WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE IN KAMPUCHEA?

The plight of the Kampucheans has received a lot of publicity and has aroused widespread concern in Britain and throughout the world. Has this publicity reflected the true situation in Kampucheas?

Reporters like John Pilger allege that Kampucheas's problems are the result of the extreme policies of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. They argue that neighbouring Vietnam was obliged, in the name of international justice, to 'liberate' the Khmer people from 'mass butchery' and to establish a new government headed by Heng Samrin, under whom, it is claimed, the situation is now stabilising.

But what the reports have failed to publicise is the fact that the Heng Samrin government was installed and has been maintained with the support of 200,000 Vietnamese troops, armed with Soviet weaponry. This occupation force is three times that of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. It even exceeds the entire British army and, despite the UN resolution of November 1979, calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the number is increasing.

The media also fails to publicise the fact that Vietnam also has 50,000 troops in Laos, and through so-called advisers, control the government.

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FOOD AS A POLITICAL WEAPON

The issue of food is being reported in such a way as to cover up Vietnam's military domination and to justify the Heng Samrin regime. Recent reports of a return to near normality coincide with a massive campaign led by the Vietnamese for the UN recognition of the Heng Samrin government.

In fact, the Vietnamese invasion was yet another violent chapter in the history of Kampuchea. After the savage US bombings in the early 1970's, Kampuchea's most urgent need was the reconstruction of their economy. Instead, as a result of Vietnam's military aggression and the famine caused by the disruption of food production, it is estimated that more than 500,000 people died.

Kampuchea has resources that Vietnam wants — oil, hydro-electric power and large areas of land suitable for rice-growing. Therefore, the Vietnamese are pushing ahead with economic and political measures destined to subordinate Kampuchea to its own interests. Corruption is rife at every level; the economy is in tatters and people are still dying of starvation or forced into dependence on foreign aid. This can offer no permanent solution to the basic problem of feeding the people.

The Vietnamese forces and the Heng Samrin regime are using food distribution as a political weapon. Food is withheld from parts of the countryside where there is resistance to the occupation in order to force the Khmer people into submission, whilst the bulk of it is distributed to the towns among government officials whose loyalty the Vietnamese are anxious to secure.

THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF FEEDING THE PEOPLE WHILST THE VIETNAMESE OCCUPATION LASTS.

The effect of the occupation on the Vietnamese people cannot be ignored either. The war absorbs a lot of Vietnamese manpower and resources which could be used for their own rehabilitation, but instead Vietnam has to depend increasingly on the Soviet Union.
THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Do the Kampuchean need to be defended from a return to power of the Khmer Rouge?

The Khmer people are not the helpless victims of history who have to rely on the protection of a bigger power, as first the French, then the US and now the Vietnamese claim. The Kampuchean nation has a long history of independence and a tradition of struggle for self-determination.

The resistance to the Vietnamese comes from all sections of the population and is not confined to the Khmer Rouge. The non-communist patriotic forces of the Khmer People's Liberation Front, led by Son Sann and supported by Penn Nouth, prime minister under Sihanouk, recently held its first congress on Kampuchean territory, drawing delegates from throughout the country. Some high-up officials in the Heng Samrin administration have defected to the resistance, alarmed by the colonisation of their country. The Khmer Rouge itself has moderated its political line in response to the diverse forces prepared to oppose the Vietnamese occupation.

These forces agree on the need to hold UN supervised elections after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops.

The breadth of the resistance and the growth of opposition forces based on the Kampuchean masses are the best guarantee of the right of the Kampuchean people to determine their own future.

There is no prospect of the Vietnamese being able to bring peace in the countryside. Only a government decided by the Kampuchean people can inspire the support necessary to bring the country from the brink of famine.

The Kampuchean people's resistance to Vietnamese aggression needs international support.

SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF THE KAMPUCHEAN PEOPLE TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN FUTURE.

SUPPORT THE UN RESOLUTION DEMANDING THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN TROOPS FROM KAMPUCHEA.

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The British Kampuchea Support Campaign asks all who believe in justice and in a nation's right to self-determination to support the Kampuchean people and all those patriotic forces who are fighting the Vietnamese aggressors in order to regain their independence and decide their own future.

If you agree with these aims and would like to find out more about the Campaign and its work, or would like to receive a copy of our Kampuchea Bulletin, please send the slip below to the National Secretary, BKSC, 31, Bath St., Oldham, Lancs.

I would like to receive further information about the BKSC [ ]
I would like to receive a copy of the Kampuchea Bulletin [ ] (Send £2.50 for 6 bi-monthly issues)

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