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CAMBODIA'S CONTINUING TRAGEDY

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by

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Trussed like an animal for slaughter, a young man is dragged to the side of a ditch at the execution ground at Samrong, the drowsy, largely depopulated capital of Cambodia's northern border province of Oddar Meanchey. From the former Lon Nol military camp 50 yards away, a place which the Khmer Rouge have renamed Kanlong Santesok, (the "Security Center"), strides a 30-year-old communist cadre known only as Comrade Da.

A dark-complexioned man, tall for a Cambodian and with dark, deep-set eyes, Da earned a reputation as a particularly fierce platoon commander in the 905th battalion of the communists' 116th Division during the civil war. After the war, the Khmer Rouge appointed him the Samrong Security Center director.

He swings a hoe, crushing the prisoner's skull, then cuts open the dying man's belly and removes the liver. Later, in the camp kitchen, Da chops the liver into small pieces, sprinkles salt and fish sauce, fries it with some slices of fresh zucchini, and eats the dish.

Not every Khmer Rouge executioner is as sub-human as Da - indeed, the communist army's regulations are said to specifically forbid cannibalism - but for the thousands of Cambodians who have survived the postwar famines and plagues in Oddar Meanchey, this ricegrower-turned-executioner has come to symbolize the new regime's extraordinary excesses throughout the entire country. "Da lusts to kill", Phin Sin, a 34-year-old Cambodian now in Thailand, told me recently, "I have no words for him".

Yet Phin should know about Da. Until his defection, Phin was for two years the executioner's comrade-in-arms in the same 905th battalion. Phin became a relatively senior communist officer himself - an assistant company commander in a border unit charged with shooting refugees

trying to escape to Thailand. Although he denies taking direct part in any killings, he admits to being present for three of Da's executions. One of the six victims was a Khmer Rouge soldier executed for disobeying orders. The others were men whose only "crime" was to have served in the defeated Lon Nol army.

As the chairman said, I am co-author with John Barron of the book "Murder of a gentle land". It has different titles in different countries and languages. Since our research ended for the book, a new and completely different and, for Cambodia-watchers, highly significant class of Cambodian has been fleeing the country - Khmer Rouge defectors, some of them, like Phin, sufficiently high-ranking to have been made privy to this dark new regime's darkest secrets. Most of these defectors are longtime Khmer Rouge military officers and civilian cadres who became disillusioned by their leaders' failure to reconstruct society or were revolted by the new order's growing barbarity. They are providing the first concrete details of an ill-fated revolt within the revolution. Their accounts add yet another sad chapter to Cambodia's dismal story.

One of the first reported steps toward this effort at counter-revolution was taken late in 1975 when a Comrade Phea, the popular 905th battalion commander, became disgusted at the number of execution orders that Da, his former platoon commander, had been receiving from Angka Loeu. Angka Loeu, as many of you must know here, translates literally from Khmer into "organization on high", and is now known to be synonymous with the Cambodian communist party. Phea convened a secret meeting near Samrong of nine of his senior aides, including Phin.

Referring to the continuing hardships and executions, Phea made a speech which brought some of his listeners near tears. "We have achieved victory over Lon Nol," said Phea, "but we still have to face many hardships". Then he added: "We must draw up a plan to oppose the enemy! "

Three or four of his officers asked, "Who are the enemy? Where are they?" Replied Phea, "The enemy are in Phnom Penh".

The commander was speaking treason to men who had recently risked

their lives on the battlefield for the communist revolution. Yet most of the officers seemed to favor Phea's ideas. According to Phin, there was no discussion. Said Phin, "When the meeting ended, we had only one thing in mind: to do whatever our battalion commander ordered us to do".

Over the next few months, the area around Samrong became a hotbed of clandestine anti-Phnom Penh politicking. In May 1976, Phea called another meeting at which he advised his officers to disregard orders from Phnom Penh calling on units to get men, weapons and ammunition ready to "combat" unspecified "enemy forces" along the Thai border. Phea told them, "Don't pay too much attention to the border. You should stop planting mines and punji sticks (sharpened bamboo spikes planted by the hundred of thousands along the Thai border to prevent refugees from escaping)." At the end of the hour-long meeting, Phea, who was in touch with like-minded officers in other provinces, revealed that the plotters' forces were insufficient for any action that year. "But in Phnom Penh in May 1977", he promised, "we will explode !"

In other parts of Oddar Meanchey province that month, anti-Phnom Penh conferences were held. In the Chong Kal district, about eight miles south of Samrong, district chief Comrade No spoke passionately to a meeting of about 35 chiefs of Oddar Meanchey villages, communes and districts. "We must overthrow the Phnom Penh authorities", he told them. "For Cambodia's sake, we must fight against these people !"

Typical of No's listeners was one of my sources for this text, Chek Pek, the 34-year-old Khmer Rouge-appointed chief of Choeung Tien village, a community of some 400 people about 10 miles south of Samrong. Formerly a communist supporter, Chek had stood helpless and appalled by the ravages of some 12 months of Phnom Penh's policies. Five of his villagers had been arrested by the Khmer Rouge squads who roamed his district, dropping in on communities every two or three days to check on "revolutionary loyalty". All five had disappeared into Comrade Da's Security Center.

