

A recent peace accord between the Cambodian government and the breakaway faction from the insurgent Khmer Rouge has focused mainly on past atrocities allegedly committed by the rebel leader, Ieng Sary, and a controversial decision by King Sihanouk to grant him an amnesty. Intelligence reports from the rebel-held areas along the Thai frontier indicate, however, that the real issue is widespread discontent among the rank-and-file of the Khmer Rouge army with the old leadership.

The real leaders of the uprising against the old diehards are said to be Sok Pheap, commander of the Khmer Rouge's 450th Division, and his close associate, Mitr Mong. They control the Khmer Rouge's former military headquarters of Phnom Malai, to which more than 100 foreign reporters were brought by Cambodian government helicopters on 9 September, and, even more importantly, the gem-rich areas around the town of Pailin 90 km to the south.

Sources report that Ieng Sary was called in by the mutineers to provide them with a recognisable political face. Ieng Sary has been sidelined for almost three years because of his comparatively moderate views.

The Khmer Rouge was the main force of the resistance during the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. They continued the armed struggle even after a peace accord was signed in Paris in October 1991 and the UN-supervised elections in May 1993, which brought the present coalition government to power.

The Khmer Rouge, because of its control over the gem mines around Pailin as well as forested areas along the Thai-Cambodian border, was in an especially strong position. Its income from the cross-border trade in gems and timber is thought to be US\$100-250 million a year, providing the Khmer Rouge with an alternative source of income following the cessation of Chinese aid, as well as giving Thai interests lucrative business. Pailin, which once had the trappings of a jungle stronghold of a Spartan revolutionary communist movement, has over the year developed into a major trading centre.

Thus, the revolutionary zeal of the Khmer Rouge has faded considerably for a group which, according to a party document in the late 1980s, considered its struggle the 'purest revolution since the Paris Commune'. On the Thai side, military and business interests headed by the present defence minister, Gen-

# Peace in Cambodia?

## CAMBODIA

By Bertil Lintner

eral Chavalit Yongchaiyuth, also worked on 'reforming' the Khmer Rouge. Several intelligence sources mention Chavalit as the main broker behind the recent peace settlement. A treaty between the government in Phnom Penh and the former Khmer Rouge unit, which now styles itself as 'the Democratic National Union Movement', officially headed by Ieng Sary, could pave the way for legal cross-border trade, intelligence sources say.

In Cambodia, second prime minister Hun Sen, himself a former Khmer Rouge cadre who later sided with the Vietnamese, would most probably strengthen his position vis-a-vis the first prime minister, Sihanouk's son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, as a result of recent events.

On 14 September, Hun Sen managed to push through a royal pardon for Ieng Sary and his followers, despite initial objections by Prince Ranariddh, who controls the royalist party which actually won the 1993 election but was prevented from setting up its own government. His coalition partner, Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (formerly the communist People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea) has since then, somewhat ironically, consolidated its



Ieng Sary, the leader of the DNUM.

(AP News)

grip on power. With more than 2,000 former Khmer Rouge soldiers, as well as Phnom Malai and Pailin, on his side, Hun Sen's position seems stronger than ever.

But this still leaves approximately 3,000 Khmer Rouge soldiers who remain loyal to Pol Pot. Whether they will continue the struggle against Phnom Penh or also surrender depends on the outcome of the recent deal between Hun Sen and Sok Pheap.

## Chinese interest in European arms sales

### CHINA

Beijing's senior army salesmen toured French and German defence equipment factories in early September at the invitation of the respective defence ministers, writes Paul Beaver. Further procurement trips are expected to the UK, Germany and Sweden before the end of the year.

This is the first time that such an invitation has been extended since the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989. It was described by one Paris-based diplomat as 'China pushing on an open

door, because despite the EU embargo, there is still a recognition that China is an important marketplace'.

In recent months, British based companies GEC-Marconi and Racal-Thorn have won export licences for maritime and air defence radars for China. These systems are required to update existing programmes, especially for surveillance of the South China Sea and the Formosa Strait.