

IN DEPTH

Vietnam invades to halt infiltration

By Jayne Werner

THE FIGHTING ALONG THE THAI-KAMPUCHEAN BORDER in June was perplexing to many observers, coming as it did on the eve of a major diplomatic conference of the foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries (held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 25-26). The Thai government claimed it was a premeditated attack. Some reports described the fighting as a "border war" (such as occurred between Kampuchea and Vietnam in 1977-78). Others called the Vietnamese action an invasion

or an incursion. Interpretations also have suggested that Vietnam invaded Thailand to test Thai defensive capabilities and ASEAN's reaction as part of a long-term plan to take over Southeast Asia. The U.S. rushed military supplies to Thailand to help the Thais defend themselves.

The border crisis also appears to be a weathervane in shifting diplomatic moves among the Soviet Union, China, and the U.S., and as such its importance should not be underrated.

I visited Southeast Asia in late May, and spent a month in Vietnam, both north and south. I also travelled by car to Kampuchea from Ho Chi Minh City.

The most prevalent interpretation of the June 23 border attack is that Vietnam wanted to teach Thailand a "lesson" (as China taught Vietnam a lesson in 1979) and show its displeasure with the unfriendly diplomatic posture the Thais have adopted toward Vietnam. Vietnam sees Thailand as the main obstacle to ASEAN acceptance of the status quo in Kampuchea. The Thai government has been committed to an anti-Vietnam, pro-Pol Pot stance, mainly because it has been unable to project its influence in Kampuchea, which it has done historically. The aim of uniting ASEAN against Vietnam was furthered at the Ministers Conference in June. Malaysia and Indonesia, who in recent months were leaning in the direction of defining China as the main threat to peace in Southeast Asia and accepting the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea, quickly realigned themselves solidly behind Thailand as a result of the border fighting. The ASEAN foreign ministers issued a joint statement strongly condemning aggression in Thailand and continued Vietnamese domination of Kampuchea.

For Thailand, the border incident has had four payoffs: (1) it has kept ASEAN within the Thai fold, at least for the mo-

ment; (2) it has enabled the Thais to procure increased military supplies from the U.S., which in turn has strengthened American commitment to Thailand; (3) the pro-military and anti-Vietnam forces in Thailand have put pro-Vietnam rapprochement forces on the defensive; (4) the border incident has strengthened the hand of those who support the seating of the Pol Pot regime in the United Nations. During the upcoming General Assembly meeting in October, the continued seating of the regime as the legitimate government of Kampuchea will be reconsidered. Vietnam had hoped to change the united stand of ASEAN on this, but their hopes were dashed at the recent Ministers Conference. Also Vietnam hopes to persuade

der, was invaded and occupied. Non Mak Moon is north of the key border town of Aranyaprathet. This is dense jungle territory, where border demarcations are obscure. Cross-border operations by both sides occur frequently here and farther south. Hundreds of thousands of Khmer refugees have straddled this border area.

Another area raided by the Vietnamese was Nong Chan, on the border itself, where refugees have been subject to the influence of anti-Communist Khmer Serei ("Free Khmer") and pro-Sihanouk forces. Nong Chan is also the site of the so-called "land bridge" of relief supplies into Kampuchea, which was not cut off on the Kampuchean side, although the Vietnamese could have done so long ago. This is despite the fact that a flourishing black market trade exists here, which in part sustains Free Khmer guerrillas. The Khmer Rouge are not numerous in this area—they are concentrated farther south.

