughter of the 1970s;
- ✓ disavow their Marxist ideology;
- ✓ surrender their arms to UNTAC.

**X Insist that UNTAC monitor state-owned property sales in Cambodia.**

To curb widespread corruption by the SoC, UNTAC should charge its newly established Register of Public Assets office with the responsibility to include sales of state-owned property. This office, in addition to registering all state-owned property, would monitor property sales and ensure that money earned through such sales is deposited in the Cambodian treasury and not in the pockets of corrupt officials.

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7 Philip Shenon, "U.S. Diplomat Warns of Return by Khmer Rouge," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1991, p. A3.

**X Encourage UNTAC to institute free market reforms in Cambodia.**

UNTAC has yet to de-socialize Cambodia's centrally run economy. Everything—from the media to telecommunications to agriculture—is in the state's hands. The U.S. should insist that UNTAC move quickly to end the government's monopolies and adopt a free market system.

To smooth the transition from socialism, the U.S. should urge UNTAC to send Cambodia's bankers and businessmen abroad to experience the workings of the U.S. and ASEAN economies. Finally, the U.S. should use its influence with UNTAC to guarantee that all forms of international assistance are channelled into emerging private enterprises rather than into the government. There is no sense in disestablishing a statist economy only to replace it with a welfare dependency beholden to international creditors.

## CONCLUSION

Southeast Asia's industrious peoples have turned their region into one of the fastest growing corners of the earth. Situated at its center is Cambodia, in which factions supported by communist China and Vietnam still strive, and from which instability is still capable of being transmitted. Communist ideology has relaxed its hold the world over. But the Marxist-Leninist belief that any means justify its now-discredited aims continues to exert a powerful influence over such groups as the Khmer Rouge, whose capacity for wholesale slaughter is proven.

**Chance for Peace.** The United Nations' ability to bring the Khmer Rouge and its rivals to a peaceful resolution of their dispute depends upon U.S. participation. To maintain and increase its influence in Asia as a keeper of the peace, George Bush's administration must redouble its efforts to ensure the successful outcome of the world organization's effort. It should seek full funding from Congress for U.S. peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, increase the number of U.S. personnel there, support the non-communist factions more vigorously, and encourage that the U.N. use aid as a means to stimulate market reform.

Direct U.S. contacts with the ruthless Khmer Rouge should not be made until certain conditions are met. Among them are the Khmer Rouge's disavowal of its present leadership and genocidal past.

There is a chance for peace in Cambodia, even though now it seems to be fragile. The key to peace is greater U.S. involvement. With it, the U.N. talks could get a new lease on life. This would benefit not only the long-suffering Cambodian people, but the U.S. as well.

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