

Seeing Rouge

THE announcement by the American Secretary of State James Baker about opening a dialogue with Vietnam over Cambodia is a big step towards preventing the Khmer Rouge from regaining power. But we should not assume that peace in Cambodia is just around the corner. Khmer Rouge forces have sufficient arms to continue fighting a guerrilla war for two to three years, and there is no indication that the Chinese government has ceased to supply them with arms.

The unseating of the Khmer Rouge-dominated coalition at the UN Assembly will not prevent them from gaining food supplies and new forced conscripts from the border camps. The lack of decisive action by Western governments during the past 11 years has allowed Khmer Rouge forces to attack villages within 50 miles of the capital Phnom Penh.

The British government and its EC allies should act now on their statements during the year: it should call for a vote at the UN Assembly to unseat the coalition, and ask for enhanced monitoring of the border camps to ensure that UN food supplies cease to get through to Khmer Rouge forces.

Western governments should send new fact-finding missions to Cambodia, which would enable them to determine how the Hun Sen government can be helped to retain power, given that Eastern Europe is on the verge of withdrawing financial aid to Cambodia. And the EC, Soviet Union, and the US should intensify diplomatic pressure to persuade the Chinese government to stop supporting the Khmer Rouge.

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