

**Yale-UN Oral History Project**

Yasushi Akashi

James Sutterlin, Interviewer

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Session 2

**James Sutterlin:** So, Mr. Akashi at our last session we ended by talking about intelligence and the extent to which you had an intelligence capacity in Cambodia. You said a good bit about it but you might have something you want to add at this point.

**Yasushi Akashi:** There was a very good amount of military intelligence and General Sanderson and I were only the receiving end of intelligence reports, particularly from the United States. Sanderson was somewhat skeptical of some of the quality of intelligence, but we took such intelligence seriously and we evaluated each one of them. I must also add that, in a broad sense, I had a constant exchange of political intelligence with ambassadors. The Japanese ambassador was very adept about dealing with Sihanouk's psychology. The French Ambassador Phillippe Coste was very good at the goings-on in Prince Sihanouk's royal family. He was pretty close to his wife, Princess Monique, sometimes to the extent to annoy Sihanouk himself. The American ambassador, Twining, was very methodical, very thorough, and I had a good overall judgment [of him]. Since we lived in the same hotel during the first part of my eighteenth month, we either got together or we had an exchange of "love" notes about the Cambodian situation almost every day. And, the Australian ambassador was interested in developmental issues; he visited projects in the field and reported to me about his impressions. The Chinese

ambassador was particularly strong, obviously, about Khmer Rouge psychology and motivations, which he was not very free to share with us, but nevertheless as a conduit to the Khmer Rouge he was very handy. The Russian ambassador was a very analytical [man], and I appreciated his intellectual capacity. When his term came to an end and when I was in the former Yugoslavia, I was quite happy to recruit him, and I was not disappointed. He acquitted himself equally well, as a splendid, independent analyst of the local political scenes.

JS: What was his name?

YA: Miyachotnic was his name, and it was a great pity that he was killed in a car accident as he was traveling from Serbia to Croatia. So, these ambassadors served as my sounding board, as a group to freely exchange information as well as ideas, and my preoccupations, my challenges, and UNTAC's problems were conveyed through them to their capitals, and through their capitals to their ambassadors in New York. So, the kind of disconnect which haunted us in the former Yugoslavia was absent in Cambodia. In fact, I know that a few of my colleagues in the Secretariat were somewhat jealous of the amount of information which some member states on the Security Council had, through this channel, although I meticulously reported to New York about developments and issues confronting UNTAC.

JS: Let me ask in that connection, they served in a way as a “group of friends” of the Special Representative. Now, there was another group of countries that were the “friends of” was it the Secretary-General or was it the Security Council, in connection with Cambodia. Do you recall exactly how that functioned?

YA: No. I was solely occupied with my group, which consisted of ten countries and ambassadors. In fact, there were others who wanted to come into the group, Vietnam for instance, which for obvious reasons could not be allowed. India was anxious, but India was considered somewhat partisan, although I will not say others were less partisan, but we wanted to avoid over-crowding and ten was a good number.

JS: I would like to go back now to an earlier area that we discussed but did not get very far with. That is, it has been written in a number of books that UNAMIC, the preparatory organization that was there before you got there, but was still there, I guess, when you did get there, that it was not very successful. I wondered if you could comment on that? Was there a problem in the Secretariat in New York, for example, in the support and organization of UNAMIC?

YA: I think it is unfair to say that UNAMIC was unsuccessful. The head of UNAMIC was recruited from outside; he was from Bangladesh, a very good, astute, political analyst and seasoned diplomat. He became very close to Sihanouk, and I think he was trusted by

some Cambodian politicians. His assessment of the Cambodian scene was very good. But UNAMIC was, throughout its existence, I think, afflicted by lack experienced UN hands who knew which button to push in the UN Secretariat. So, it did not get the requisite support from New York and it was always troubled by the lack of resources and lack of good communication with New York.

JS: It has been suggested that that might have been partly because New York was preoccupied with the more “interesting” European problem of Yugoslavia – that the same people were working on...