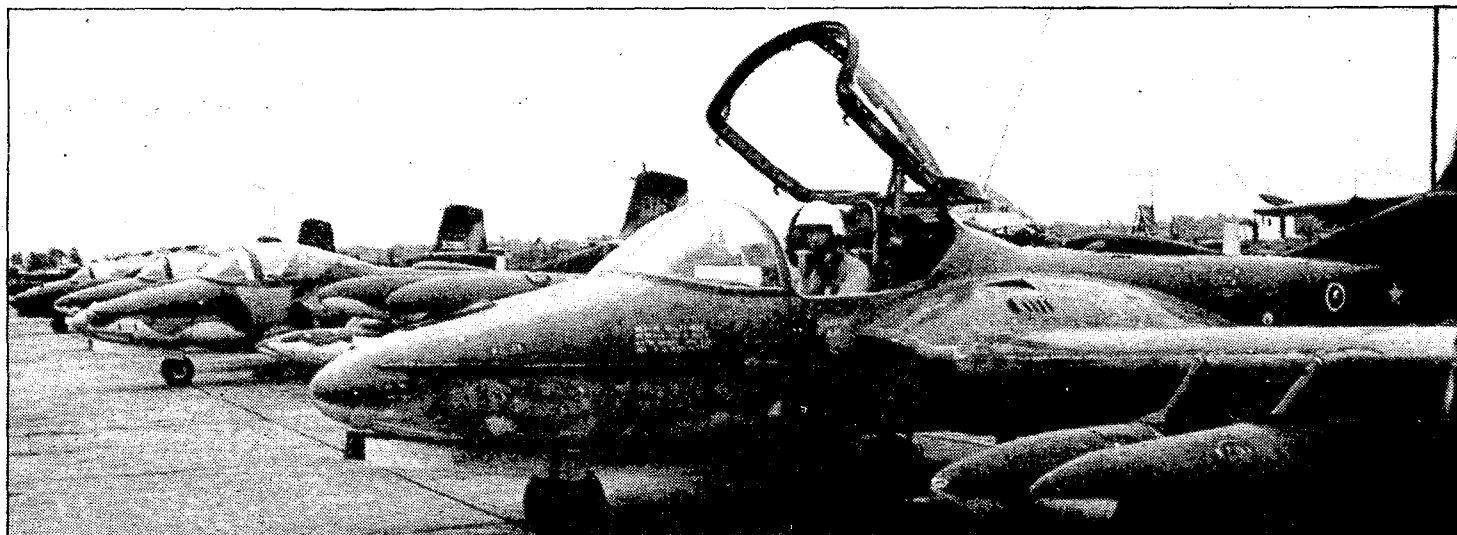
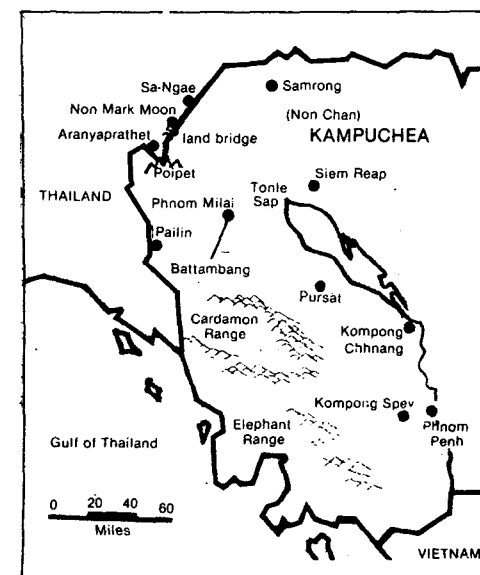
The Vietnamese invasion was motivated, in the first instance, by a desire to disperse the Khmer Serei, to close the land bridge, and with it international supplies coming into Kampuchea over the border, and to contain black market racketeering. The Khmer riel was introduced in Phnom Penh in April and its stability depends on curtailing black market trade.

But more than this, the Vietnamese attack was a tactic to divert Thai troops, concentrated along the southern border, to the north. The main object of Vietnamese attack is further south—Phnom Malai, the main base camp of the Khmer Rouge. June marks the beginning of the rainy season in Kampuchea, and with it an annual offensive on the part of the Pol Pot forces against the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin government. (The guerrillas are more mobile in the rain and protected by denser jungle cover.) The Khmer Rouge has enjoyed safe haven in Thailand during the dry season, and enters Kampuchea with the rainy season.

days before it convened. Now Thailand is left holding the bag. The repatriation program has been halted, and Thailand still has 140,000 Khmer refugees on its hands. Furthermore, the border between Kampuchea and Thailand is now sealed.