Malaria and dysentery, both often fatal, were rife. Starvation had followed the communists' confiscation of much of Choeung Tien's rice.

The Khmer Rouge had also taken away all the villagers' small arms, thereby reducing their ability to kill wild game, formerly an important protein source.

Like most Cambodians, Chek feared and disliked Vietnamese - perhaps not without reason. Since at least the 16th century, the people from the east had been trying to take over Cambodia. Since the 1920's, the Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh, had spoken of a future formal linking of Vietnam and smaller Laos and Cambodia in an "Indo-China Federation", a big new nation which would exploit the economic possibilities of the mighty Mekong River and the rich alluvial rice-plains around it. Although most of the best land and most abundant water lay in Cambodia, however, Hanoi would be the federation's capital.

So disastrous had Phnom Penh's postwar policies been in his district that Chek had come to believe that the Phnom Penh leadership were secret allies of the hated North Vietnamese. Subsequent events were to prove him dramatically wrong. Nevertheless, at the time Comrade No spoke, Chek's Vietnamese theory seemed highly plausible. Said the village chief: "I had no other explanation for the madness".

Despite the fact that most, if not all, of Comrade No's listeners had welcomed the overthrow of the communists' corrupt and inefficient predecessors, his audience was highly receptive to his urgings that all unite against Angka Loeu. Over the next three days, plans were drawn up for the secret recruitment of "mobile youth units" who would one day march upon Phnom Penh. About 300 young men and women were to be recruited for each unit. For the time being, these young men and women were not to be told of their units' purposes. Only three officers in each group - the heads of each 100-person section - were to be let in on the plot.

Throughout 1976, the conspiracy gathered momentum. Exactly which person or persons directed the plot is still not clear. Refugees and intelligence sources have named various leaders, including the communists' former Information Minister, Hou Nim, who was last seen in public in September 1976, and a certain "Comrade Soeum", identified by several of the refugees only as "the Khmer Rouge army chief". Other analysts believe that there was no single leader and that the move-

ment is better seen as a spontaneous, loosely-organized response to Angka Loeu's excesses.

Whatever the truth, we know that the plotting was widespread. The Samrong conspirators were collaborating with senior officials in neighboring Siem Reap province, including province chief Comrade Soth. Although information on the progress of the plotting in most parts of Cambodia is still sketchy, high-ranking military officers and civilian cadres in all adjoining provinces from Battambang in the northwest around the northeastern shores of the Tonle Sap (that is the "Great Lake" in Cambodia's center) to Kompong Cham near Phnom Penh are believed to have joined the secret movement. For a time it seemed possible that Cambodians themselves might be on the way to ridding themselves of Angka Loeu and its horrors.

In September 1976, however, Phnom Penh appeared to get the first wind of these developments. In Oddar Meanchey province, an agitated Phea told his 905th battalion aides that somehow Angka Loeu had learned of the plot. "Everyone will have to find his own way out", said the battalion commander. A few days later, Phin fled to Thailand.

In other provinces and especially around Siem Reap town, capital of the province of the same name, the plotting continued. But by this time, Angka Loeu's leadership had become visibly active. In January of last year, in a trip which some Cambodia-watchers now link with the plot's suppression, though they have no proof, Premier Pol Pot visited Siem Reap town. Cambodia's highly-developed internal spying system also seems to have been working overtime. There have been fragmentary reports, for example, of Khmer Rouge security agents' aborting in Phnom Penh in January of last year of an assassination attempt - against whom and by whom is unclear at the moment. And on January 17, in what may have been the most serious unravelling of all, a messenger carrying dispatches to plot-leaders in Kompong Thom and Kompong Cham provinces was reported to have been arrested by the Khmer Rouge in Kompong Thom town. The source for that is Chek Pek.

Acting on information believed to have been extracted from this messenger, Angka Loeu launched the first of a series of major purges, which continued for most of last year. In all suspect provinces, heads of villages, communes

and districts and many military officers were reportedly arrested. Said village chief Chek, "I was told that Phnom Penh considered all unit commanders in the Northern region untrustworthy following the plot's discovery". In any event, many were arrested, executed and replaced. According to a high-ranking Vietnamese official, Vo Dong Giang, who met with a group of Western journalists in Hanoi earlier this month, those killed included five members of the twenty-man Central Committee of the Cambodian Communist Party and the commanders of several army divisions.

But despite this fresh blood-letting - perhaps partly because of it - Phnom Penh found itself dealing with continuing widespread turbulence in the countryside. In Siem Reap and areas around the Tonle Sap River ominously close to Phnom Penh, for example, subversive pamphlets began to circulate. These pointed to the emergence of the Khmer Rouge as a privileged elite, a "new class" receiving better food and clothing than the people's. Asian intelligence sources believe that these pamphlets were printed within Cambodia, indicating (because of severe restrictions on the use of paper and printing facilities) that persons in a position of authority were responsible.