YA: I see – that’s very interesting. In fact, I often felt I was in competition with another major UN peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia. A concrete example of this rivalry was in the recruitment of senior staff. I am happy to say that then-Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali gave me *carte blanche* in the recruitment of senior staff and this is one area [in which] I was extremely aggressive. I am by nature not terribly aggressive, but I always insisted on surrounding myself with a diversity of opinions, but representing the best professional advice. I believe I was very successful in doing it, and UNTAC’s success can be significantly attributed to the high professional caliber, as well as high personal commitment, of senior staff.

Of course, there were one or two, maybe three, exceptions; I think we could have done a bit better in civil administration, better in civilian police, and better in legal

advice. But in all other domains, we were *very* strong. And because of this aggressiveness on my part, I got in trouble for instance with the head of UNCTAD, Ken Dadzie, who felt I did not consult with him in advance about stealing one of his very able directors, who became the director of the rehabilitation component of UNTAC, Roger Lawrence.

JS: Taking it, then, to your period, you had the knowledge of the UN Secretariat and so forth. What comments would you have over the whole period of your tenure there, on your support, your relations, with the Secretariat in New York? I meant not just the Secretary-General – you were in direct contact, I presume, with the peacekeeping office and also other offices.

YA: First let me mention the Secretary-General. I think I had good relations with him. As you know, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali visited Cambodia in April 1992, and subsequently in April 1993, when the situation got quite tense. I think newspaper reports talked about impending disaster, which would befall on UNTAC. But seeing us in operation and talking to us, I think Boutros-Ghali was quite relieved to see the degree of confidence with which we were doing our job. We were constantly joking with each other; we had a strong team spirit. I also introduced him to the group of ambassadors, which constituted this group of ten; the core group, and I think the group conveyed the same message, that the situation was far from impossible, and that despite all these media

reports of impending doom, there was a good possibility of accomplishing the job. So, these visits were useful. Also, I might add that some of the entourage of the Secretary-General, like Chinmaya Eharekhan were very experienced diplomats. Once Boutros-Ghali wanted to criticize Sihanouk publicly for his frequent absences from Cambodia in Beijing. I pleaded with him not to do so because Sihanouk was a vital card in our hands when there was to be crisis – he was the only symbol of unity. And when I heard from Chinmaya Eharekhan that Boutros-Ghali was on the way to Phnom Penh and intended to do that, I asked him to join me in pleading with him not to do that. And he listened to us and he did not do that. So, these things were useful.

Speaking about my relations, organizationally, with the Secretariat, first of all I do not know whether I already spoke about our administration, our management, not wanting to go into Cambodia in the beginning of 1992 because they felt, honestly, professionally, they felt we were not ready to do so.

JS: You mean the administration back here in New York?

YA: Yes, in New York. They felt that the budget had not been passed, the procurement orders had not been placed for a large number of vehicles, communication equipment, and all kinds of gear. They warned me that it was foolhardy to plunge with a large force and a large number of civilians into Cambodia. As you know, the rainy season starts in late April or May, and it goes on until October, and they pleaded that therefore

we should wait until November 1992, or even better a year later. After my initial visit to Cambodia in January 1992, I became convinced that there were high expectations for [our] arrival and that there was a good political momentum in Phnom Penh, which I feared, would be dissipated if we waited, even for six months. The Secretary-General was in complete agreement with me, and I am glad that we were able to reverse the recommendation from the administration in New York.

JS: Could I just interrupt you there, because there is a question that interests me?

Actually, during the Paris peace negotiations, from the very beginning, it was the United Nations which sent the first information team, so to speak, and several were sent to Cambodia, so that it was said, I think, at that time, that certainly the United Nations had more information about Cambodia, the situation there, and what would be required, than any other organization or country. Can you explain why, then, having all this information, why wasn't the Secretariat more prepared?

YA: I think this information was not communicated to the departments and offices which had to do the actual preparations for the operation. In fact, at one seminar, held outside the United States, I was with Rafee Ahmed and Mig Goulding, and Mig Goulding was surprised by some of the things which the UN would have to do in Cambodia if the negotiations then taking place in Paris came to a fruitful conclusion. So, that indicated that necessary information was not, you know, smoothly transmitted from office to office.

I think that was one of the problems. But you are right [that] that some valuable studies, based on missions to Cambodia, were at hand, which we studied as thoroughly as possible.

