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SPOTLIGHT:

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A040

COMMUNIST CAMBODIA -- WHO ARE THE REAL LEADERS?

P 1A

SPOTLIGHT 4-16

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SAIGON (UPI) -- THE INSURGENT TROOPS WHO HAVE VIRTUALLY COMPLETED THEIR CONQUEST OF CAMBODIA ARE FIGHTING NOT FOR NORODOM SIHANOUK, THEIR OUSTED PRINCE, BUT FOR A SMALL GROUP OF PRACTICALLY UNKNOWN COMMUNIST LEADERS.

SIHANOUK, WHO FOLLOWS THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR FROM HIS EXILE IN PEKING, HOLDS THE HEADLINES AND THE SHOWMANSHIP. BUT THE REAL POWER IN COMMUNIST CAMBODIA LIES IN THE HANDS OF THE SKILLFUL, PUTHLESS ORGANIZERS AT THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT OF CAMBODIA (OF FUNK, ITS FRENCH ACPONYM), WHICH PREACHES DOCTRINAIRE COMMUNISM.

SIHANOUK, THE FUGGY PRINCE OUSTED IN A BLOODLESS COUP MARCH 18, 1970, IS THEIR FIGUREHEAD, THEIR MOUTHPIECE FOR OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS. HE IN FACT HAS BEEN LITTLE MORE THAN A NOMINAL LEADER FROM HIS EXILE IN PEKING, AND HE SAID IN AN INTERVIEW HE EXPECTED TO RETURN AS CAMBODIAN CHIEF OF STATE, BUT IN NAME ONLY.

THE CONCLUSIONS OF DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS OF THE CAMBODIAN SCENE ARE THAT TWO OF SIHANOUK'S FORMER POLITICAL ENEMIES WOULD HOLD MOST OF THE POWER IN ANY GOVERNMENT FORMED BY THE KHMER ROUGE (RED CAMBODIANS) IN PHNOM PENH:

-- KHIEU SAMPHAN, 45, A PARIS-EDUCATED ECONOMIST WHO DIRECTED THE DAY-TO-DAY WAR IN CAMBODIA. HE HELD THE TITLE OF ARMED FORCES COMMANDER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN THE REBEL GOVERNMENT AND IS BELIEVED TO BE THE MAN IN CHARGE OF FUNK'S PACIFICATION AND MILITARY RECRUITING.

-- IENG SARY, THOUGHT TO BE HEAD OF CAMBODIA'S COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE IDEOLOGUE WHO PLANNED THE POLITICAL SIDE OF THE INSURGENT GROWTH IN THE NATION. ONE OF HIS ROLES WAS TO FLIT BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCES IN PEKING.

IN PARIS TUESDAY, A SPOKESMAN FOR SIHANOUK SAID KHIEU SAMPHAN WOULD ADMINISTER THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN CAMBODIA WHEN THE CAPITAL FELL. HOURS EARLIER, IN A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW BROADCAST OVER A FRENCH RADIO STATION, SIHANOUK SAID HE ENVISIONED ONLY A FIGUREHEAD ROLE FOR HIMSELF.

BOTH KHIEU SAMPHAN AND IENG SARY ARE ALMOST UNKNOWN IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY.

KHIEU SAMPHAN WAS ORDERED JAILED BY SIHANOUK IN 1967, BUT FLED TO THE JUNGLES AND DISAPPEARED.

IT WAS RUMORED AND WIDELY BELIEVED AT THE TIME THAT SIHANOUK ACTUALLY HAD EXECUTED KHIEU SAMPHAN. TO THIS DAY, MORE THAN A FEW PERSONS IN PHNOM PENH BELIEVE THE MAN CALLED KHIEU SAMPHAN IS REALLY A LOOK-ALIKE.

DESPITE THEIR EARLIER DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, KHIEU SAMPHAN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST COMMUNISTS TO SUPPORT SIHANOUK AFTER THE PRINCE'S OUSTER. WHEN SIHANOUK REACHED HIS PEKING EXILE, KHIEU SAMPHAN WAS NAMED DEFENSE MINISTER AND HAS SERVED IN THAT CAPACITY SINCE.

FRIENDS SAY HE WAS AN UNLIKELY ARMY LEADER.

HIS SLENDER BUILD (HE OFTEN PLAYED FEMININE LEADS IN HIGH SCHOOL PLAYS), HIS SCHOOLING IN PARIS IN LAW AND ECONOMICS AND HIS ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF MILITARY TRAINING MADE HIS APPOINTMENT AS DEFENSE MINISTER SURPRISING.

BUT THOSE WHO KNOW HIM WELL SAY KHIEU SAMPHAN'S FORTE IS ORGANIZATION. HE IS CREDITED WITH SUCCESSES OF THE CHINESE-STYLE FARM COMMUNES AND MOBILIZATION OF THE POPULATION BEHIND THE INSURGENT LINES.

UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP AS THE KHMER ROUGE SWEEPED ACROSS THE COUNTRY, LIFE BEHIND THE LINES CHANGED THE WAYS OF MOST CAMBODIANS.

FARMERS NO LONGER LIVE AN INDOLENT AGRARIAN LIFE ON THEIR PICH FARMLANDS. THEY HAVE BEEN WHIPPED INTO COMMUNIST-STYLE UNIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS. SIMILAR CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE CITIES.

EVEN LESS IS KNOWN OF IENG SARY. HE HAS SPENT MOST OF HIS LIFE IN THE JUNGLES OF CAMBODIA, HIDING OUT FROM ANTI-COMMUNISTS (INCLUDING SIHANOUK) WHO HAVE CONTROLLED HIS NATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1954.

IN 1971, IENG SARY SUDDENLY SHOWED UP IN PEKING FROM HIS HOMELAND AND RECEIVED A HERO'S WELCOME FROM SIHANOUK AND CHINESE LEADERS. DURING LATER VISITS TO PEKING, SIHANOUK HIMSELF HAS SERVED AS HIS TRANSLATOR.

IN THE INSURGENT GOVERNMENT, IENG SARY TECHNICALLY HELD THE TITLE OF SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE FUNK DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER -- A TITLE WHICH BELIED HIS POWER.

SIHANOUK APPARENTLY HAS NOT KIPPED HIMSELF ABOUT HIS ROLE IN THE CAMBODIA OF THE FUTURE. HE TOLD THE PARIS NEWSPAPER LE MONDE HE WOULD HOLD THE TITLE OF CHIEF OF STATE AFTER A REBEL VICTORY, BUT WOULD HAVE NO POWER AND EXPECTED TO LIVE IN CAMBODIA ONLY ONE MONTH A YEAR.

FOREIGN EXPERTS ON INDOCHINA AFFAIRS HAVE SAID NEITHER NORTH VIETNAM -- THE MAIN PATRON OF THE FUNK ARMED FORCES -- OR FUNK ITSELF CAN TRUST SIHANOUK.

SIHANOUK, THESE EXPERTS SAY, CLEVERLY PLAYED ONE GROUP AGAINST THE OTHER WHEN HE HELD POWER, AND THE COMMUNISTS WHO WOULD DOMINATE THE NEW CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP HAVE NO TIME FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT TOE THE REVOLUTIONARY LINE.