(I'd like to make a point here in paranthesis, on the use of intelligence sources, that they obviously have disadvantages. My colleague John Barron will expand on this in his subsequent speech to you. I considered whether or not to put them in this text, or leave them out; I concluded that it was better to put them in, but I think, if you like, you can discount that source and you will still see a fairly consistent pattern of horrors in Cambodia.)

Certainly, many senior officials in at least Siem Reap and Oddar Meanchey provinces were still active plotters, notably province chief Soth; his deputy, Comrade Hean, and the third member of the province's three-man ruling committee, Comrade Sean. As late as early May, Soth planned to use his mobile work units (Khmer Rouge-created battalions of conscripted workers who roam Cambodia's provinces building dams and paddyfields and planting and harvesting rice) against Angka Loeu. He ordered all units of single workers under his command to go to a place called O Chik in Oddar Meanchey province and begin military training.

According to Leam Lis, a 17-year-old messenger who lived in Soth's compound in Siem Reap town, "The plan was to use these units to attack Phnom Penh!" However, 15 days after all units had reached O Chik, long before training was sufficient for a march on the capital, the Phnom Penh leadership, apparently informed by a spy or spies within Soth's organization, struck at Siem Reap.

Soth was arrested and immediately taken with his wife and child to Phnom Penh by helicopter. Hean was arrested on the same day and held until Sean's arrest a week later. Hean and his wife and large family and Sean and his wife and one child were taken to the capital by car.

All but one of these prisoners were later reported to have been bludgeoned to death in Phnom Penh. For a few days, Hean was spared, perhaps as part of Angka Loeu's investigation of the plot. But then he turned up in Kompong Thom town, along with two other plot-leaders called Pol and Kaeut. According to a friend of Chek's, a 22-year-old battalion commander known as Comrade Si, these three were taken to a crematorium at one of the town's pagodas. While still alive, Si and his men drenched the prisoners in gasoline and set them alight. Said Chek, "Comrade Si told me that the orders to burn them alive came from the new regional commander sent in by Phnom Penh." Some weeks later, executioner Si was himself caught up in a purge and executed.

Indeed, in mid-1977, it seemed there might be no end of purges, many of them especially brutal, even for the Khmer Rouge. At the Security Center in Siem Reap town, for example, communist loyalists wired prisoners' thighs and penises to army field generators, then tortured the men with electricity before executing them. Other prisoners before they were killed were brought to near-suffocation with plastic bags tied over their heads. "It was awful", Leam told me, visibly moved by the memory. "The prisoners were frightened, splashed with their own shit. The torturers kept saying over and over again: "Do you have any connection with the Khmer Serai Ka (the Free Khmer Movement) ? Have you sent any supplies to the Khmer Serai Ka ?"

(Various Cambodian anticommunist resistance groups, invariably small and often mutually distrustful, have sprung up in Asia and elsewhere since the communist victory in Cambodia. Referred to collectively as the Khmer Serai Ka (free Khmer Movement), they raise funds for refu-

gees, and on some occasions may even cross into Cambodia from Thailand or Vietnam. However, their influence on events and especially on something as widespread as the 1976-77 plots is thought by Asian intelligence authorities to have been minimal).

In many centers, the arrival of the replacement cadres, (that was after the purge of 1977), most of them from loyalist Khmer Rouge units from Phnom Penh and areas near the capital, resulted in further purges. In Samrong commune about 10 miles east of Siem Reap town, more than 200 elderly people (all the younger villagers had been sent elsewhere to work) demonstrated against their new cadre and the food rations. Because of their age, the communists, in a rare display of mercy, spared them, launching instead an intensive "re-education" program.

In the Chikreng district some 26 miles to the east of Siem Reap town, however, the Khmer Rouge ran true to form. Here, villagers rose up and killed 20 of the new arrivals, including the commune and village chiefs and the local militia commander. After the killings, many of the villagers fled into the jungle, but the Khmer Rouge managed to arrest some 300 men and some wives and children. At a clearing in the Prey Koki area, about six miles north of Kompong Kdei town, a 60-man squad which included ten executioners armed with hoes and heavy lengths of bamboo, bludgeoned the prisoners to death truckload by truckload. As a bulldozer pushed earth over the mass grave, Leam, who had driven the car carrying the chief executioner, could see that some of the men were still alive.

Perhaps the worst of the post-revolt atrocities, however, occurred at Kompong Nong commune in the southern coastal province of Kampot. At the time, the commune had a population of about 2000 - there were 400 so-called "old people" (the Khmer Rouge term for the relatively favored former inhabitants of the village, which had been on the communist side of the lines for the last two years of the war) and some 1600 "new people" (evacuees from formerly Lon Nol-held areas who were forcibly settled in the commune after the war). The commune's senior civilian communist was known as Comrade Ay, a semi-literate former rice-grower. Ay was hated for his arrogance and cruelty. "He reserved his worst threats for the "new people" ", said 23-year-old Prak Leng Horn, a former agriculture student. "At commune meetings, he would

talk very loudly, saying he had the power to kill any of the "New people". And when one of Ay's senior aides, a Khmer Rouge civilian cadre, was arrested for alleged dealings with the Khmer Serai Ka, the commune leader apparently decided to exercise that power in a grim "final solution" to Kompong Nong's security problems.

