

Regional powers win Cambodian cease-fire

by Linda de Hoyos

Meeting in the Thai resort town of Pattaya, the newly formed Supreme National Council of Cambodia, chaired by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, has reached the first stages of agreement on measures to end the 11-year-long conflict in Cambodia. The council is comprised of the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh, and the three factions of the resistance coalition to that government, led by Sihanouk, the U.S.-backed Son Sann, and the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge.

On June 24, the council announced that it had reached unanimous agreement for an "unlimited cease-fire" and to stop receiving foreign military assistance. Further, Sihanouk told the press, the council had put to rest the contentious issue of leadership, by unanimously endorsing the prince as "convenor and president" of its future meetings and as head of the council delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, according to the *Bangkok Nation*. The meeting also adopted a common flag and national anthem.

The cease-fire is being imposed after the Khmer Rouge has been driven out of the crucial town of Pailin near the border with Thailand, and Phnom Penh had stopped their drive to take the provincial capital of Battambang.

The tortuous road toward settlement of the conflict has centered on the plan put forward last year by the Permanent Five of the U.N. Security Council. That plan called for a cease-fire, the dissolution of the Phnom Penh government, and a replacement administration by the United Nations itself to oversee national elections. Phnom Penh and its backer Hanoi have, not surprisingly, opposed the plan, which is, also not surprisingly, enthusiastically endorsed by the Khmer Rouge.

Although it has agreed to cease-fire—the first condition for any settlement—the council has not yet agreed to the extent to which it will adhere to the U.N. "Perm Five" plan. Prince Sihanouk said that Hun Sen, prime minister of the Phnom Penh government, did not agree with the plan at all, although Phnom Penh representatives said Hun Sen had never rejected the plan. Sihanouk quoted Hun Sen as saying, "We are a sovereign country, we have to solve our problems as sovereign people"—a statement Sihanouk himself might agree with.

Japanese-Thai efforts

The council's meeting, in the balmy atmosphere of Pattaya, followed a round of diplomatic initiatives by neighboring and friendly governments that see the Cambodia im-

broglia as a major obstacle to the full integration and strengthening of the region as a whole:

- In early June, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama visited Hanoi, the first visit of a Japanese foreign minister to the country. Aside from promising to train Vietnamese economists and provide technical assistance, Nakayama also reportedly said Japan would provide Vietnam with \$1 billion in investment, upon the completion of the Cambodia settlement. Nakayama also met with Hun Sen while in Vietnam. Japan has been seeking to find a middle ground within the U.N. plan to which Phnom Penh would agree.

- At the same time, Chea Sim, Politburo member of the Phnom Penh government party, visited France for meetings with officials there. France has been working with Indonesia to mediate a settlement on Cambodia.

- Thailand has also played a crucial role in trying to bring the warring Cambodian factions to the negotiating table. In the last year, Thailand has acted as informal mediator between Phnom Penh and the resistance coalition, working in tandem with Tokyo. On May 30, Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, speaking during a visit to Malaysia, said that he saw no problem with the Indochina countries—Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam—joining the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

One week before the Cambodian Council met in Pattaya, the Thai government hosted a visit by Yang Shangkun, President of the People's Republic of China. Yang was met at the airport by Thai King Bhumipol and fêted accordingly. According to the *Thai Rat* daily, a settlement of Cambodia was a key point on the agenda.

Also discussed were plans for the development of the upper reaches of the Mekong River, situated in China, as part of the overall Mekong River Project. The project, expected to be underwritten by Japan, is awaiting the Cambodian settlement to move forward. Seven dams would be built along the Mekong, resulting in the vast expansion of irrigation and hydroelectric power for Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Mekong Delta area of Vietnam. In May, the P.R.C. indicated for the first time that it was interested in joining the Mekong Interim Committee, composed of the countries through which the Mekong River runs.

According to the *Bangkok Nation*, the Chinese President had agreed to "try to persuade the communist guerrillas [Khmer Rouge] to be more flexible."

- On June 22, Prime Minister Anand met with all the Cambodian factions in Pattaya.

There is still a long way to go until a sovereign government is established in Phnom Penh which is able to rule the entire country. The Khmer Rouge wants 700 U.N. advisers to rush to the scene to oversee the ceasefire, while Hun Sen has said that the cease-fire should be directed by a Cambodian committee. However, the agreement to a ceasefire itself is a major step—and the promise of a regional effort to rebuild Cambodia has been a major factor in its attainment.