While visiting Vietnam in June, I could not help notice the outrage felt by many Vietnamese against the Thai repatriation policy. In an interview with Phan Hien, Vietnam's deputy foreign minister, I was also told, "Thailand's present stance is war-like." Its support of Pol Pot is aimed at unseating the Heng Samrin government. For this reason, Phan Hien stated, it is unlikely that Vietnam will soon withdraw its troops from Kampuchea. As long as the China-aided Khmer Rouge is in a position to reverse the situation in Phnom Penh, Vietnam will stay put.

The border attack is thus part of the current Vietnamese drive to destroy Khmer Rouge military capability during this rainy season. This season will test the stability of the Heng Samrin government. If the Khmer Rouge are unable to make substantial gains, the likelihood of Phnom Penh's survival will be enhanced. While in southern Kampuchea, I no-



Vietnamese pilots in American A-37 fighters, captured in South Vietnam.

other third world governments to change their vote, which could tip the balance in the UN. This now seems less likely.

It is now clear that the Vietnamese knew their attack violated Thai territory. Some said more than 2,000 Vietnamese troops were involved, but the most prevalent figure cited was 200 troops, or a company of men. A Thai village, Non Mak Moon, one kilometer from the bor-

The issue of the repatriation of Khmer refugees to Kampuchea is another reason for the attack. There are an estimated 150,000 refugees inside Thailand, whom the Thais would like to repatriate back to Kampuchea. In February, the Heng Samrin government said it was prepared to accept the refugees, on condition that Thailand hold negotiations on the matter. The Thais refused because they do not recognize Heng Samrin.

In early June, with the assistance of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Thai army escorted about 9,000 refugees, many of them armed Pol Pot guerrillas, across the Kampuchean border, according to the Vietnamese. (The arms may have been furnished by the Chinese, who have been funneling military equipment to the Khmer Rouge with the cooperation of Thai officials.) It is also no secret that UN relief supplies in refugee camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge go directly to the troops, and not to civilians. The International Red Cross has repeatedly complained about this situation. On July 8 it permanently discontinued sending food to Khmer Rouge refugee areas.

It was no accident that unconsulted repatriation began the week before the Foreign Ministers Conference, when Hanoi could be expected to be wooing ASEAN. But Vietnam apparently decided the refugees were more important than the conference, and struck two

ticed a growing sense that life is "returning to normal" under Heng Samrin. The food situation is not yet solved, but the international relief agencies in Phnom Penh generally concur that emergency supplies of rice seed will ensure an adequate harvest this fall. Officials in Phnom Penh insist there is and will be no famine, although they admit that there is a food shortage in some rural regions. The thousands of rag-tag refugees along the roads trekking back to their former villages in the east and south look like they have just emerged from the Black Death.

The border attack on Thailand took place for five reasons: (1) to divert the Thai army, for tactical purposes, in case the Thais provided military support for the Khmer Rouge further south, as the Vietnamese prepare their attack against the Pol Pot forces; (2) to stop the voluntary repatriation of Khmer refugees; (3) to signal to the Thais that the refugee issue will no longer be used to gain legitimacy of the Heng Samrin government; (4) to signal to the Thais that the Vietnamese will stage their operations up to the border, and will no longer stay farther back, and (5) to demonstrate to the Thais that the Vietnamese army is not to be fooled with. The violation of Thai territory on June 23-26 appears to have made these points.

Jayne Werner visited Vietnam to set up a U.S.-Vietnam Social Sciences exchange program.

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PERSPECTIVES

Convention will pose issue of black survival

By Manning Marable

MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND BLACK POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, community organizers and black nationalists will meet in New Orleans Aug. 21-24 at the 1980 Convention of the National Black Political Assembly. The meeting will include three dozen workshops on socioeconomic and political issues, from the development of cooperatives to criminal justice and police brutality within the black community. The highpoint of the convention will be a debate on program development and the formation of an independent black political party.

