

have spoken to me of their determination to put an end to a policy that consistently tarnished their international image. However, China felt it could not make any concessions on Cambodia unless Vietnam agreed to give in first on certain Chinese demands.

Conforming to the long tradition of the conflict-ridden Sino-Vietnamese relationship, Vietnam's leaders paid a visit to China. A secret meeting in Chengdu in early September laid the groundwork for agreements which paved the way for a normalization of relations between the two countries. In August, changes in Vietnam's political structure and the replacement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nguyen Co Thach, by Nguyen Manh Cam, clearly pleased the Chinese who were only too happy to see the departure of the person whom they considered responsible for the deterioration of relations between the two countries.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT IN CAMBODIA IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO the end of the antagonistic relationship between China and Vietnam. The fallout from the breakup of the Soviet empire, drove both protagonists to find a modus vivendi. While the Paris Accords underscore the failure of Vietnam's policy on Indo-China, the Vietnamese communist party may have been willing to pay this price in order to ensure the future support of its Chinese brother. It is also possible that Beijing gave Vietnam assurances about its intentions with respect to the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea – both island groups being the subject of a serious territorial dispute between the two countries.

Three agreements, capped by a final accord, were signed in Paris on 23 October 1991. The first agreement, which has the status of a treaty, is the most important. Entitled "Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict," it lays down the conditions for establishing peace in Cambodia and placing it under the partial supervision of the United Nations. Essentially, the document reiterates the framework agreement of 26 November 1990, with clarification of those points which remained vague or had been deliberately omitted.

In this respect, Articles 15, 16 and 17 of Part III, which deal with human rights and prevent "new violations of human rights" from occurring are of particular interest. These provisions were formulated in order to compensate for the complete absence from the settlement of a reference linking the Khmer Rouge with genocide. The wording of a particularly diplomatically phrased paragraph reflects the kinds of compromises made:

Above all, in view of the tragic recent history of Cambodia, states participating in the Conference undertake to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cambodia, which are stated in the relevant international instruments to which they are parties.

For many, provisions like this are scant compensation for wiping clean the Khmer Rouge slate and allowing them full participation in the peace and electoral processes.

The principal document contains five appendices the extent of which show the cautious and meticulous work that has gone into them: (1) the mandate of UNTAC; (2) withdrawal, ceasefire and related measures; (3) elections; (4) repatriation of refugees and Cambodian displaced persons; (5) the principles of a new constitution. Appendix II clarifies methodically and with precision the military functions of the UN Transitional Authority. Implementation of every provision, however, will require good faith on the part of all the Cambodian factions. It is already clear that demobilizing seventy percent of the armed forces of

each will not be easy. One of the big problems here is doubt about the reliability of the figures on which percentage calculations are to be based.

In the short term, one of the most difficult tasks will be the repatriation of refugees. There are approximately 350,000 living in camps on the border with Thailand. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will supervise operations to return the refugees to their country of origin. In addition to the logistical difficulties of moving refugees within Cambodia, minefields and ongoing violent efforts by the Khmer Rouge to subjugate and control groups of displaced persons, pose an enormous threat.

Attention must also be given to the conditions under which these people are to be resettled. What are their rights when seeking lost land and property? What can be done to avoid having them congregate, together with demobilized troops, around cities such as Phnom Penh? What immediate steps can be taken to deal with the shortage of schools and hospitals and to establish an infrastructure capable of meeting the demands of the population – expectations now raised by the hope of a peace at last regained.

In an effort to face up to these economic difficulties, the signatories in Paris agreed to support a "Declaration on the reconstruction and recovery of Cambodia." This thirteen-point document contains a number of guarantees of generous economic assistance to help rebuild the country. There is every reason to believe that these promises will be kept. Many knowledgeable observers regard Cambodia's chances of rapid recovery as better than Vietnam's. Japan, to name only one outside country, has already arranged to provide considerable assistance in agricultural development.

In addition to its military responsibilities, UNTAC will supervise the organization and holding of "free and impartial" elections. Planned for the spring of 1993, the Cambodian people will elect a constituent assembly of 120 members to draft and adopt a new constitution. This body will subsequently become a legislative assembly, from which the new Cambodian government will be formed. One of the problems resolved by the Paris accords was the question of voter eligibility. The principal document states:

Every person who has reached the age of eighteen at the time of application to register, or who turns eighteen during the registration period, and who either was born in Cambodia or is the child of a parent born in Cambodia will be eligible to vote in the election.

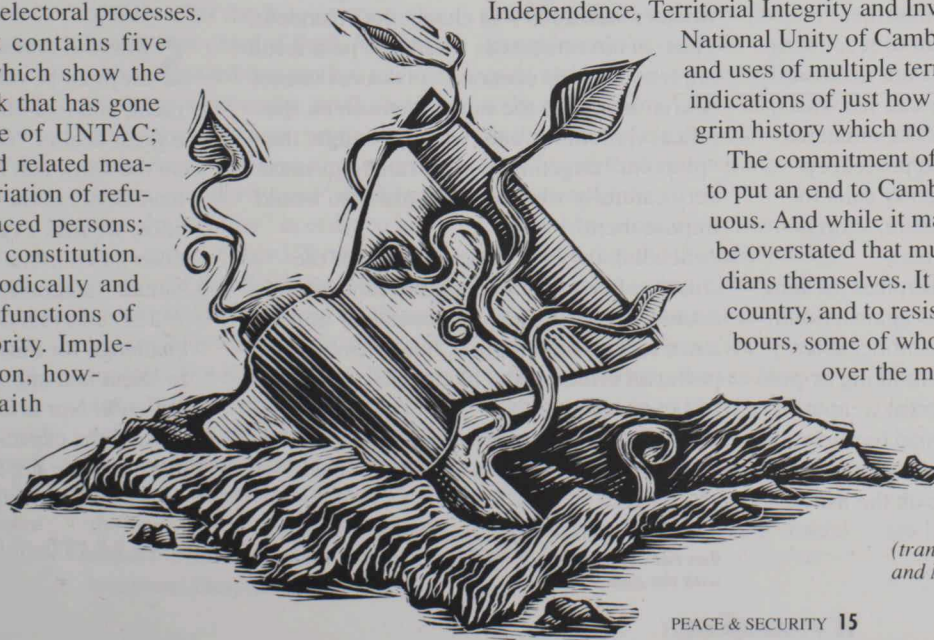
DESPITE THE EXPLICIT WORDING OF THIS PROVISION, IMPLEMENTATION will not be easy. Not only will it be difficult for many, especially refugees, to establish proof of age and birthplace, but there are already indications that some of the names already on the electoral lists will be challenged.

The second accord is entitled: "Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia." The length of the title and uses of multiple terms for the same concept are indications of just how conscious its framers are of a grim history which no one can afford to repeat.

The commitment of the international community to put an end to Cambodia's misery is unambiguous. And while it may seem a banal idea, it cannot be overstated that much now depends on Cambodians themselves. It is up to them to rebuild their country, and to resist any interference by neighbours, some of whom are all too clearly inclined, over the medium and long term, to

regard a neutral and non-Marxist Cambodia as a threat to their own regimes. □

(translation by Sogestran, Jane Boulden and Michael Bryans)



James Wurdell