

Every phase of life soon strictly was regimented according to dictates from Angka Loeu, the High Organization or Organization on High, in whose name Cambodia has been ruled since the Communist conquest.

Husbands and wives were forbidden to quarrel and, in some villages at least, prohibited from disciplining their own children. The children were singled out for intensive political indoctrination and were trained to be informants against their parents and elders. Extramarital sex was made punishable by death, and some couples were executed merely for planning marriage without prior authorization from Angka.

Generally, anyone violating the strictures of Angka or thought to be violating them received a warning known as a "kosang." A second transgression brought a second warning. A third transgression resulted in execution or "disappearance," which was widely believed—and, I believe, correctly—to be the same as execution. However, anyone caught trying to escape usually was shot without warning.

By late summer of 1975, food shortages reached famine level in large portions of the country. Epidemics of cholera, malaria, and dysentery incapacitated a sizable percentage of the new villagers. Given the demanding work regimen, the tropical squalor, and the almost total lack of modern medicine, the death rate inevitably was high in the settlements.

In the autumn of 1975, Angka Loeu ordered field commanders to prepare for the extermination, after the forthcoming harvest, of all former government soldiers and civil servants, regardless of rank, and their families.

I will say here that it is no longer any secret. What goes on the airwaves is frequently heard. While I am not at liberty to discuss what has been heard, I suggest that a lot of governments know that these orders were issued.

Soon word spread among Communist soldiers that former teachers, village chiefs, and students also were to be massacred. The second organized slaughter began early in 1976. Now the lowliest private, the most humble civil servant, and most innocent teachers, even foresters and public health officials, became prey.

The testimony of one Cambodian physician indicates that some intellectuals after servitude in the fields or incarceration in prison were concentrated in special villages for reeducation. However, the physician's own experiences, as well as accounts of numerous other refugees, indicates that many teachers, students, and educated people were killed simply because of their class or education.

Our most recent interviews, as well as the research of other journalists—for example, *New York Times*, May 2, 1977, page 1—suggest that mass executions have abated. But all data available to us show that individual executions, disease, hunger, and, above all, unremitting terror continue unabated in Cambodia.

Possibly, some of the atrocities and barbarities committed against the populace in the first hours or even first days after the conquest were the result of uncontrolled excesses by individual soldiers, many of whom were very young and haggard, most of whom had been taught to hate and kill.

However, the evacuation of the cities, the methodical assault upon symbols of the past, the carefully organized massacres in different

parts of the country, the establishment of thousands of new villages, the imposition of more or less uniform work patterns, modes of behavior, and discipline, clearly reflect systematic central planning and direction.

As a consequent of this central rule by the Communist leaders who enshroud themselves under the title Angka Loeu, the people of Cambodia systematically are being denied virtually all human rights.

They do not have the basic right proclaimed by the Magna Carta to leave their land. They do not have the right to speak freely, to read, to assemble, to travel within their country, to choose their work or place of residence, to raise their children as they think best, to be tried according to due process of law, to worship.

They do not even have the right to speak favorably of their former home or way of life. They do not even have the right to love each other unless Angka Loeu approves.

And, unless the rest of the world effectively brings pressure to bear in their behalf, they have no right or grounds to expect surcease from the ubiquitous fear and terror that now envelops them.

Mr. FRASER. Thank you very much, Mr. Barron.

Our next witness is Dr. David Chandler. Dr. Chandler.

**STATEMENT OF DAVID P. CHANDLER, PH. D., RESEARCH ASSOCIATE,
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David P. Chandler was born in New York City in 1933. He attended Harvard College (A.B. 1954), Yale University (M.A. 1968) and the University of Michigan (Ph. D. 1973).

From 1958 to 1966, he was a Foreign Service Officer, posted to Phnom Penh (1960-1962), Bogota and Cali (1963-1965) and as Director, Southeast Asian Area Studies, Foreign Service Institute (1965-1966).

Since 1972, Mr. Chandler has been a senior lecturer in history at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. He is currently on sabbatical, and is a research associate at the East Asian Research Center, Harvard University.

His books include "In Search of Southeast Asia: a Modern History" (one of six co-authors, 1971); "The Land and People of Cambodia" (1972); Cambodia Before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1847" (1974) and Favorite Stories from Cambodia (translator, forthcoming). He expects to complete a general history of Cambodia in 1978. Mr. Chandler has also published articles dealing with history and politics of Cambodia in *Commonweal*, *Current History*, *Journal of the Siam Society*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, and *Pacific Affairs*.

Mr. CHANDLER. Thank you. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak before the subcommittee, Mr. Chairman. My statement is quite short, because I was told it should be limited to 5 minutes. I will be happy to answer on specific points afterwards.

I should add, just before starting, that my background is very similar to Peter Poole's; we served in the Embassy at Phnom Penh together. In 1966 I went on to an academic career, and since then I have concentrated on Cambodian history.

To get some perspective on human rights in Cambodia today, we should keep three things in mind: First, the kinds of information that are available to us; second, how human rights were treated in pre-revolutionary Cambodia; and, third, what the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea, the so-called revolutionary organization, mean by "rights and freedom."

We Americans take it as a right, I suppose, to talk with anyone we like. We cannot do this with Cambodians today. The voices we hear are

those of people running the government or of those who have run away from it.

Democratic Kampuchea operates no postal service. All its publications are official and seldom reach the outside world. Visitors to the country are all guests of the government. Ordinary Cambodians aren't free to come and go. We can't talk to the people who are making the revolution or to those who are suffering from it, and they can't talk to us. The situation in Cambodia today is very difficult to judge.

It is easier to judge what Cambodians call the "old society," where human rights or freedoms were the privilege of a few. Before the revolution, Cambodians saw themselves as divided into "big people"—neak thom—and "little people"—neak touc. Haves and have-nots, masters and servants, meritorious and unworthy are other names they gave to this division.

