

An Atrocity Called Cambodia

The murderers entered the school while the children were sleeping: They were attired in black suits and carried guns and knives. They broke into the people's houses, woke the children up and ordered them to gather at the playground. Only a few children managed to escape. Some 50 children and seven female teachers were captured. The murderers forced the children to watch them rape the female teachers. Then they beheaded all the teachers and threw their heads into the air. The children could not even cry because they were so frightened, while a few passed out . . . They held the children's legs and threw them into the air and bayoneted them. A moment later, the playground was painted red with the blood of the pupils and female teachers. The murderers then fired at the remaining children. The children's bodies were left scattered on the playground while they frolicked with the children's limbs and torches in their hands before setting fire to the school and people's houses. The moon turned scarlet . . . the ground gave off the putrid smell of the burning . . .

Eyewitness account of a Cambodian
raid on a Vietnamese school in
Tan Bien, January 1978

It is no surprise that there are very few men among us, because in Cambodia women and children live separately and men are taken away to other places. Many men have been killed. My husband, a former officer in Samdech Sihanouk's army, was shot by the Cambodian authorities. Not only my husband but all other intellectuals, including professors and doctors, have been arrested, massacred or taken away to unknown destinations. Schools no longer exist . . . even temples have been destroyed. Anyone who is not killed or arrested must perform labor, or put more precisely, is ill treated and forced to do hard labor. Workers are given scant daily rations. Nobody has enough to eat. One of my friends said loudly 'I am still hungry' after finishing his meal. Immediately, those in charge of management and surveillance beat him up with hoes and then buried him alive . . .

A Cambodian refugee, Ban San
Camp, Vietnam, March 1978

These reports appeared in *Nhan Dan*, the daily press of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Vietnam, of course, has been at undeclared war with Cambodia (Kampuchea) for some months, and these "refugee interviews" might therefore be dismissed as exaggerations or even fabrications not atypical of war-time propaganda. But in this case, their dismissal would be a mistake.

This news service has no special knowledge of what transpired in the places, at the times, reported by the Vietnamese. However, comparable war-time eye-

witness atrocity reports, say about Hitler's Germany in the 1940s, were to be believed even before all the horrifying evidence was in, because the regime accused of such crimes was by its nature, fully capable of the crimes described.

The Cambodian regime, nominally Communist, is of the same species-nature as the Hitler regime. It is not communist in any meaningful sense, but — like Hitler — fanatically "zero growth" in its policies and paranoid in its peasant mentality, as even friendly observers report. For the Cambodian regime, human beings are no different than beasts, or beasts of burden. That is what war-crimes are made of.

There is a certain half-truth to U.S. National Security chief Zbigniew Brzezinski's "observation" that the Vietnam-Cambodia border conflict is actually a "proxy war" between the Soviet Union and China. Vietnam, like the Soviet Union, is a humanist republic in its policy-commitments, anxious to develop its nation, its people, and its region in cooperation with Communist and non-Communist neighbors and allies. Cambodia, like Maoist China, its supporter, is committed to zero growth and peasant bestialism, and as a matter of record, Vietnamese reports aside, the Cambodian leadership is engaged in an atrocity against its own population by virtue of basic economic orientation.

Otherwise, Brzezinski's "proxy war" statement indicates his (and London's) purposes respecting the Vietnam-Cambodia "hot spot," but not the reality of the situation. Brzezinski might be compared to William Pitt the Younger, outspoken over the horrors of the French Revolution, while secretly directing Jeremy Bentham in deployment of his agent, Jean-Paul Marat, to wield the Paris mob in the Great Terror which destroyed the French humanist leadership. Pol Pot, Secretary General of the Cambodian ruling party, has chosen to play the part of Marat; China's Teng Hsiao-ping, that of Bentham.