I remember one conversation I had with Mig Goulding about why UN operations in places like Namibia were successful, and why it was not successful in places like the Western Sahara. I will not forget Mig's observation that in places like Namibia, there were thorough, intensive, advance planning and preparations, and there was full-time attention by the top leadership of the operation as to what we were getting into. In Western Sahara, he told me, it was simply not the case.

JS: When I interrupted, you were going to go ahead with your relations with the Secretariat.

YA: Yes. With regard to my relations with the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations, it was a mixed picture. I am glad that they did not interfere with the operation too much, and confined themselves to indicating more general guidelines. But there were instances which we felt constituted sort of micro-managing the operations. Based on our very close observations and discussions in Cambodia, for instance, with all parties, we came to the conclusion that with regard to the preparation of the electoral law, we had to introduce at least two major amendments to the Paris accords, with regard to

elections. One was the qualifications for voting, and the other was the places for registering and places for actual voting.

On the question of qualifications to vote, the anti-Vietnam feeling in Cambodia was extremely strong, and of the four factions, with the exception of the People's Party, three had very, very strong anti-Vietnam feeling, not just Khmer Rouge, but FUNCINPEC and PLDP. In fact, perhaps PLDP, led by Son Sen was more obsessed with Vietnamese threat than the threat from any other things or anybody else. *Ad nauseam* they came to us that Vietnamese soldiers were hiding, or Vietnamese agents were everywhere, but whenever we asked them point-blank to specify this information they could not, or they would not. And so, it was important not to disqualify people of Vietnamese descent, but to tighten the qualification to say that not only people born in Cambodia but people born in Cambodia from parents who were born in Cambodia could vote. So we had to tighten up that qualification. Although we had to insist that people had to register in Cambodia, we felt that in view of the large number of Cambodians residing outside of the country, many of them could not afford to go back to Cambodia for both registering and for voting, so in the end we recommended that we compromise on voting outside of Cambodia in a limited number of countries and cities like New York, Sydney, and Paris. But these were departures, perhaps legally impermissible, from the Cambodian peace accords signed in Paris, but we felt that in order to get the support of a large number of Cambodians we had to make these compromises. New York did not like it; DPKO did not like it. They were afraid that once we make these compromises we might have to reopen other essential passages of the Paris peace agreement. Their concerns were well taken, but you see I had to fight some of the legalistic views both in New York and within

UNTAC itself. And I am glad that this core group of ambassadors was more pragmatic and more political in their assessment of the situation and the problems than legal. I had them as my allies in most cases, in order to over-ride legal views which were very narrowly conceived. I had the right to myself promulgate electoral law, but I'm glad that I did promulgate electoral law after having passed the Supreme National Council, in which I had the support for this electoral law by three of the four factions, except the Khmer Rouge. Had I not done it, the impact, the prestige behind the electoral law would have been much smaller. But New York did not quite understand why I spent four months negotiating with Cambodian parties for this majority.

JS: Was this law, the electoral law, primarily drafted by UNTAC?

YA: Yes.

JS: So, in effect you had to get the SNC on board, since they hadn't...

YA: Yes, but when SNC was deadlocked, I had the right to override them. But I did not want to do that.

JS: Interesting. Were there other instances where the DPKO was inclined to micro-manage? I ask that because in one of these books that I have read, General Sanderson says that he got absolutely nothing from New York, and eventually a system was introduced where there were two liaison officers from UNTAC that were established in New York.

YA: I think there General Sanderson exaggerates a little bit. He was inclined for more independent action. I wanted to persuade New York to support us, and oftentimes in the end we were successful. I must say that the administration was not entirely, you know, “closed.” When they saw that I, myself, with Bill Sadrey as the head of UNTAC administration, were going to Cambodia, they made higher the ceiling of expenditure that was permissible without headquarters’ prior authorization. Since Akashi and Sadrey, both seasoned UN officials, were going to be in this operation, they felt they could make this discretionary authority somewhat larger.

So, we appreciated this kind of trust, but on other things, like on the establishment of a UN-owned and -operated radio station, which in the end was such an important instrument in conveying the message of UN peacekeeping, what its objectives and limitations were, what was the message of democracy and human rights, and as you know other major peacekeeping operations afterwards tried to follow this good example. I must say that Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali was very much opposed to this, mostly because of the high expenditure involved. Mig Gouling was skeptical. I persuaded Mig who joined me in persuading, eventually, the Secretary-General. I was very, very satisfied with that, but it was with significant difficulty that we did over-come these difficulties.