There was very little movement from the bottom of society and very little sensitivity at the top. For most of Cambodia's history, most of the people were slaves.

To be sure, the "old society" wasn't as antagonistic or as self-aware as the revolutionary organization wants it to have been. Relationships were intermittent and disorderly. Here and there you could find kindness, loyalty, good fellowship, and rebellion. "Merit" and "power" were held to be interchangeable terms, and so, perhaps everyone did have a chance. Besides, there was usually the option of escape.

Cambodians now say that the "old society" lasted for 2,000 years. The handful of people who enjoyed what we would call rights or freedoms only did so very recently and always at the expense of people who had none.

Whether they knew it or not, they were "riding on the backs of the peasants," to use a Cambodian expression. The Cambodian language has many examples of this exploitative relationship, since the word for "I" meant "servant" and the word for "govern" meant "consume." Everyone saw themselves as dependent on someone else.

The revolution, according to its leaders, has destroyed the "old society." People are no longer servants of other people. Instead, they serve the revolution. In other words, since Cambodia today, according to its constitution, has "no rich or poor, no exploiters or exploited"—and I think Mr. Barron has explained to us why there are no exploiters—the people serve themselves.

Every day Radio Phnom Penh tells the people to "build and defend" Kampuchea, now that they have become its "masters." Property, transportation, and leadership are all collective, and, while the constitution gives people the right to "spiritual and material aspects of life," only two individual rights are mentioned: The right to work and the right to believe or disbelieve religious teachings.

The constitution doesn't give Cambodians the right to life itself. A recent broadcast from Phnom Penh, surveying the last 7 years, admits that, after liberation, the Cambodian people:

Turned their deep anger against the U.S. imperialists, the traitorous clique—that is, the Lon Nol government—and all exploiting classes which had sown * * * destruction, suffering and hardship * * * among our people for thousands of years.

In April 1975, the Americans had left, so this "deep anger" turned against those who had befriended us or who had fled to the cities from

the liberated zones. People with higher education, money, authority, even with Western-style clothes were seen as traitors.

Thousands of these people, it seems, were killed in the early days of the regime or were allowed to die. The revolutionary organization has never publicly regretted their deaths.

What drove the Cambodians to kill? Paying off old scores or imaginary ones played a part, but, to a large extent, I think, American actions are to blame.

From 1969 to 1973, after all, we dropped more than 500,000 tons of bombs on the Cambodian countryside. Nearly half of this tonnage fell in 1973, when it was stopped after pressure from the Congress; there is no indication that we planned to stop it without that pressure.

In those few months, we may have driven thousands of people out of their minds. We certainly accelerated the course of the revolution. According to several accounts, the leadership hardened its ideology and got rid of wavering factions during 1973 and 1974. By 1974 the opportunities for a negotiated peace—which had never been large—had disappeared.

We bombed Cambodia without knowing why, without taking note of the people we destroyed. We might have thought things through. Instead, we killed thousands of people who had done nothing to us, thousands of people we had never met. And, at the last moment, we walked away from our friends.

Perhaps these actions are preferable to what the Cambodians call "deep anger" and its consequence, which is murder, face to face, and in large numbers, but it is ironic, to use a colorless word, for us to accuse the Cambodians of being indifferent to life when, for so many years, Cambodian lives made so little difference to us.

In closing, it is impossible to say when and to what extent rights and freedoms, as we conceive of them, will be honored in Democratic Kampuchea. In the meantime, we should focus our attention on Cambodian refugees, here and in other countries, doing all we can to make the adjustment of living in America or in a refugee camp easier than it is.

We should do nothing, on the other hand, to encourage armed resistance. Instead, we should accept the fact, even if it might be a sad one, that Democratic Kampuchea is a sovereign, independent state, and we should formulate our policies toward it, in part, by remembering, rather than forgetting, what we have done.

Thank you.

Mr. FRASER. Thank you very much, Dr. Chandler.

I gather there is no serious disagreement with respect to what happened after the U.S. forces left and the Lon Nol government was overwhelmed. That is, there was, I gather everyone agrees, forced evacuation of Phnom Penh and other cities; there were large losses of life that occurred by direct execution as well as by the hardship involved in the mass exodus.

The three of you have no specific recommendations for the U.S. policy which you would put forward as a means of ameliorating or encouraging moderation in the regime there, as I understand it, although Mr. Barron makes the point that it is important that the international community be aware of what is happening.

Where does that leave us? Is this a matter that we simply acknowledge and that is the end of it as far as we are concerned? Or is there something more that we really can do?

Mr. POOLE. May I respond to that? I think that I said in my statement that I did not see anything direct we could do to alter the situation there for the better, apart from this business of approving humanitarian/economic links like the sale of DDT. I think possibly there are other things in that category that might come along.

I think it is very likely they would have to come along at the initiative of the Cambodian side. I think that our offering officially or even perhaps unofficially offering any form of aid to Cambodia would probably be grounds for being turned down.

I am not saying "don't try", but I am saying my hunch is, on the basis of past statements and the way they viewed the Woodcock mission, that they are very anxious to avoid any ties with us for the time being.

I also suggest in my statement that that could change, and I don't put any time limit on it. I think it could change fairly quickly. I think that events in the region, for example, if ties between the United States and Vietnam are reestablished—that will force the Cambodian leadership to review their attitude toward us. But I am not sure what that will produce, whether that will make them more or less interested in contact with us. I think quite possibly less, but I am not sure.

Certainly the way ASEAN goes, the way things develop in Thailand, and the way our relationship with ASEAN and particularly Thailand go, will profoundly influence the environment around Cambodia.