The married males were killed first. Last September 1, they were taken, along with some wives and single females - about 500 people altogether - to two different execution grounds near the commune. Villagers heard sustained machinegun-fire and grenade explosions and later saw the bodies. In a series of mass executions later in the month, Ay's men slaughtered another 530 persons, most of them young unmarried men and women. Of the commune's 1600 "new people", only about 500 women and children were spared - for the moment, at least. About another 40 youths managed to escape by fleeing into the jungle.

Prak was an eyewitness of Ay's purge of the commune's infirmary. On the afternoon of September 1, the Khmer Rouge moved all "old people" out of one of the wards and moved in a number of "new people". That evening, Prak noticed that, contrary to usual practice, kerosene lamps in this "new people's" ward were left burning. At about midnight, Prak, who was in a neighboring ward for treatment of an infected leg, saw a squad of about 17 soldiers armed with heavy bamboo clubs and lengths of waterpipe suddenly appear at the entrance to the illuminated building, about 100 yards away. Swiftly, the black-clad figures moved among the beds, bludgeoning patients and some hospital staff who were also "new people". For several minutes, Prak could hear screams and muffled thuds, and then all was quiet. None of the 20 or so persons housed or working in the building escaped alive.

As a brutal officialdom thus preserves its rule, Cambodians, especially the "new people", continue to suffer from Phnom Penh's economic policies. The most callous example is perhaps the rice ration. Official Phnom Penh propaganda holds that Cambodians have seldom had it so good. In a speech in April 1977 marking the second anniversary of the communist takeover, President Khieu Samphan boasted that "Cambodians, depending on the type of work they do, receive two, two and one half or three tins of rice a day and a dessert three times a month". In Singapore and elsewhere last year, rice-traders reportedly began receiving offers

of export rice from the Cambodian government. Shipments are known to have been made to Laos and Malagasy.

To anyone who has witnessed the gaunt, skeletal condition of refugees newly arrived in Thailand from Cambodia there is no question about how Phnom Penh has returned the country to the international rice trade. "Their exports are taken from the rice-bowls of their people", a Thai official familiar with events in Cambodia told me flatly. Even some of the privileged military and militia units have had trouble getting sufficient rice. Before the outbreak of heavy fighting between Cambodian and Vietnamese troops in the remote north-western province of Ratanakiri, one Asian intelligence service received from what was described as a highly reliable source, reports indicating that of 1250 troops in one Ratanakiri-based Khmer Rouge border regiment, no fewer than 670 were engaged in fulltime rice-planting and another 150 were working on dry-land crops. Some 200 others were engaged in "miscellaneous activities" and there were about 90 reported "weak" (thought to be a Khmer Rouge euphemism for regular hospital cases) and another 70 "sick" soldiers (believed to be the euphemism for soldiers in a dying condition). Only about 70 were free to concentrate on purely military duties.

In a border patrol unit on the other side of the country - at Veal Sre Sanor in westernmost Pursat province - President Khieu's boastful April speech was the final disillusionment for at least two Khmer Rouge soldiers. While their camp's radio was carrying Khieu's claims about food, Chhin Sern, a 20-year-old communist militia-man was sitting with nine colleagues eating their second of two meals for the day - half a condensed-milk can of rice per person. "He's lying", some of the soldiers whispered. "We were always hungry", Chhin told me in Thailand last April, shortly after he and one of his comrades fled Cambodia.

In the communes themselves, the situation is usually much worse than at Chhin's camp. Sik Non, a 35-year-old escapee from Trapeang Cho, a village about 36 miles north of Kompong Speu town in the province of the same name, spoke of a ration of just one ladle of rice soup at 11.00 a.m. and another at 5.00 p.m.

One of three persons running Trapeang Cho's blacksmith's shop, Sik

had formerly been an accountant in a sugar factory. Said Sik, "Sometimes the soup was flavored with salt and fish paste, nothing more. We had been given permission to fish during the lunch-break between 11.00 a. m. and 12.30 p. m., but most of the time we were too exhausted and took this opportunity to rest. Every two or three months, the diet was relieved - by one serving of tapioca and sugar dessert".

As a consequence, Trapeang Cho suffered severely from starvation and disease. When Sik arrived in the settlement in April 1975, there had been some 400 "old people" and 800 "new people". As a consequence of deaths and, in some instances, disappearances - if a person had been scolded for something more than twice, the soldiers would say: "He's been sent to Angka Loeu", - Trapeang Cho's population dropped sharply. Said Sik, "Each time we had a meeting, the men and the women would sit separately. I noticed that our groups were getting smaller and smaller. As the months went on, I could see Trapeang Cho disappearing before my eyes".

By last August, when Sik and his wife and 26 others fled Trapeang Cho towards Thailand, more than half the village's population had died and some had disappeared. Said the former accountant, "Of the original 800 "new people", 500 had died. Of the 400 "old people", about 200 were dead. At the time I left, Trapeang Cho's population was only about 500. On my last day there, there were only about 80 men left, more than 300 women and more than 100 children."