JS: And you think it was more the financial question than the question of the intervention in the sovereignty of a country? The [opposition to the] radio station?

YA: Cambodia's sovereignty was latent rather than actual, so that was not the difficulty. I think the Secretary-General's awareness of the UN's financial straits led him to take a more restrictive attitude.

JS: I'd like to pursue that particular question now, for a minute. While there were financial problems, basically Cambodia had fewer financial problems than any other operation.

YA: In fact, yes, that is very true. In hindsight we were better off than many subsequent operations, and one big thing was the, I think, unprecedented approval by ACABQ and subsequently by the General Assembly, of \$200 million of authorization without our submitting detailed justifications for these expenditures. Here, our work with the Chairman of the ACABQ as well as some of the members, including the Japanese member Inomata, brought about this good result.

JS: How important was, what I might say, your special relationship with Japan in this? Because Japan did carry a heavier burden in Cambodia than in other operations.

YA: For Japan's relations with the UN, Cambodia was an epoch-making event. Japan had nothing to do with my appointment, but once they knew of my appointment they were delighted. The foreign minister then was a very dynamic man, Wantabe Michio, and he called me and he said he would do whatever he can to help with this. And as you know, I was invited by the Japanese parliament to talk about Cambodian peacekeeping in the process of their consideration of the situation to set up Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping. I obviously did not appear as a witness, but as a resource-person, talking more about the peacekeeping philosophy of the UN, rather than points in this proposed legislation. So, I think what I told the parliament had a certain positive resonance and impact.

I knew that financially speaking Japan and the United States would be the two most important countries. In fact I informally proposed to Japan and the United States bear one third each of the total aid or rehabilitation expenditures outside of the UN peacekeeping assessment. There was a healthy competition between the US and Japan in this respect. What other UN operation enjoyed such a high degree of positive financial support? In fact, Boutros-Ghali appealed for over six hundred million dollars of assistance for Cambodia...

JS: ... for rehabilitation, right?

YA: Yes. But lo and behold, we had more funds committed, pledged to Cambodian rehabilitation assistance than the Secretary-General of the United Nations had asked for. I know of no other example. So, it was very heartening, it was good that not only all neighboring countries of Cambodia but all the Permanent Five and all the major donor countries were interested in supporting the operation.

JS: And your appearance before the Japanese Diet, was that unique, or had that happened before?

YA: I think that it had not happened before. The Foreign Ministry was a bit nervous about it, and especially in view of the well-known antagonism expressed by not only the Communist Party but also by the Socialist Party of Japan towards participating in UN peacekeeping. But during my discussions with this special committee of the Upper House, the reception was uniformly friendly and I remember that the Socialist Party spokesman cited from my books on the UN and the whole scene became as if it was a university seminar. So I was quite touched by the positive response by the parliament.

JS: Now, I have another question with regard to Japan. The Japanese contingent in the peacekeeping operation, which was an engineering battalion, is that right? Now, as I understand it, there was an understanding that they would not be on the front lines, so to speak.

YA: Yes, as they were an engineering battalion, like the Chinese engineering battalion, they were not an infantry-type of force, but a force which took care of transport, reconstruction, and these other logistical matters.

JS: My question is did this create any feeling of disunity among the very disparate peacekeeping force as a whole, the fact that one country or two countries had roles that placed them in less danger?

YA: As you know, the distinction between front lines and logistical assignments was I would not say 'theoretical,' but disputable in a country like Cambodia. In fact, the Chinese engineering battalion had two of its soldiers killed by the Khmer Rouge – by mistake I think. But the danger confronted by troops, whether they were logistical or infantry were not that great.

JS: But one Japanese was killed?