I don't think the leaders of Cambodia are stupid people. I think they will understand that the environment around them is changing, and their views will probably change over time.

I think there has been some—I tried to point out in my statement some very slight softening of their line on foreign economic relations. This is something that apparently Khieu Samphan thought about a good deal. I am not sure how influential he is on the Government's policy. But he probably thought about this a good deal as a graduate student in Paris in the 1950's. Apparently, they took a pretty hard line against foreign economic ties at the start of their period of exclusive control in Cambodia in April of 1975. I think that line has been softened a little bit.

So I think there are little currents of movement in several different directions, and I think that we ought to, as I state flatly in my paper—I think we ought to be prepared to establish normal relations with the established Government of Cambodia, as with virtually any government in the world, when that can be done.

I don't think we can force the pace.

Mr. FRASER. Mr. BARRON.

Mr. BARRON. I am only a journalist and have no competence in formulation of foreign policy, but, speaking as a layman, it seems to me there are a few things we might do.

I revert to a point I insinuated in my prepared statement, by saying it is my feeling that, unless we speak out, our silence lends a concurrence. And, by not taking a moral stand, by not denouncing the deaths of a very large number of people, we are, in effect, communicating to

the leadership that they can with impunity continue to do whatever they want.

Second, I would say that, while the leadership has, by every means possible, sought to isolate itself from the world, to make the country impervious to foreign influence, it still has to live in the world and is cognizant of what goes on in the rest of the world and what the attitudes of its neighbors are.

The Cambodians do maintain a relationship with the Chinese and they have some relationships, despite continuing border clashes, with the Vietnamese. It might be possible, through the Chinese and the Vietnamese, diplomatically to take some action to induce them to ameliorate this continuing extermination of the population, and extermination is now occurring not so much through execution, but by the conditions in which the people have been enslaved and by very serious shortages of food and medicine.

I would agree that any direct offer of U.S. food perhaps wouldn't be successful, although they did accept DDT, which they desperately needed. And I would think that through some international organization or some combination of states of different ideologies, we might try to get these suffering, dying people some food and medicine so they at least have a chance to live for a while.

No one knows how many people have died there. Our best and most conservative estimate was 1.2 million since April 17. If you read the account of my colleague, he now feels that is low. If you analyze the statements of Khieu Samphan, you could fairly conclude that maybe more than 1.2 million have died. French authorities and students estimate 800,000, and I think you can get a figure somewhat in excess of that from our own Government.

But this is an ongoing massive death of people. So however hard it looks for us to try, I think some effort is justified, if we can save only a few hundred thousand lives.

Mr. FRASER. Dr. Chandler.

Mr. CHANDLER. Yes. The first point—I would certainly concur with what Mr. Barron said about the food and medicine. It seems to me that this is a place where we could be of some assistance. And if it isn't done directly, in the name of the United States, we could help to keep people alive.

What worries me a little about some other suggestions is that I personally feel that we are not in a good position to make moral statements about Cambodia, and this doesn't mean that what has happened since April 1975 isn't very horrifying, that the regime is not everything that people have said it was, such as the recent report in the New York Times and Mr. Barron's presentation.

I am certain that many of my friends and Peter's friends in 1960-62 have been killed, and I didn't want to give the impression in my statement that I was indifferent to this, but it seems to me that to make statements condemning the situation in Cambodia is a lot easier for us to do than to combine a policy or an ideology of remembering our own activities there with true humanitarian gestures that might be made through, as suggested, international organizations, without allowing—and this is always very hard for us in this country—without allowing a note of sanctimoniousness to creep in.

Mr. FRASER. We have a vote in progress, so, we will take about an 8-minute recess, and be right back.

[A short recess was taken.]

Mr. FRASER. The subcommittee will reconvene. There may be some additional votes soon, so I think perhaps we should use this chance to pursue questions.

Dr. Poole, you and Dr. Chandler were in the U.S. Embassy at Phnom Penh. How late were you there?

Mr. POOLE. I left in December 1962, which is now getting a little far back.

Mr. CHANDLER. I left at the same time. We were in language class together, so our tours of duty overlapped.

Mr. FRASER. Dr. Chandler, you suggested that we lack the moral basis on which to make judgments with respect to the regime that is now in control of Cambodia on the basis of our own conduct there, which you were quite critical of. Should that be a bar to our expression of concern in perpetuity or for just—

Mr. CHANDLER. Of course not.

Mr. FRASER [continuing]. A decent interval?

Mr. CHANDLER. I would wish that statements of concern were made in a context of memory as well as a context of sanctimoniousness, and this is part of the problem, it seems to me, that statements about the regime, true as they are, seem to be made in a vacuum, as if we had nothing to do with the situation there. The same is true of statements about the apparent deterioration or troubles that have arisen in southern Vietnam, in Saigon, whereas the city of Saigon where these troubles are taking place is our own creation.

It seems to me that it is a complicated position to take, but it is one we have to take to be honest with ourselves. I don't say that we should be quiet or that we should merely admit our responsibility and then be quiet, but we shouldn't be surprised—let me put it this way. We shouldn't be surprised at the moment if this regime despises us. And we should work with that as a fact for now and hope that it will change as time goes on.

Mr. FRASER. Mr. Goodling.

Mr. GOODLING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, since you are doing the speaking now, Dr. Chandler, I will start on this end rather than that end. Your testimony was very annoying to me, needless to say.

I see you are sort of backing off the statement that you made that we shouldn't make moral statements. You know, it is just unbelievable to me that you could say that, because we bombed Cambodia—you didn't say that gives them the right to eliminate all the people, but you indicated that that may be the reason that they are killing their own.

Our bombs didn't single out certain segments or certain peoples in Cambodia. Our bombs hit them all. And whether you thought it was right or I thought it was right, the military at that particular time thought it was right.