The continuing travail in the countryside, meantime, also attracted the attention of a group considerably more dangerous than Western Cambodia-watchers. Within weeks of the April victory commemoration and while Angka Loeu's agents were preparing to close in on the plotters in the provinces, the leaders of neighboring communist Vietnam, who continued to have their own plans for Cambodia, took advantage of Phnom Penh's distractions. The Vietnamese, of course, were also reacting to a suicidal tendency on the part of youthful, ill-directed and characteristically murderous Khmer Rouge units to raid Vietnamese border communities in attempts to recover contested territory from their eight times more populous neighbor. On May 2 last year, accordingly, Angka Loeu's

formerly "fraternal comrades-in-arms" began military actions against the Cambodian army.

Vietnamese air fleets struck at military targets in Cambodian border areas. Quickly, the fighting escalated into major clashes between Vietnamese and Cambodian infantry divisions, supported by armor and heavy artillery. A conflict which some observers are calling the "Third Indo-China War" had begun.

Thus does the Cambodian tragedy maintain its awesome, squalid momentum. Few, if any, people in recent times have been required to suffer as much - civil war, grotesque social and economic dislocation, destruction of their religious and cultural heritage, famine, pestilence, purge upon purge and now an encounter with a nation whose thrust for hegemony in Indo-China has had them girding for this confrontation with the vastly outnumbered Khmer for at least three centuries. "Perhaps we're witnessing the beginning of something truly apocalyptic - the extinction of an entire race", a veteran British observer of Indo-China's affairs said to me in Bangkok recently. "The fact that this genocide seems largely self-inflicted magnifies the awe I feel".

In a poignant attempt to find some small hope for the future, Cambodian peasants have begun a whispered revival of an ancient prophecy of great turbulence in Cambodia which would be followed by eternal peace and a revival of Buddhism. In a centuries-old book called Puth Tomnceay (Buddhist Prophecies), a monk whose identity is lost to history speaks in Nostradamus-like verses of the turbulence following a time of "houses, but no people to live in them; roads, but no one to walk them" - a fair description of Cambodia today. The book also refers to "the land flat as the skin of a drum", a reference which recent refugees say is being seen as a metaphor for Marxist equality.

The prophecy contains another grim promise which also seems to speak of today's Cambodia. When the apocalypse comes, says the book, there will remain so few Cambodians that "all will fit under the spreading branches of a single bodhi tree". The only consolation for Cambodians: at that time, there will be left only enough Vietnamese to fill one sampan.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA

By John Barron

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

"On 10th December 1948, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under which, for the first time in history, responsibility for the protection and pursuit of human rights was assumed by the international community and was accepted as a permanent obligation.

The Universal Declaration consists of 30 articles covering both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

Articles 1 and 2 are general articles, stating that "all human are born free and equal in dignity and rights" and are entitled to "all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The civil and political rights, recognized in articles 3 to 21 of the Declaration, include: the right to life, liberty and security of person; freedom from slavery and servitude; freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to recognition as a person before the law; equal protection of the law; the right to an effective judicial remedy; freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; the right to a fair trial and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty; freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence; freedom of movement; the right to asylum; the right to a nationality; the right to marry and to found a family; the right to own property; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; the right of association and of assembly; the right to take part in government and the right of equal access to public service.

Articles 22 to 27 cover economic, social and cultural rights: the right to social security; the right to work; the right to rest and leisure; the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being; the right to education; and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community."

(Basic Facts about the United Nations, Office of Public Information, United Nations, New York 1970, pp. 44-45).

Various scholars, representatives of international bodies and journalists of different nationalities have reported or alleged that human rights in Cambodia have been massively crushed. In sum, these reports, including those written by this author, depict a terrorized land which has been plunged into the dark ages by a malevolent regime that callously massacres, enslaves and subjects its people to deathly conditions of life.

Can such extreme charges be true? Is there sufficient evidence - sufficiently credible evidence - even to permit an evaluation of such charges? Some say no. They contend that because it is impossible for independent investigators actually to enter Cambodia and see for themselves, definitive conclusions are impossible.

Certainly, Cambodia today is one of the most isolated nations of the world. Its borders are sealed. It does not maintain normal commercial or cultural relations with other countries. The few foreign diplomats accredited to Phnom Penh are severely restricted in movement and live under circumstances approximating house arrest. Foreign journalists, scholars or representatives of international organizations generally are debarred from entering the country and freely moving about to observe prevailing conditions of life.

But simply because the leaders of Cambodia so ardently have endeavored to keep the world ignorant of what is happening in their country, does not mean that the world has to remain ignorant. Sources of data about what has transpired in Cambodia since the communist conquest, do exist. Let us identify these sources and analyze the potential value as well as the limitations of each.

The statements of the Cambodian regime itself, usually transmitted by radio Phnom Penh, frequently seem, to me at least, illogical, contradictory, propagandistic or excessive. Nevertheless, if carefully studied and collated with other available data, they sometimes can be both illuminating and revealing of certain realities.