Prominent participants in the convention will include black educator Barbara Sizemore; political activist/theorists James Turner, Ronald Daniels, Ronald Walters and Mtangulizi Sanyika; rural economic organizers Makaza Kumanyika and the Reverend A.J. McKnight; and national black religious leader Louis Farrakhan.

The current National Black Political Assembly is the product of the Black Power and Pan-Africanist movements that dominated black politics a decade ago. Launched at the historic March 10-11, 1972, Black Political Convention held at Gary, Ind., the NBPA initially attracted such mainstream black spokespersons as Operation PUSH's Jesse Jackson, Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, and Coretta King. Gary Mayor Richard Hatcher, Rep. Charles Diggs and avant-garde black nationalist Imamu Amiri Baraka served as co-convenors. The manifesto produced at Gary, the Black Agenda, remains one of the most progressive documents written in the name of black America. In its initial years, the NBPA helped elect progressive black state legislators and local officials, organized educational and political activities at the community level, and became the central national forum for political debate among black nationalists and the "radicalized" black middle class. Two major national conventions were held following Gary, at Little Rock in 1974 and at Cincinnati in 1976.

By the mid-'70s, the NBPA experienced a decline in membership and commitment, not unlike other left organizations. Most black elected officials abandoned the convention movement when the NBPA opposed school busing for desegregation, and raised the idea of an all-black Independent Freedom Party outside the controls of mainstream, white-dominated politics. Intense debates between black Marxist-Leninists and black nationalists between 1973 and 1976 also provoked the disintegration of local and state assemblies that were committed to an electoral political agenda. The NBPA was unable to implement its "1976 Strategy" for running a black independent candidate for the presidency, and by 1977 had suffered a serious loss of support from even its most activist followers. Between 1978 and the present, under the leadership of national chair Ron Daniels, co-chair Mashariki Kurudisha and Mtangulizi Sanyika, director of Political and Organizational Development, the NBPA has gradually rebuilt in Louisiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and a dozen other states. The 1980 convention in New Orleans marks the organization's emergence as a force within contemporary U.S. and black politics.

A long history.

The immediate activities of the NBPA obscured the fact that the history of the black convention movement is 150 years

old. The heritage of the modern NBPA goes back to a five-day meeting of free blacks in Philadelphia Sept. 20-24, 1830. Between two and three dozen black leaders, representing five free states and two slave states, met in A.M.E. Bishop Richard Allen's Bethel Church to survey the needs and problems facing black Americans.

Three years before, Samuel E. Cornish, editor of the country's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, suggested that a series of black conventions should be held to improve the status of Northern blacks. White abolitionists were initially supportive of the call for black conventions, and during the first meetings assumed an active role in setting their agendas. Within several years, however, black delegates concluded that bi-racial participation did little to help meet the specific issues confronting blacks.

Educated and politicized in a racist society, white abolitionists insulted blacks by demanding a major role in all matters of public policy. Recognizing their dilemma, William Hamilton, president of the 1834 convention, stated that "under present conditions, it is highly necessary [that] the free people of color should combine, and closely attend to their own particular needs" without white supervision.

The first conventions in the 1830s and early 1840s were modest affairs, usually involving no more than 70 delegates. The political programs issued by these conventions mirrored the demands made by the Chartist Movement in England and by the more radical working-class Jacksonians—universal manhood suffrage, the abolition of all property restrictions on voting, and public education. Blacks attending the meetings were representative of the fragile black artisan elite that prospered in most major Northern cities in the antebellum era. As a result, their demands tended to be accommodationist in tone and reformist in content—temperance, support for black-owned and operated schools and libraries, economic self-help within entrepreneurial capitalism, and a rejection of territorial separatism for blacks. In this regard, the early conventions established the ideological tenets for black educator Booker T. Washington, at the beginning of the 20th century.

As the crisis of slavery dominated American politics in the 1840s and 1850s, the black convention movement began to move toward a more militantly nationalist and separatist posture. The chief spokesman for the integrationists, *North Star* editor and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, deplored the nationalists' demands to establish a black militia and calls for complete racial separatism.