Therefore, I can accept your last paragraph down to the word "it" in the next to the last line, because that is the direction I think we should be going. I cannot accept your third to the last paragraph and in no way can I justify anything that may have happened since the end of the war, based on what we as an American people may have done, and, therefore, we should sit back and be quiet.

I suppose because the Chicago police force was corrupt, that spawned Al Capone, and, therefore, American citizens should just sit back and be perfectly quiet about that.

You know, we have made the decision and this administration has made the decision that we are going to speak out. And, if we are going to base whether we speak out or whether we don't on some of our sins in the past, there is nowhere that I know of within the country or in any country where we would be permitted to speak out, because certainly there is a sin of some nature in relationship to Americans actions or behavior in relationship to other countries.

I know you are not trying to oversimplify it and say the slaughter of 1 million or 2 million people—however many people were slaughtered—is justified, but I cannot understand how you think we should sit back and not speak out while this is going on, that we should feel very badly about doing this kind of thing, since this is the decision the administration has decided on, to be applied all over the world, and I see no difference in Cambodia than in any other place.

Dr. Poole, you suggested some of the things we could do to try to find some way to get some humanitarian aid in. I was tickled, of course, being in the orchard business, that they would request DDT. I wish I could find a way to get it back into my orchard to protect it from the Japanese beetle.

How would you—you did mention something about going the route of international organizations. Do you think the United Nations, for instance? The Red Cross?

Mr. POOLE. I am not sure that that was my statement that you are referring to. I think it might possibly—I think it might have been Mr. Barron.

Mr. GOODLING. But you did say something in your statement about that being one way—

Mr. POOLE. I think each of us made some comment that humanitarian aid, however it could be gotten there, was a good idea. I don't think that the question of methodology or how you get material to them is something that I can comment very usefully on here, nor does it seem to me to be terribly central.

It seems to me the first question is: They are probably going to have to ask for something, because I don't think that our offering it is going to cause any reaction in Phnom Penh, and, if they ask for it, then I think we can probably find a way of getting it there.

Mr. GOODLING. Then let me ask you this. Do you think our speaking out, for instance, will make them any more amenable to doing something about the plight of those people who are dying and have been murdered?

Mr. POOLE. No; I don't, sir. I think that—

Mr. GOODLING. Then, if we have nothing to offer unless they ask and if speaking out isn't going to put any pressure on them whatsoever, what is left?

Mr. POOLE. I don't think there is a great deal we can do. As I said in my statement, I don't see a lot that we can do to change the situation for the better. I think that we could conceivably worsen the situation by an overly—

Mr. GOODLING. Then why is it right in some instances or in a lot of instances to do a lot of speaking out? You know, I get the impres-

sion that, if we speak out, that is going to bring about a change in the way they are going to treat human rights in other countries.

How is this situation all that much different?

Mr. POOLE. I am not sure that I think speaking out will do much good here.

Mr. GOODLING. You are not an advocate of this speaking out?

Mr. POOLE. I don't think it will do much good in this case.

Mr. GOODLING. Anywhere?

Mr. POOLE. No. I don't personally prefer declaratory statements to action in many situations that I can think of and certainly not in this one.

Mr. GOODLING. I have no further questions.

Mr. FRASER. Mr. Solarz.

Mr. SOLARZ. Mr. Chairman, if it is OK with you, I would prefer it if we could go ahead and vote and then come back and resume the hearing. My questions may take more than a few minutes.

Mr. FRASER. We have another vote coming, so we will recess again briefly.

[A short recess was taken.]

Mr. FRASER. The subcommittee will come to order. Since we last recessed, Dr. Gareth Porter has joined us. Dr. Porter has a prepared statement which we will insert in the record at this point. Then, perhaps, we could ask him to join in responding to questions.

[Dr. Porter's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GARETH PORTER, INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES,
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The situation in postwar Cambodia has generated an unprecedented wave of emotional—and at times even hysterical—comment in the United States and Western Europe. The closing off of Cambodia to the foreign press, making the refugees the only source of information used by the media, and the tendency of many refugees to offer the darkest possible picture of the country they fled have combined to provide a fertile ground for wild exaggeration and wholesale falsehood about the government and its policies. The result is the suggestion, now rapidly hardening into conviction, that 1 to 2 million Cambodians have been the victims of a regime led by genocidal maniacs.

This charge is based on a kernel of truth: There were undoubtedly large numbers of killings in the newly-liberated areas immediately after the war by soldiers of the victorious army, motivated by vengeance, and diseases such as cholera and malaria have taken a heavy toll. Moreover, it may well be true that summary executions have been used by local officials to punish foes of the regime as well as others who have violated regulations. But the notion that the leadership of Democratic Kampuchea adopted a policy of physically eliminating whole classes of people, of purging anyone who was connected with the Lon Nol government, or punishing the entire urban population by putting them to work in the countryside after the "death march" from the cities, is a myth fostered primarily by the authors of a Reader's Digest book which was given massive advance publicity through Time magazine and then again when the book was condensed in Readers Digest. The charge is not supported by serious documentary evidence, and it is contradicted by a number of reports from refugees themselves. A careful sifting through the available evidence suggests that this charge, like the infamous "bloodbath" in North Vietnam from 1954 to 1956 is an historical myth.

It will undoubtedly be many years before anything like an adequate picture of the situation in postwar Cambodia can be constructed from abroad. Nevertheless the analyst must intelligently assess the totality of the information available. It is my judgment that the predominant cause of death in Cambodia has been disease, complicated by heavy work schedule, and in some case, inadequate nutrition. It may be argued that, to the extent that the current government

is responsible for suffering and death, it is not primarily because of its reorganization of Cambodian society, nor its policies toward those associated with the old society, but rather its pursuit of a policy of self-reliance, which has minimized reliance on foreign assistance during a period of hardship whose fundamental causes lay in the ravages of an externally-imposed war.