YA: Not troops, but one [member of the] civilian police and one Japanese volunteer were killed – so two Japanese were killed, which confronted a serious crisis in the Miazawa government. I am glad that Prime Minister Miazawa stood fast and refused the call for withdrawal of the Japanese contingent. But when the situation became precarious, I had the visits of Japanese politicians and Cabinet Ministers who asked for special dispensation for the Japanese. I refused – and they understood my position. I took certain measures, which were applied to all contingents, not anything special for the Japanese. But speaking of tensions within the troops, General Sanderson's approach, based on efficiency, was resented by some of the troops – Asian troops – and I have to say that within our peacekeeping operation I had to engage in some peacekeeping among the troops. Between the force commander and ASEAN troops, for instance. The ambassadors came to see me to complain about General Sanderson's leadership; I explained Sanderson's concerns to them; I engaged in bridge building. And I think that was successful.

But as the situation got very tense, and the casualties mounted prior to the elections in May 1993, UN volunteers became very nervous and they decided to congregate to Phnom Penh from their outlying assignments. There were about five hundred UNVs all together. We divided them into two groups, and they engaged in a few days of very intensive internal soul-searching and brainstorming, in which Sanderson, myself, and other leaders had very candid talks with UNVs. Their concern was two-fold. One was their security – and they were dissatisfied with the protection afforded by UN

troops. Their second concern was about the nature, the significance, of their work: can we truly conduct free and fair elections in a country which had deep-seated authoritarian traditions? In other words, what we are doing, isn't it just a superficial imitation of democracy, which has nothing to do with instituting a true democracy in Cambodia? To this, I had to tell them that democracy takes years, decades, even centuries to be rooted. And even countries like the United States and Western Europe are tinkering with their democracies. They are far from perfect. So, don't expect a perfect democracy or perfect elections in a year and a half. What we are doing is to sow the seeds of democracy, which Cambodians themselves have to water and fertilize and make strong. If Cambodian soil is not hospitable to democracy, let us try to sow at least very strong seeds. That is why we put a special emphasis on the growth of Cambodian civil society, of non-governmental organizations, in the area of human rights – in fact, there was a mushrooming of Cambodian NGOs, whose membership was I think over 150,000 which in a country of 6 to 7 million is a very significant ratio.

JS: How was this accomplished? Were the volunteers important in this mobilization of civil society? Were the external NGOs important in this? Or was it UNTAC itself?

YA: I think it was a combination of all of them. We had a very committed activist human rights component, with a lot of dedicated young officers, who subsequently became active in Africa, in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, and we made sure to be

in close touch with the Cambodian NGOs and invited also external NGOs from India, Europe, North America, and Australia, to encourage Cambodian counterparts to continue being active.

JS: Were there other areas in Cambodian society where you were able to have a similar mobilization of civil society?

YA: We had to refrain from interference in internal matters, and yet we did our best to encourage and support all Cambodian initiatives. The same applied to the growth of mass media in Cambodia. Of course we could not financially help them, but we facilitated their travel abroad, their exposure to non-Cambodian organizations, we organized seminars and encounters, we arranged with willing countries in Asia and elsewhere to invite these Cambodian activists for training or refresher courses. I think all of that was an important fact.

JS: ...part of the peace-building process?

YA: Yes.

JS: I have two specific questions regarding Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali and you. One has to do with the move to impose sanctions on the Khmer Rouge. What was your attitude towards that and what was the attitude of Boutros-Ghali?

YA: One journalist...

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YA: One Japanese journalist described my method as that of strangling somebody with very soft cotton cloth. I tried not to impose sanctions as such, but to work in such a way that the SNC would be taking a very strict stand on the Khmer Rouge, who were increasingly recalcitrant and opposed to measures of peace and democracy. We sometimes employed a very round about soft democratic approach, and here we had allies among some of the outstanding diplomats. Jean-David Levit, who is now the diplomatic advisor to President Chirac, was one of the architects of this method. For instance, in the summer of 1992, Khmer Rouge opposition to the peace process became very clear; we knew that Japan and Thailand, who were trying to find some method of compromise with the Khmer Rouge, would fail. But Jean-David Levit conceived of tactics for the Security Council to endorse a Thai-Japanese compromise exercise, but had these countries agreed to a harder Security Council line once they failed, and we knew that they would. In that way, you see, you did not isolate the moderates and more cautious elements, but let them do their job but convince them to come to a harder line step-by-step. And so, Security

Council resolutions were few in number, but very well conceived and encouraged the SNC to adopt certain measures, like banning the exportation of Cambodian lumber which was a major source of Khmer Rouge income.