Various foreign intelligence services, mainly relying upon technological means of collection, also continue to acquire information about internal happenings in Cambodia. The motives of any intelligence service always must be viewed sceptically, and in any case, intelligence services are not eager to widely disseminate secretly acquired information lest they jeopardize continuing acquisition of intelligence. Nevertheless, when the intelligence services of nations with differing political systems and different foreign policies, continue over a protracted period to report virtually identical findings, then these findings, in my mind, at least, tend to acquire some credibility.

Despite the extreme restrictions imposed upon diplomats in Phnom Penh, the emissaries resident there can glimpse something of life in the capital and reasonably infer from their observations something about life elsewhere in the country. Additionally, Cambodian authorities within the past 12 months or so have permitted a few foreign delegations to visit areas of the nation. To be sure, these delegations were permitted to see only what the Cambodian regime had desired or hoped they would see. Nevertheless, the observations as reported by the visiting foreign diplomats and journalists are significant.

Further insight into contemporary life within Cambodia may be gained from the behavior of Cambodian forces which have crossed into neighboring Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. During the past two years, the Cambodians have staged hundreds of raids against border villages in Thailand and Vietnam. I would like to interject here that in my opinion the attacks in Thailand have been unprovoked. I do not know the rights or wrongs of the conflict between the Vietnamese and the Cambodians; nevertheless, hundreds of raids into Vietnam have occurred, and what is significant to me about the evidence they produced, is what it reflects about the tactics that seem to be standard for the Khmer Rouge. The evidence of their tactics has been recorded photographically by foreign journalists in Thailand, and photographic evidence has been displayed by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Because increasingly widespread hostilities exist between Vietnam and Cambodia, the Vietnamese statements might ordinarily be considered propagandistic, self-serving or extravagant. Yet, when they mesh consistently and harmoniously with certain other evidence, then they too tend to acquire a certain credibility.

Finally, there exist tens of thousands of eye-witnesses to what has happened and continues to happen in Cambodia. Since April 1975, some 60,000 Cambodians at least are believed to have fled into Vietnam, and the Thai government estimates that at least 30,000 Cambodians have taken refuge in that country. I think that the initial waves of Cambodian refugees perhaps included a disproportionate ratio of educated and affluent people, a majority of whom came from the cities. However, the flow of refugees subsequent to 1975 has been composed in the main of peasantry or more ordinary citizens. Within recent months, it also has included an increasing number of defectors from the Cambodian army or the communist regime. Now I acknowledge that immediately prior to flight, a majority of the refugees probably resided in areas close to the Thai or Vietnamese borders. However, in months preceding the flight, many of them inhabited interior or other regions of the country. Thus, the overall refugee stream consists of an extremely heterogeneous group of people who have witnessed events in most sections of Cambodia. It appears that most Cambodians who attempt to escape, die, succumbing to the rigors of the jungle, ambushes by communist patrols, land mines or other lethal obstacles implanted to prevent flight. So all who risk probable death by attempting escape obviously are antagonistic toward the regime. Those who would discount the testimony of refugees contend, therefore, that they are so biased that their accounts are of dubious worth. Doubtless, the survivors of Dachau, Buchenwald and the Stalin concentration camps also were biased. Their bias, however, did not efface the realities they survived, realities subsequently and indisputably verified by independent historical investigation.

The powers of individual human observation and memory are fallible. Individual refugees may be guilty of conscious fabrications or self-serving tales. But during the past three years, hundreds, indeed thousands of Cambodian refugees have told dozens of reputable journalists, scholars and interrogators of diverse nationalities basically the same story of life in contemporary Cambodia. Therefore, it seems to me difficult rationally or honestly to dismiss out of hand the basic thrust of this collective story.

Examination of the data emanating from all the sources enumerated

above demonstrates that certain fundamental facts simply are not in dispute. Everyone, from the communist regime itself to the most hostile, disaffected anti-communist refugee, agrees that certain extraordinary events have occurred. Let us consider the occurrences about which there really is no argument.

Within a few hours after overrunning Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the communists ordered the capital evacuated at gunpoint. Within the next days, the entire population, estimated to have numbered at the time approximately three million, was expelled at gunpoint. No one was exempted from the evacuation order. Even hospitals and convalescent homes were emptied, and their patients, regardless of condition, swept away with the masses. Soon, other Cambodian cities, harboring altogether approximately half a million people, similarly were evacuated. And later, probably another half million people were driven from the larger villages in territories controlled by the Lon Nol government prior to April 17. Now, there is no dispute about this.

There also is no dispute that virtually all of the millions thus exiled ultimately were dispersed in new settlements or communes hewn out of the bush or jungle in the countryside. Generally, even those displaced persons allowed to reside in the vicinity of established villages were nevertheless required to fashion their own settlements out of the bush. With comparatively few exceptions, all of the men, women and children exiled, regardless of physical condition, particular talents or vocational background, were impressed into forced labor gangs whose principal task, initially at least, consisted of clearing land, building irrigation systems and cultivating the soil for rice crops.

In time, a minority of the exiles was redeployed in rudimentary cottage industry, reopening of some factories, and efforts to rebuild an elementary transportation system. But the overwhelming majority of people cast out of the cities in 1975 today remain agrarian laborers.