Most commentaries on postwar Cambodia have attributed all the suffering and death there to the determination of its leaders to destroy the old society and recreate a radically new one according to a rigid ideological concept. But while the Khmer Communists' collectivization of economic and social life represents an ideological choice, the major decisions which have been so controversial—the dispersal of the urban population to the countryside, the organization of the entire working population into work teams and the continuation of a wartime work schedule, have been taken in the midst of a profound social crisis, during and immediately following a war which was certainly one of the most devastating to any country in history.

It should not be forgotten that the vast bulk of the countryside underwent a revolutionary transformation not during the last two years but during the five years of warfare. The conditions in which the zone controlled by the Communist-led National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK) was transformed into a system of collective agriculture included very heavy bombing by the U.S. air force and the Kymer Republic air force of heavily populated areas.

That bombing disrupted old patterns of cultivation and residence and made the systematic reorganization of agriculture a requirement for the revolutionary movement's ultimate success. It also brought a degree of hardship for the people in those areas which appears to have been far greater than anything experienced since the end of the war.

Again, contrary to the popular interpretation, the evacuation of Phnom Penh and other cities, whether or not it was consistent with an ideological end relating to the elimination of Western cultural and social influences, was also certainly a rational response to the realities faced by the new government at the end of the war. As I have pointed out elsewhere,¹ in the absence of that decision to evacuate the population to the countryside, a far greater toll of human lives would have been taken by starvation and epidemics which had already begun to break out among the population of the city. The move had to be made as soon as possible to minimize the human cost of the status quo in Phnom Penh and other cities and to maximize the labor power needed to prepare the planting of crops to be harvested later in 1975 as well as to build water conservation works to increase the land which could be cultivated during the dry season.

The contribution which the Khmer leaders have made to the postwar suffering and death has been the result of its eagerness to move as rapidly as possible toward a modern economy, and its desire to do it with a minimum of assistance from outside the country. The fact that the revolutionary zone had passed through the most extreme privation during the war undoubtedly encouraged the leadership to believe that the population as a whole could endure a lesser degree of hardship in order to make a major leap forward in agricultural production in a short time. This meant demanding continuing sacrifices of the population in terms of long working hours, at a time when too many of them were weakened by illness and marginal nutrition. Moreover, they seemed to be determined at first, to refuse assistance from the international community, even for the purpose of coping with the serious outbreaks of cholera and malaria.

These policies, which seem to have been motivated by an extreme national pride in overcoming any physical obstacle by one's own efforts, had to be changed significantly within the first year, as Democratic Kampuchea eased the work schedule to protect the health of its workers and began to actively seek medicine and other goods from abroad to cope with the critical health situation, primarily malaria.

Alongside these mistaken policies which have added to the severity of the health crisis in postwar Cambodia, one must consider the regime's positive accomplishments. The most important of those is certainly the successful feeding of more than three million people most of whom had been dependent on U.S. food imports during the war and who would have suffered massive starvation had it not been for the careful preparations made by the revolutionary leaders and the organization of the rural population to produce a surplus of food even during the wartime period.

¹ See George C. Hildebrand and Gareth Porter, "Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution" (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 39-57.

Beyond these very basic gross generalizations about postwar Cambodia it is difficult to venture. The characterization of Cambodia as a prison camp in which everyone lives in fear and terror which is conveyed by most—but not all refugees—must be treated with caution since it is so easy for those who rejected the revolutionary society to project their own views on the entire Cambodian population. There is evidence to support an alternative thesis: that the majority of Cambodia's poor peasants, who were responsible, ultimately, for the victory of the NUF over the U.S.-supported government, gave the revolutionary movement strong support, accept the present government as legitimate and follow its leadership for reasons other than fear. It is hazardous to attempt to weigh the balance of opposition and support for the revolutionary regime without far more information than is now available.

There has been and will be a price paid in human lives, in hardship and suffering, and in the loss of certain values, in the revolutionary transformation of any society. Cambodia is no exception to that principle. But a fair assessment of that cost must be based on an accurate understanding of both the costs and benefits of the change, as well as on a distinction between those conditions for which it can reasonably be held responsible and those which it inherited from the war. It must also be matched by a calculation of the cost of the old society and of the violence waged to prevent that revolutionary change. Thus far, Western observers have not begun to come to grips seriously with the issues inherent in such a balancing of costs and benefits.

Over the past year a series of reports have been published suggesting not only that there were reprisals taken against former Lon Nol government personnel by individuals and groups after the war, but that the government had carried out a massive purge of all those connected with the old society, rounding them up and killing them in a systematic, planned way. The first to put forward this version of reality were the authors of Reader's Digest book, John Barron and Anthony Paul, who did extensive interviewing of Cambodian refugees in camps in Thailand.² Their conclusions, along with some of the more sensational refugee accounts, were publicized by Time magazine in the summer of 1976 and have since come to be widely accepted as fact. Along with the acceptance of the "purge" thesis, there have been various "estimates" of deaths from anonymous sources in postwar Cambodia, varying from 800,000 to 1.4 million. Again, by sheer repetition, these figures have taken on a life of their own, regardless of their origins.

This is not the first time that such a nationwide "purge" by an Indochinese Communist movement has been charged. There is a clear parallel between the Reader's Digest account of the alleged Cambodian bloodbath, and the earlier account of the alleged elimination by the North Vietnamese regime of all landlords along with many innocent peasants in a class purge. The fact that there were executions on a limited scale in North Vietnam combined with the belief that it was the intention of the revolutionary government to physically eliminate everyone in their class, produced the allegation that there was, in fact, a policy of purging everyone with ties to the old regime or the old society.³ Although the differences in the two situations are of course, enormous, the same political dynamic appears to be at work in the case of Cambodia. A close examination of all the available evidence suggests that the charge of a policy of purge of former government personnel and educated Cambodians is false.