But, let me see, at a later stage, when the Khmer Rouge recalcitrance became very clear and even the Asians became convinced of their absurdity, then the banning of petroleum imports to both areas of Cambodia which were not following our line was decided by the Council. Even then the Khmer Rouge was not explicitly mentioned, and in most cases these hard measures took the form of SNC action rather than Security Council action.

JS: That is very interesting, again in comparison to the situation in Bosnia – very different, where the communication was poor.

YA: Extremely different. The less effective Security Council, the more radical the resolutions adopted by the Council, which simply enlarged the gap between reality and the Security Council rhetoric. Of course, Council resolutions and Presidential decisions were close to 200 in number in the former Yugoslavia, while in Cambodia it was less than 20.

JS: In this connection I would like to ask your opinion on something with which you have no direct involvement. The word 'genocide' is not used in the Paris accord, and that is because, actually, of a decision taken by the former Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar, because he, following the same logic which you have just explained, felt that if you insisted on that, the war would continue and you would not get agreement. Now, in retrospect, you were there, is it your sense that the omission of the word 'genocide' in the Paris agreements was a serious omission, that it could inhibit a sense of fairness on the part of the majority of the Cambodian people, or following your system, that it was a wise choice?

YA: I think it was a wise choice. Everybody knew that it was genocide of the worst kind. There was no family which did not have victims from that genocide. You didn't have to say that. Ideally speaking, we thought that maybe the Khmer Rouge wanted to join the democratic family. It turned out they didn't, but I think it was worth trying.

JS: And from that point of view, to take the soft approach?

YA: Yes. And they continued to take a harder approach. But, you know, I think the Cambodian society as well as international society had to be convinced that the Khmer Rouge did not change their colors.

JS: Now, going back just a minute to the question of sanctions, was it your sense that Boutros-Ghali favored a harder line, which is to actually impose the petroleum sanctions or other sanctions by act of the Security Council?

YA: I don't think he had any specific position on these specific policy issues.

JS: Because there is another issue where this question comes up. Later, I believe that Prince Sihanouk proposed that there should be elections not just for the constituent assembly but also for a President of Cambodia. I don't know what was your opinion on that – what was it? And what was the view of the Secretary-General?

YA: You are referring to his proposal made when?

JS: It was fairly late – but it was before the elections, it would have been 1993 at some point.

YA: There was once a Sihanouk proposal, this was after the elections in fact, when there was general confusion about the People's Party not accepting the verdict of the elections and the FUNCINPEC getting 58 seats while the People's Party got only 51. Sihanouk was working towards a power-sharing formula based on a coalition of the two largest parties, and he proposed himself as the President and two Prime Minister representing the two major parties, or he becoming Prime Minister and having two vice-Premiers from the two parties. But when he heard criticisms from many quarters, he withdrew that.

I was convinced, and so were almost all the ambassadors in the core group, that in view of the control by the People's Party of the administrative apparatus, the army, and the police, their endorsement of the new setup was absolutely essential for the stability of the country, while FUNCINPEC's victory could not be contradicted. And so, based on this, after Sihanouk withdrew his initial proposal, I kept encouraging him to come out with similar proposals, perhaps for more democratization, and when he came out with the idea of two co-Prime Ministers, I endorsed the idea and all the ambassadors like the idea very much. Roger Rollins saw that the Cambodian currency on the day of the proposal went up, which indicated endorsement by the business community. But Washington was somewhat skeptical, and within UNTAC there was some serious feud. Sanderson and the legal counsel felt this was an undemocratic formula, but they didn't have any other alternative proposals. I thought that within UNTAC some supported the new Sihanouk proposal, others opposed it, but most of them were sort of in between. I felt that there was no other alternative for the stability of Cambodia than endorsing this as the only feasible compromise.

JS: And now that it has fallen apart, do you see what has remained?

YA: But don't forget, it lasted for four years. It should have lasted for another year until the next election, but it didn't.

JS: But what now exists? Is it pretty much a reversion to the old SOC?