Certain radical social, cultural and economic changes imposed by this upheaval and concurrent communist policies also are not in dispute. Urban life has been almost totally abolished. The evacuated cities now in the main stand as ghostly, empty wastelands. It seems that the only flickers of life are to be found in Phnom Penh, where an

estimated 20,000 or so communist cadre reside, and in Batambaang, where the inhabitants presently are far fewer. Money, conventional commerce and private property also have been abolished. Universities, libraries, telecommunications and the postal system have ceased to exist. A communist spokesman recently boasted that the practice of Buddhism, to which most Cambodians formerly adhered, has been eliminated. The people depend almost entirely for their daily sustenance upon rations dispensed by the state in quantities determined by the state. The practice of modern medicine also has been almost entirely eliminated. Such medical care as is available consists of herbal medicine administered by communist cadre, which the regime itself has acknowledged are comparatively untrained and unskilled.

These basic occurrences and conditions of life which have been abundantly documented by multiple sources, including the communist regime itself, by themselves, I submit, constitute evidence that widespread abrogation of basic human rights has been inflicted in Cambodia. But there is still more evidence that this abrogation of basic human rights has been inflicted on a scale and with a barbarity unexcelled in modern history.

According to hundreds of diverse survivors of the march from the cities, this unprecedented exodus was accompanied by countless summary executions and innumerable deaths resulting from privation, exposure and disease.

While draining the cities of all human life, the Khmer Rouge mounted a methodical assault on the physical symbols and sinews of preexisting Cambodian society and culture. Troops ransacked libraries, offices and homes, burning books by the hundreds of thousands, along with all other types of written matter.

They smashed hospital equipment, wrecked furniture and hurled the contents of homes into the streets to ruin. Temples were despoiled and sacked, and automobiles by the thousands were overturned and vandalized.

Simultaneously, the Khmer Rouge commenced killing former military officers and civil servants of the Lon Nol government. Thousands were slaughtered in organized massacres conducted outside the cities

Personnel who had been induced to surrender en masse were taken, usually by truck or bus, under various guises to outlying fields where Khmer Rouge troops waited in ambush. The actual extermination was accomplished by differing means, which included artillery fire, explosions of hand grenades and land mines, machine-gun and automatic rifle fire, bayoneting, stabbing and bludgeoning.

Officers and civil servants who managed initially to conceal their past, were killed whenever and wherever unmasked. In a number of cases described by eye-witnesses, their families, including children and infants, were killed along with them.

Congestion on the highways and roads out of the cities made driving almost impossible, and cars soon were confiscated anyway. Some people brought along bicycles and pushcarts on which they carried enfeebled relatives and such belongings as they were able to bundle together before their sudden evacuation. But most of the outcasts proceeded from the cities toward the bush and jungle on foot.

Soldiers guarding and goading the exiles along the lines of march, frequently shot those who refused or were unable to keep pace.

On the five national highways leading out of Phnom Penh, the midday temperature in those last days of April rose above 100 degrees F. Yet the nights were cold. The dry season now ending had parched the flatlands and evaporated the rice paddies, leaving behind stagnant, fetid pools and ponds increasingly fouled by bodies and excrement.

Virtually no stores of potable water, no stocks of food, no shelter had been prepared for the millions of outcasts. They slept wherever they could, often in fields and ditches. Along some stretches of the highways, trucks did haphazardly distribute small quantities of American rice brought from Phnom Penh, but most families received none.

As all logic would dictate, such circumstances brought death often. The very young and the very old were the first to die. Adults and children alike slaked their thirst in roadside ditches. Consequently, acute dysentery racked and sapped life from the bodies already weakened by hunger and fatigue.

A Cambodian physician, Dr. Vann Hay, who on April 17 was roused from a Phnom Penh clinic along with all his patients, spent almost a month on various roads and trails before escaping to Vietnam. Dr. Hay stated to Ursula Naccache:

"We must have passed the body of a child every 200 yards. Most of them died of gastrointestinal afflictions which cause complete dehydration. I had some medication with me, but most children brought to me required massive dosages and lengthy rest afterward. Neither was available. Thinking of all the bodies I saw, plus the sick who came to see me, between 20 and 30 every day, half of whom were not going to live, I figure that between 20,000 and 30,000 people must have died the first month, just in the area described (the route along which he walked to Vietnam). "

Now, some of these exiles were fortunate enough to be consigned to new settlements relatively close to the cities, and thus, for them, the ordeal of the march lasted relatively a short time. Hundreds of thousands, maybe even some millions, of others marched for weeks, goaded ever onward into the countryside without knowing what their ultimate destination or fate would be.

The eventual destination of most was a new settlement. Typically, upon arriving, a new villager family would be ordered to construct a hut out of bamboo leaves, whatever else could be foraged from the jungle, and then they were put into a work group normally comprised of ten families.

The work groups labored and still do from 5 or 6 in the morning to the midday break and then until 5 or 6 at night. On moonlit nights in many areas work continued from 6 or 7 to 10 p.m. And all this goes on seven days a week. There were in many areas a lack of agricultural implements, tools, and so, much of the work had to be done by hand by people who were unaccustomed to arduous physical labor.