A discussion of the use of refugee interviews as a documentary source is necessary before analyzing the evidence in more detail. Two points should be kept in mind in evaluating the use of refugee accounts by both Barron and Paul and the recently published book by Francois Ponchaud.⁴ The first is that many of the refugees, particularly those coming from the middle or upper class in the old society and those who were connected with the old regime, are strongly motivated to portray the situation in Cambodia in the worst possible light. They are therefore prone to exaggeration or even fabrication. Responsible journalists who have visited the camps and reported on their interviews have warned that their accounts cannot be taken at face value. As one Western journalist put it, "In the

² John Barron and Anthony Paul, "Murder of a Gentle Land" (Reader's Digest, 1977), condensed in Reader's Digest, February 1977.

³ For an analysis of the charge of a class purge in North Vietnam in connection with the land reform program of 1954-56, see D. Gareth Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath: North Vietnam's Land Reform Reconsidered," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, vol. 5, no. 2, September 1973, pp. 2-15.

⁴ Francis Ponchaud, "Cambodge: anée zero" (Paris: Julliard, 1977).

strange subculture of refugee camps, men and women who have to justify their own decision to themselves and to foreign authorities merge fact into fantasy."⁵

Even more significant in terms of evaluating the claims of a nation-wide purge of the educated or of the former Lon Nol personnel is the comment by Francois Ponchaud, a French specialist. Writing in January 1976, he said, "Don't the passage of time and the overheated atmosphere of the refugee camps, where imagination amplifies and distorts the least rumors, invent facts or at least exaggerate their scope?"⁶ Coming from the author of the book considered to be the most credible work on postwar Cambodia, this certainly constitutes a serious disclaimer on the value of refugee accounts. Yet Ponchaud relies completely on such accounts, not only to reconstruct specific incidents, but to convey the alleged attitudes and policies of the Communist government as well.

The casual way which some of these refugees have with truth is illustrated by two different news reports of interviews with a refugee named Chou Try, a former school teacher who had worked as a medical orderly with the new government. In January 1976, he told a CBS reporter that he had witnessed the beating to death by Khmer Rouge soldiers of five students only days before his departure from Cambodia.⁷ But in October 1976, he told Patrice De Beer that he had not witnessed any executions, although he had heard "rumors" of them.⁸ (Chou Try was later chosen to be the Khmer chief of the entire refugee camp at Aranyaphrathet).

Another case of an elaborate refugee story which is known to be untrue involves the series of photographs widely published in Thailand, Europe and finally, by the Washington Post.⁹ The Post reported a Cambodian refugee story to explain the origins of the photographs, which included a scene purporting to show an execution by hoes and rifles about to take place. According to the refugee, the pictures were taken by a man pressed into service as a photographer by the Khmer Rouge soldiers, who were ordered to take photographs to prove to their superiors in Phnom Penh that the fields were being worked. The photographer tried to escape from Cambodia, according to the story, but was killed 12 miles from the border. But a cousin traveling with him thoughtfully grabbed the camera, said to contain the film with the pictures later published, and took it with him to Thailand, from which the pictures were finally taken to the United States.

The story was apparently credible enough for the Washington Post, which published the pictures as the "first visual confirmation of stories by Cambodian refugees of the harsh conditions under which Khmer Rouge rulers are holding the country." The only trouble is that the pictures are known to be fakes. When they were first published by a Thai-language newspaper in April 1976, Cambodia specialists in Bangkok pointed out several things about them which indicated they were fakes.¹⁰ And a Thai journalist working for a Japanese newspaper, elicited from the Thai counterintelligence officer in the border province of Aranyaphrathet, the admission that he had posed the scenes in the photos in Thailand.¹¹ Color prints of the pictures were circulated widely among Cambodian refugees in Aranyaphrathet during the spring of 1976, and the Indochina Resource Center received a set of them from a Cambodian living in Washington, D.C. It revealed the hoax, in the July 1976 issue of its newsletter after hearing the story from a Thai who spoke with the Thai journalist in question. The interesting question raised by this episode, of course, is what motivated one or more Cambodian refugees to concoct such an elaborate story about the "Khmer Rouge photographer" and his attempted escape from the country.

This does not mean that refugee accounts are always false or even grossly inaccurate. But in judging the credibility of assertion based on a refugee report, one should take into account not only the general political and emotional bias of the refugee, but other important distinctions as well: first, any interview which is arranged by camp authorities and in the camp situation should be looked upon as less reliable than one which takes place outside that context.

⁵ Martin Woollacott, *The Guardian* (London), Feb. 22, 1976. For other caveats regarding atrocity stories by Cambodian refugees, see Dan Southerland in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 4, 1976; H. D. S. Greenway, *Washington Post*, Feb. 2, 1976.

⁶ Francois Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré," Dossier no. 13, *Echange France-Asie* (Paris), January 1976.

⁷ CBS Evening News, Jan. 26, 1976.

⁸ *The Guardian* (London), Oct. 3, 1976.

⁹ "Forced Cambodian Labor Depicted," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 8, 1977.

¹⁰ *Bangkok Post*, Apr. 19, 1976.

¹¹ "Thais Fake Atrocity Photos," U.S./Indochina Report, July 1976.

Both the Ponchaud and Reader's Digest books, it should be noted rely heavily on interviews conducted in the camps and arranged by camp authorities.