YA: No, I don't think so. I think it is a more multi-party set-up. The authoritarianism of Cambodia is still there, their old methods of coercion, violence, and even killings is still there. But they know that they are under greater scrutiny by the international community, so they have to adhere to certain principles, to pay lip service to democratic and human rights principles. So, I think there is a distinct change. Even Hun Sen, I think, is much better aware of what democracy and parliamentary rules and procedures mean. But, we have to monitor and closely observe their behavior to see whether what they say is what they really thought.

JS: Namibia was a successful operation before Cambodia. The question is to what extent did the experience gained by the United Nations in Namibia, especially the

formation of the constitution and judicial procedures, have an influence on your leadership and on the effectiveness of UNTAC in Cambodia?

YA: Not too much. I think certainly the Namibian experience gave some confidence in the UN, but my senior colleagues were not in Namibia and of course what we had to do in Cambodia was 5 to 7 times larger than Namibia in the number of population, and voters, and Namibia was a colony while Cambodia was an independent country with a much more checkered international political involvement and an involvement in the Cold War. So, I don't think Namibia provided much of a model for us. You see, in Namibia, we observed or supervised elections. In Cambodia, we organized elections from scratch. We had to set up computers, the countries largest computers, to register the electors, and we had to engage in political education, we had to promote the emergence of the free press. We had to do everything.

JS: And you had much more of a problem with the police, with CIVPOL, in Cambodia than in Namibia. Was this because of the make-up of the ... organization that you got, or was it because of the different culture in Cambodia?

YA: I don't know too much about Namibia, but I venture to think that perhaps there was more uniformity among the parties in Namibia than in Cambodia, where partisan interests which separated the four major factions were much deeper. But we had a

quantum jump in the number of civilian police in Cambodia, and I must say that as compared to the military contingents, the quality of civilian police that were sent to Cambodia was very uneven, very disparate.

This is one of the major problems for the United Nations in the future – the ways in which we have to police will simply expand, so the soldiers act as a unit, but civilian police have to act individually or by twos or by threes at most, and so their ability to communicate to people is much more important. And yet, in Cambodia, we found that many of the policemen did not speak English or French, certainly none of them spoke Cambodian, and many of them did not have an elementary education in human rights. In the former Yugoslavia the situation was better, many came from other European countries, but still many had to be rejected and be returned home because they failed in the various tests. I think it is very important for us to develop common standards for the police.

JS: So there should be training for peacekeeping police battalions.

YA: Indeed! That is much more urgent.

JS: I want to end with two general questions. One, what would you identify as your major problem as the Special Representative in Cambodia?

YA: I think that to make people, factions, and leaders, understand why we were there, what we could do, what we could not do. In other words, not to have inflated expectations about UNTAC.

JS: These people you are speaking of, are they the Cambodians or the external audience?

YA: Cambodians. ...which could lead to deflated cynicism and even negativism about our peacekeeping operation. That is very, very dangerous. And here again we come back to the usefulness of effective information policy, not just to send a message of democracy and human rights, but in the first place to make our mission understood, accurately, so that there would be neither over-expectations nor under-expectations about the nature of our mission. That is, I think, one conclusion. The second thing is to have strong communication channels with headquarters in New York. I mentioned to you the difficulty that even I, supported by seasoned UN officials, had difficulties. If the head of the mission was somebody from outside of the UN, or with little UN experience, what would be the difficulty of his or her experience? And so, I think it is important that you know the workings of the organization so that you can channel your frustration into constructive ways.

JS: And, just to repeat something that you said, but I think you would want to emphasize that this almost unique procedure by which the ambassadors there provided a channel not just to their capitals but to the Security Council...

YA: That was vital. That is a very important device, which I tried but could not repeat in the former Yugoslavia. The other thing, which I repeated in the former Yugoslavia, was to assemble a small group of area experts on the history, culture, and society of the country where we went. This was immensely useful, to have their in-depth understanding of the working of the society and of the minds of the people we are dealing with. Here, military intelligence is a superficial thing, useful but superficial, and I am glad that I took experts from Yale University and others. There were not more than half-a-dozen experts on Cambodia in the world, and I took more than one half of them with us!

JS: The question here arises: should there be such a group also at headquarters, which could inform the people who are supporting the operation?