Cambodia

The Cambodians own propaganda betrays their claim of having been victims of Vietnamese aggression. Their radio station commentaries — there is only one newspaper, issued three times a month — talk only of Vietnamese intrigue to establish a vague Indochinese federation; usually some captured Vietnamese soldier or officer is dragged in to reveal a dark invasion plan, all of it much as a paranoid peasant always sees his neighbor plotting to steal his chickens. By contrast the Vietnamese have interviewed hundreds of the nearly 100,000 Cambodian refugees *who have fled to Vietnam*, and who tell of attacks by Cambodian troops and of "concentration camp" conditions inside Cambodia. These stories are more than confirmed by Western journalists, who have been to the disputed territories in Vietnam. Particularly

telling is the report filed by a team of Yugoslav journalists, who went to Phnom Penh on a friendly mission to observe life in "Democratic Kamuchea" and could only diplomatically describe catastrophic mass relocations of the people to farm labor camps. (Portions of their report appear below.)

Cambodian propaganda speaks of its "Kampuchean revolution" fighting for equality in the "collective spirit." In contrast to Vietnam, however, where new urban and industrial centers are being planned, the Cambodians have depopulated their cities of 3.5 million residents, forcing them into the countryside to become peasant laborers. Its former capital city, Phnom Penh, which boasted a population of 1 million before the fall of the Lon Nol regime, has, in the words of the Yugoslav journalists, been reduced to a "city without life or soul," and a current population of 200,000. One could stand on the main boulevard the entire day, they said, and count the passers-by on the fingers of one hand.

The urban population has been shoved into cooperatives throughout the countryside, imbibing the "collective spirit." A more accurate description was given by a Cambodian refugee who recounted how the "Cambodian authorities have turned Cambodia into a large concentration camp." She described how Cambodian town dwellers were simply arrested while walking along a street and sent to a cooperative, where they were put at hard labor. These cooperatives are generally composed of 30 families who eat in a common dining hall; children are taken away from their parents at an early age for "revolutionary indoctrination." No one is allowed to have rice, vegetables, or pots and pans to prepare additional meals. Anyone who dares to build a fire in his home is arrested and punished.

There is no money, and no higher education in Cambodia. The former National Bank of the Kingdom of Cambodia lies in ruins in the center of Phnom Penh. According to the Yugoslav journalists, unopened safes, cash boxes containing untold millions in foreign currency and precious metals, lie strewn about untouched. Cambodians have been reduced to bartering for whatever commodities are available.

Pol Pot told the Yugoslav newsmen that there is no need for universities or secondary education, since cadres are trained on the job: "by doing practical work, we gain practical experience." The journalists told of children as young as 12 and 14 working in factories, standing on boxes in order to reach the machines.

What keeps the Pol Pot leadership in the seat of power is cold-blooded terror. The depopulation of the cities and establishment of an autarkical regime underscores the paranoid outlook of this clique, suspicious of all intellectuals, technicians, and anything that smacks of foreign influence. In the last three years Cambodia has suffered a continuous "cultural revolution," with young Khmer Rouge, many in their teens, marauding through the countryside like Red Guards, seeking out any "opposition elements" — and anyone over 30 is immediately suspect.

Following an attempted coup last April by leaders opposed to the continuous relocation programs that have reached genocidal proportions, purges were initiated against the "Old Khmer Rouge." These included resistance fighters who had fought beside the Vietminh

against the French, or, later, with the Viet Cong. But Pol Pot condemned them as "of an advanced age if compared to the young, with reduced strength and slightly declining mental facilities."

Vietnam

Cambodian claims, and those of Cambodia's apologists like Noam Chomsky, that the depopulation of the cities and political purges were the result of food shortages and security considerations are dramatically disproven by developments in Vietnam. While Cambodia immediately cut itself off from the world except for China, Vietnam immediately put out an international appeal for reconstruction aid and emergency food supplies. Starvation was averted through food aid from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and United Nations relief agencies. Similarly, no soldiers of the former Saigon regime were killed, but were sent to reeducation camps.

The Vietnamese liberated their country in order to rapidly transform its backward rural economy into a modern industrial and urbanized society. This transformation is being based on the introduction of higher forms of agricultural techniques, organization, and education to the peasant, to aid him to overcome his narrow traditional outlook. A recent article in the Vietnamese party daily, *Nhan Dan*, quotes Party Secretary General Le Duan on the question of "socialist pricing": "Paying attention to value is being mindful of incessantly promoting technical improvement, constantly increasing labor productivity, and striving to make a profit in production for the purpose of unceasingly improving the standard of living and accumulating more capital for carrying out expanded reproduction."