Barron and Paul have confirmed that in each refugee camp in which they conducted interviews, "we approached the camp leader elected by the Cambodians and with his guidance compiled a list of refugees who seemed to be promising subjects."¹² The Khmer camp chief works closely with and in subordination to Thai officials who run the camps and with the Thai government-supported anti-Communist Cambodian organization carrying out harassment and intelligence operations in Cambodia. The organization has recruited freely within the camp for these paramilitary units, and its headquarters are known to be at Aranyaprathet, where one of the four major refugee camps is located.¹³

It seems fair to assume, therefore, that the chief of the camp determined who was to be interviewed on the basis of whether or not they had horror stories to tell (The same procedure was used for all visiting journalists, who were able to interview only refugees selected by the camp chief.)

Barron and Paul go on to explain that this initial selection by the Khmer camp chief was followed by a second selection, in which the refugees with whom the authors talked briefly were assessed as to "credibility, intelligence and experiences" before "deciding whether to interview at length." The fact that the authors consciously based their decision to interview on the basis of the kind of experiences which the refugee mentioned to begin with further biased the nature of the accounts which would be reported as representative. The result was that the most extreme refugee stories were passed on, while those which might have contrasted with or contradicted them were ignored.

Ponchaud also interviewed Cambodians in the camps, presumably under the "guidance" of the Khmer camp chief, and his "sample" of refugee stories is clearly unrepresentative of the population of the refugee camps, let alone of the population of Cambodia. Although by late 1975, the majority of the refugees were said to be peasants, the refugee accounts which Ponchaud cites appear to be only with educated, urbanized Cambodians. Of the 94 accounts which Ponchaud says he used in the book, not a single one is with a peasant.¹⁴ Since those educated Cambodians who had some connection with the Lon Nol government are most likely to have a strong ideological bias against the new regime, this represents remarkably skewed segment of the refugee accounts.

The second distinction which must be maintained in judging the credibility of information based on refugee interviews is whether the interviewer is able and willing to press for details, to go over important allegations, carefully probing for inconsistencies or exaggerations. If he does, the resulting interview is inherently more credible than if he does not. The importance of this distinction is illustrated by an interview by an Australian Cambodian specialist Ben Kiernan, with a Cambodian refugee in Australia in 1976.¹⁵ The refugee claimed initially that all of 3,000 to 4,000 Lon Nol soldiers had been killed by the Khmer Rouge after the takeover of Battambang. When asked if he had seen them all killed, the refugees said yes, but when asked again if he saw the killing with his own eyes, he said he only heard the shots. But when asked if he had actually gone to Thmar Kuol, where he said the killing took place, he admitted that he had gone elsewhere, and that a friend had told him that *he* had heard the shots.

Ponchaud's use of refugee accounts is particularly questionable, because most, if not all were written by the refugees themselves, and thus were not subject to any questioning at all.¹⁶ Such accounts would seem to be the least reliable kind of documentation, and Ponchaud's uncritical reliance on them is a particularly serious weakness given the general problems of exaggeration and falsification to which Ponchaud himself alluded in an early study.

The final distinction which should be kept in mind is between refugee reports about the statements or policies of the Communists and those which relate only what they experienced themselves. This is so because reporting on the *intentions* of one's foes always lends itself to greater distortion than does the reporting of an event. It requires that the refugee remember accurately the words of a cadre, that he understands their meaning, and that he is willing and able to report them accurately. This kind of report is therefore least likely to be reliable. Yet Ponchaud

¹² Reader's Digest, February 1977, p. 8.

¹³ For details, see *The Nation*, (Bangkok), May 27, 1976; *Liberation* (Paris), May 6, 1976.

¹⁴ Ponchaud, *Cambodge*: Anee Zero, p. 10.

¹⁵ Ben Kiernan, "Cambodia in the News; 1975-76", *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, vol. 8, 1975-76, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ Ponchaud, *loc. cit.*

repeatedly cites refugee allegations about the slogans, policies and statements of the Communists uncritically, as though they were objective fact. Indeed, he goes a step further, rendering the slogans or quotations as though they were primary documents—the actual words of the Communists themselves, rather than the proximate recollections of refugees who are far removed from the actual words.¹⁷

The consequences of these methodological weaknesses must inevitably be a serious distortion of reality. Both Ponchaud's and Barron and Paul's books fail to measure up to even the minimum standards of journalism or scholarship, and their overall conclusions and general tone must be regarded as the product of overheated emotions and lack of caution. Moreover, there is enough evidence available from various sources, including material published by Ponchaud himself, to discredit the extreme thesis propounded by both books.

II

What the evidence from refugee interviews does clearly establish is that there were widespread reprisals against officers, and in some cases, against their families, in the Battambang-Siem Reap region. In particular a number of accounts tell of the killing of some 300 officers who gave themselves up in Battambang a few days after the end of the war. There is no reason to doubt that such violence took place. But there is reason to believe that was not the intention of the government or was the result of vengeance by local Communist troops and cadres.

It is clear that many cadres and soldiers of the revolutionary army were motivated to take revenge against their enemies in the days following the end of the war. One refugee, interviewed at length in Australia in 1976, recalled that cadres admitted being fired up by "controllable hatreds" and having killed "old society" people immediately after the war. The same refugee said, however, that the Angkar, or revolutionary organization, the name used for the Cambodian Communist Party, stepped in to order that such killing be stopped.¹⁸ Such orders from the revolutionary leadership were confirmed by a former Cambodian diplomat who reported that he was told by a Communist official near the Thai border in late May 1975 that local officials had explicit orders not to kill any more people of the old government.¹⁹

Ponchaud conceded, in an analysis published early in 1976, that there was no pattern of such killings in other provinces. He wrote that Battambang-Siem Reap was a region of "bloody violence more than any other," and that in other provinces, "massive purges of this type are not mentioned. . . ."²⁰