YA: That would be ideal, perhaps a smaller number at headquarters than in the field. But at least, we need people who speak and who deal in the local or national languages. How can you comprehend the minds, the aspirations, the fears, and the concerns of the people, unless you have those resources?

JS: And if you don't, then you run into a situation like Somalia, right?

YA: Yes.

JS: These are not only your problems, but also, I judge, the lessons you would take from the Cambodian experience.

YA: But Jim, you wanted to ask me about Thailand.

JS: Yes, I did. Because Thailand played, I assume, an obscure role – would you comment on that? Exactly how did you perceive the position of Thailand?

YA: Thailand was a problem, but we did not want to confront Thailand, which was an important country and an important member of ASEAN. So, in balance, it was good to have Thailand as a member of this core group of ten. When I visited Thailand, frequently, so did General Sanderson to meet with this military counter-parts, I invariably received assurances from the Prime Minister as well as the Foreign Minister of their

support. But this was not always translated into the actual situation, especially in the borders between Thailand and Cambodia, where the military and business elements engaged in their own business.

I am pretty sure that honorable leaders like the Prime Minister did not know what was happening in the border areas, but I think other people did know, and this was a problem. We flew once a helicopter, with cameras, to shoot the active Thai business activities in Pai-ling, which is the major center of Khmer Rouge activities, and in fact Thai businesses were under the protection of the Khmer Rouge. We sent a copy of the videocassette of these Thai activities in Khmer Rouge territory to Headquarters with a recommendation that this film be shown to the Security Council. The Headquarters, for its own reasons, did not want to show it to the Security Council. We were very disappointed, but I had a visit from a good friend of mine, William Shawcross, who had written excellent books on Indochina and Cambodia, and who followed our activities very closely and conscientiously. One day while I was looking the other way, he took a copy of this videocassette and used it in the BBC television special program on the Cambodian peace, and without stating how he got hold of this videocassette. Perhaps this was behavior on my part unbecoming to a good international civil servant, but I felt I had to do it.

JS: And the Thais had a very unsavory police force, as I understand it, in the refugee camps, which were corrupt.

YA: I have only second hand information, but as election time approached, and the Khmer Rouge's behavior became more and more unacceptable and dangerous to the operation, two countries in particular, the United States and Japan, through their ambassadors in Bangkok had very candid talks with the government about the need to support UN peacekeeping in Cambodia. I know this from personal experience. So, not only economically but also politically, these two countries were very important – as well as the ASEAN countries' support, China's backing, Australia's activeness, the co-chairmanship between Ali Alatas of Indonesia and Roland Dumas of France. These were very skillful people who cajoled, persuaded, pressured, the Cambodian faction leaders to support UN operations until its conclusion.

JS: In this list, you did not mention Gareth Evans.

YA: I mentioned Australia.

JS: Australia. But not Gareth.

YA: But it was Gareth.

JS: It was Gareth. So you would include him as a positive force?

YA: Indeed, indeed. When we had a special SNC session in a crisis situation in Beijing, under Sihanouk's chairmanship and my co-chairmanship, of course Roland Dumas and Alatus were there as co-chairmen of the Paris peace conference, but to our surprise, and some amusement, Gareth Evans showed up and he wanted to make sure that this process should be gone through. He was actively involved.

JS: Thank you very, very much. Is there anything else you would like to put on this record for history, before we turn this machine off?

YA: I'd like to emphasize, and here I think we took lessons from Angola where elections were conducted successfully but it was a post-electoral process which in the end fell apart. So I wanted to make sure that the outcome of elections would be respected, and the actual armed revolt by certain parts of the People's Party in the eastern provinces, I had to engage in very difficult and delicate negotiations with the leadership of the People's Party. I had to even offer some ideas of the Inter-Parliamentary Union or somebody like that, in certifying our certification. I think it's important in the future as well that when the UN gets involved in elections, we make sure that not only the process

of democracy be adhered to, but we should be fully aware of the post-electoral situation. In other words, you have to convince people that all of them have a stake in this, and that nobody unduly loses his face or honor or vanity, just because of being defeated in the elections. You have to have a process in which everyone has a stake and everybody, even if defeated once, may have some hope for the future.

JS: A very good thought. Thank you very much.