Every phase of life soon strictly was regimented according to dictates from Angka Loeu, the Organization on High.

Husbands and wives were forbidden to quarrel and, in some villages at least, prohibited from disciplining their children. The children were

singled out for intensive political indoctrination and were trained to be informants against their parents and elders. Extra-marital sex was made punishable by death, and some couples were executed merely for planning marriage without prior authorization from Angka Loeu.

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.

According to numerous eye-witness accounts, provided us over a period now of more than two years, executions were and are effected by bludgeoning, garroting, beheading, stabbing and other primitive means. It would appear that males most often are killed by being struck in the back of the neck with heavy hoes. Women and children usually are extinguished by being slashed in the throat.

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, by repeated radio orders intercepted by a number of nations, 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. Soon word spread among communist soldiers that former teachers, village chiefs and students also were to be targets of massacres. 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, Dr. Oum Nal, whom we heard yesterday, indicates that some intellectuals after servitude in the fields or incarceration in prison were concentrated in special villages for reeducation. However, his testimony, and his other experiences as well as accounts of numerous

other refugees, indicate that many teachers, students and educated people were killed simply because of their class or education.

Statements both from the Phnom Penh regime and communist defectors interviewed this year by my colleague Anthony Paul, indicate that plots against the central government began to develop within the communist ranks as early as 1976. Their detection provoked last year a new wave of massacres whose victims included longtime communist supporters and functionaries as well as civilians suspected of being educated or related, however remotely, to the former government.

Concerning the current food supply, evidence available to us, at least, is fragmentary and sometimes contradictory. It would appear that despite persisting pockets of hunger and abnormally high incidence of disease, the pervasive famines and epidemics that took such a toll in 1975 and 1976 have subsided. However, we find no evidence from refugees or any other credible sources that the brutal discipline and regimen of life have been significantly ameliorated. Newly arrived refugees, communist defectors and Thai border officials all attest that anyone caught attempting to flee Cambodia, still is killed on the spot.

A former deputy company commander in the communist forces named Phin Sin, told Anthony Paul recently: "Adultery, love affairs, flirtation - these were all reasons for execution." Marriage may occur only with the prior sanction of Angka. Malingering, disobedience or any other manifestation of hostility to the regime also remain grounds for execution. There is no freedom of movement, no freedom of choice as to place of residence or nature of work. The printed-word virtually has vanished from the land, and anyone discovered reading foreign material that has survived the attempted eradication of literature, is subject to execution.

Neither does there seem to have been any diminution of the savage spirit that has characterized the communist regime since its ascension to power. For Cambodia's neighbors, Thailand on the west, Vietnam to the east, report that their citizens are being victimized by the very same kind of butchery which refugees assert that Cambodia - or the Khmer Rouge - continue to visit upon their own people.

In the dead of night last year, Khmer Rouge troops crossed into Thailand and raided the border villages of Baan Nong Dor, Baan Klong Kor and Baan Noi Parai. In a formal statement the Thai government said of the attack: "The said Khmer Rouge soldiers fired their guns at the innocent Thai villagers and burnt all houses to the ground. These murderers did not only gun down everybody in sight, including helpless women, they also disfigured the bodies and slashed the throats of children and babies". Independent news photographers visited the scenes of the carnage and provided grisly photographic evidence that the Thai statement was accurate.

Last January the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stated:

"It (Cambodia) has attacked populous areas, towns, cities, new economic zones, schools, hospitals, temples and churches. Since early May 1975, it has committed thousands of encroachments on Vietnamese territory, killed or wounded thousands of civilians, captured hundreds of others, burned thousands of houses and plundered a huge amount of our property.

"What hurt us most was that they beheaded and disemboweled Vietnamese women and children, burned down houses, looted property and tore Vietnamese babies into pieces....."

"Wherever they went, they set fire to schools, they raped women, ripped open the bellies of pregnant women, cut off heads, massacred children and threw their bodies into houses in flames..."

These, it must be emphasized, are the words of communists speaking about other communists who until recently were their longtime and intimate military allies, at least. I recognized that there's a long-standing animosity between the Vietnamese and the Khmer people, and I hold no brief for the Vietnamese, but what I think is significant, is that we see in the tactics and the mentality and the behavior, as reported both by the Thais, who are trying to accommodate with the Cambodian regime, and the Vietnamese, who are at war with it, virtually, the same pattern of behavior that is reported by other sources inside Cambodia.

No one can know how many hundreds of thousands of people have perished in consequence of the fanatical, indeed nihilistic policies enforced by the present rulers of Cambodia. But I submit that overwhelming evidence

demonstrates that nowhere in the world today are elementary human rights being more grotesquely and barbarically violated than in Cambodia. In fact, this evidence shows that the Cambodian people enjoy none of the rights proclaimed three decades ago by the United Nations. 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 marry and raise their children as they think best, to be tried according to due process of law, to worship the deity of their belief. They do not 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 the omnipresent state approves.

And unless the rest of the world effectively brings pressure in their behalf, the people of Cambodia have no right or grounds to expect respite from the ubiquitous fear, terror and tyranny that now envelop them.