Even in Battambang, where the worst reprisals are reported to have taken place, the organized killings appear to have been limited to high officers of the Lon Nol army.²⁰ One refugee who was interviewed at great length in Australia and who was in Battambang at the time the Communists took over, reported that, although high-ranking officers were shot, middle-ranking officers were separated from them and taken to a different place, while non-Commissioned officers and ordinary soldiers returned to their families three months later.²¹ Another refugee confirmed that non-Commissioned officers in Battambang were told they were being taken away for reeducation. He presents no evidence that they were killed except for other refugee claims that they saw bodies or talked to someone else who saw bodies along the highway which they assumed were the non-Commissioned officers from Battambang.²² Still another refugee reported that ordinary soldiers had been taken to a "prisoner of war village," where they worked in the fields like anyone else.²³

¹⁷See, especially, pp. 90, 91 and 97 for egregious examples of the presentation of refugee allegations in the guise of primary documentation. It should be recalled that one of the primary methods used by Hoang Van Chi, a refugee from North Vietnam, to discredit the land reform in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a bloody class purge of all landlords, was the presentation of distorted versions of government slogans. The presentation of similar allegations about slogans used in Cambodia should be equally regarded as a distortion which is politically motivated. For a detailed analysis of this distortion of policies and slogans in North Vietnam, see Porter, "The Myth of the Bloodbath."

¹⁸David P. Chandler, with Ben Kiernan and Muy Hong Lim, "The Early Phases of Liberation in Northwestern Cambodia: Conversations with Peang Sophi," Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Working Papers, no. 10, p. 9.

¹⁹Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré."

²⁰Denis Grey, Associated Press dispatch, Bangkok Post, June 25, 1976.

²¹Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²²Ponchaud, *Cambodge: annee zero*, p. 64.

²³Ibid.

Still other reports contradict the view that military and civilian personnel of the old regime, including officers and higher civil servants, were the object of a policy of purge. As early as June 1975, one refugee whose account Ponchaud cites, mentioned the existence of a prison camp for officers and high officials as well as rebels against the new regime, located West of Stung Treng. Ponchaud also reported that summary executions were not the rule at this camp.²⁴

Except for the accounts of killings of officers, the only evidence presented by Ponchaud to support the notion of a policy of general purge of those connected with the old society are the disappearances of various individuals from their work teams. Ponchaud reports the nearly unanimous belief of the refugees surveyed that these disappearances meant execution. But, according to Martin Woollacott's February 1976 report, those who had "been able to study the full range of evidence here in Thailand believe most of those who disappear now end up somewhere else in another labour project but that no attempt is made to dispel the notion that they may have been killed."²⁵

Significantly, the Barron and Paul book does not base its charge of a massive purge of old regime personnel and the educated on evidence from refugees. In fact, it states that in 1975 "the organized slaughter largely had been confined to the officers and senior civil servants."²⁶ The argument rests instead on alleged orders to local officials claimed by an unnamed foreign intelligence source. Barron and Paul say that a foreign intelligence agency monitoring Cambodian broadcasts overheard the communist commander in Sisophon receive radio orders to prepare, in their words, "the extermination, after the harvest, of all former government soldiers and civil servants, regardless of rank, and their families." [Emphasis in original.]²⁷

These alleged radio orders may or may not exist. Since the U.S. government refuses to make them public, it is impossible to know. Even if there were orders intercepted, one would have to know the exact wording, as well as the context, to be confident that the meaning was not either misunderstood or deliberately distorted. In any case, one U.S. official dealing with Cambodia told this writer in July 1976 that he had "never seen anything that could be regarded as orders from the Party" to carry out a general purge of former Lon Nol government personnel or any other social or political category.²⁸ A journalist who inquired with a State Department official in April 1976 was told that intelligence reports on Cambodia "contain little beyond the refugee accounts relied on by the press."²⁹

The Reader's Digest account offers no evidence that any such order was carried out. Nor does Ponchaud cite any refugee account which would support that charge. Journalists who interviewed refugees during 1976 found none who claimed to have heard about, let alone witnessed, any massive roundup of former soldiers or civil servants. Patrice De Beer, who visited the Aranyatprathet camp in late September 1976, asked the chief of the camp, Chou Try, about executions. Since Chou Try was the one who had kept track of newcomers to the camp during the previous months, when the purge should have been taking place, he would have known of any stories relating to it. But instead, he told De Beer that he thought "the number of executions has dropped."³⁰

The Reader's Digest authors also cite another alleged order in support of their argument that such a purge was ordered, but it is equally suspect as evidence. They quote a report by Francois Ponchaud that a Communist official in Mongkol Borei district declared on January 26, 1976, "Prisoners of war . . . are no longer needed, and local chiefs are free to dispose of them as they please."³¹ Apart from the fact that the quotation is a mistranslation of what Ponchaud had quoted in *Le Monde*, which falsely conveys the expectation of harsh treatment, if not death, to the "prisoners of war,"³² the authenticity of the quote is extremely dubious.

The statement which Ponchaud attributed to a Communist military officer appears to be a highly distorted rendering by a refugee, who is not identified and whose credibility as a source is therefore questionable. It includes the sentence,

²⁴ Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré."

²⁵ *The Guardian* (London), Feb. 22, 1976.

²⁶ Barron and Paul, *Reader's Digest*, p. 260.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Interview, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1976.

²⁹ Richard Dudman, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Apr. 25, 1976.

³⁰ *The Guardian* (London), Oct. 3, 1976.

³¹ Francois Ponchaud, "Le Monde," Feb. 18, 1976.

³² The quotation, as attributed by Ponchaud to a "Khmer Rouge Military Commander," is as follows: "On ne plus besoin des prisonniers de guerre . . . qui sont laissés a la discretion absolue des chefs locaux."