At the Buffalo convention of 1842, black militant Henry Highland Garnet called on Northern blacks to support slave uprisings. In an emotional appeal, Garnet declared: "Brethren, arise! Strike

for your lives and liberties. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves."

Led by Douglass, the moderates managed to defeat the fiery resolution by a single vote. By the 1850s, however, nationalist spokesmen like Garnet and Dr. Martin Delany had become the dominant forces in the convention movement. The Cleveland convention of 1854 even recommended a policy of voluntary emigration of blacks to either the Caribbean, Canada or West Africa as the best solution to the race question in the U.S.

Reconstruction.

The tradition of black conventions continued after the Civil War. Unlike the earlier meetings, these conventions were concerned with halting the rising tide of white reaction against the gains of black Reconstruction. The major convention during this time, held in Washington, D.C., in December 1873, concentrated on civil rights questions, the enforcement of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, the suppression of the Ku Klux Klan and the proliferation of white violence against Southern blacks.

After the compromise of 1877, which marked the beginning of the decline in black civil and social rights for the next eight decades, convention programs began to stress racial self-sufficiency and economic development. The national convention of 1883, held at Louisville, advocated the abolition of the Southern sharecropping system and the creation of black public schools. State conventions of local black businessmen and

equally certain that this economic problem could not be approached from the point of view solely of race."

Between the Great Depression and the decline of the modern civil rights movement, no major independent black conventions occurred. It was only after the emergence of the politics of Black Power, the popularity of the ideas of Malcolm X and the disintegration of the integrationist-oriented black leadership within black politics had become commonly perceived at a mass level that an independent black strategy for struggle could challenge the NAACP-Urban League for hegemony.

The new black nationalists and militant community leaders of the '60s could not, for philosophical, historical and cultural reasons, identify their goals within the integrationist movement. For this reason, the convention movement was revived in the creation of the NBPA.

It is ironic that the central points of discussion at this month's convention are nearly identical to the concerns raised at meetings held in the 19th century. Police brutality, the rise of the KKK and the lack of human rights for blacks are as relevant today as they were to Frederick Douglass in 1870. The crisis of black unemployment and relative political powerlessness was an item in the convention agendas of both 1883 and 1980.

In the words of this year's "Call to Convention," issued by the executive committee of the NBPA, "in the historic past, the forward progress of the race has always depended upon the willing-



Educators Booker T. Washington and Mry Bethune at Tuskegee. Some of Washington's ideas are contained in the NBPA's current aims.

politicians were also held in South Carolina, Arkansas and Texas that year. In 1890 black newspaper editor T. Thomas Fortune established the Afro-American League at the Chicago convention of January 1890, a coalition of several hundred black leaders.

In many respects, the League was the precursor to the modern civil rights and black economic development organizations created after 1900—Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League (1900), W.E.B. DuBois' National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1910), and the National Urban League (1911).

By the 1920s, the convention movement had temporarily ceased to exist. Part of the reason was the success of both the integrationist-oriented formations like the NAACP and the creation of newer black nationalist organizations like Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Garvey, trade union socialist A. Phillip Randolph, the Communist Party and the AFL of William Green were all aggressively competing for the allegiance of the burgeoning black urban working class.

Attempts by black intellectuals to call together new conventions that might represent the total scope of black political life—notably the Sanhedrin Conference of 1923, initiated by Howard University dean Kelly Miller, and the Amenias, N.Y., conferences of 1916 and 1933 of W.E.B. DuBois—met with indifferent results. After the second Amenia conference, a disappointed DuBois wrote in his autobiography, "We were mentally whirling in a sea of inconclusive world discussion. It was agreed that the primary problem before us was economic, but it was

ness of men and women of principle and conscience to pose very sharply...the essential question of black survival." The major problems "in the black community are not created by black people in the main, but by the nature of capitalism and the way it functions to allocate jobs and income and other economic opportunities."

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