The Vietnamese dealt with the refugee problem in terms of this national development policy. Refugees have been resettled in well-prepared New Economic Zones; the new settlers were given enough supplies and equipment to sustain themselves. Technicians and agricultural specialists including those who had served under the old regime and were far too precious to be "purged," were mobilized for the gigantic task.

The Vietnamese leaders have conducted themselves in their conflict with Cambodia in the same way they have treated their own population. The nearly 100,000 Cambodians who fled to Vietnam have been housed and clothed at rehabilitation centers; some have been settled on land to engage in agricultural production.

A Polish journalist visiting captured Cambodian soldiers in a Vietnamese camp was surprised to see them, chalk in hand before a blackboard, being taught to read and write. Shocked to see that these young soldiers, many only in their teens, were illiterate, he compared Cambodia to Nazi-occupied Poland, where the Nazis said it was enough that the Polish people could read and write, and closed all the schools.

Vietnamese soldiers are under orders to take prisoners, for which they are given material reward, whenever they engage in military operations against Cambodian troops. The aim is to relax border tensions and show the Cambodians that their worst enemy is the Pol Pot clique.

Since the first week in January, right after Cambodia

broke diplomatic relations with Vietnam, the Vietnamese have made numerous peace proposals which the Cambodians have chosen to ignore. The Cambodians have made no peace proposals, but have periodically escalated their border attacks, striking at Ha Tien in the south while conducting naval operations against Vietnamese-held Phu Quoc Island. And Western intelligence sources report that the Chinese have been sending new arms shipments since February.

As a concession, the Vietnamese said they would be willing to withdraw from Cambodian territory in the context of an overall ceasefire. They called for negotiations, to be based upon noninterference in each other's internal affairs. These efforts have been supported by a white paper stating the Vietnamese position over three years on the disputed border territory.

The United States could well support these proposals — as critics of Zbigniew Brzezinski ought to note.

Yugoslavia Delegation Tours Cambodia

The following release detailing a visit to Cambodia was issued by the Yugoslavian news service Tanjug, March 21:

Phnom Penh — In the very center of the capital city of Cambodia there stands the ruins of a modern red building which one can read was the National Bank of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In the debris in front of and behind this building we noticed heavy bank safes and cash boxes which, our companions told us, the Khmer Rouge have not yet attempted to open. . . . People from the Ministry of Information and Propaganda who accompanied us convinced us that this indifference towards what could well be millions lying in the safes was no more than acceptance of the principles of the new authorities, who want to resolve this country's difficulties by self-reliance.

Town Without Life and Soul

This unarranged tour of the former treasury coffers of the Kingdom of Cambodia perhaps most symbolically illustrates the attitude of the new authorities toward everything that could remind one of the old times. From this one may draw a conclusion why millions of men, women and children sleep in dilapidated straw cottages or in hastily built huts when towns offer comfort in the totally empty, beautiful — and more than beautiful — residential buildings, villas and ordinary family houses.

...Even Pol Pot, secretary of the Cambodian Communist Party (KCP) and prime minister, does not want to answer the question of when this national wealth will be given to the people. He prefers to speak of the reasoning behind the decision to evacuate the city population....all towns were evacuated in the first days of the liberation.

All former town inhabitants are now agricultural producers or members of mobile work brigades building the new Cambodia. This involves 3 million people....However, on the enormous building sites — where sometimes there are over 20,000 people per square kilometer at any given time — they cannot be distinguished from other builders. And our hosts are not always ready to make it possible for us to establish contacts, for in Cambodia all workers are now peasants.

Yet, confronted by journalistic curiosity and persistence to look closer and become acquainted with the needs of these people who work 8 to 9 hours per day in very difficult conditions — because they often do not have any technical aids at their disposal — our hosts

gave in and took us to one or two former town inhabitants for an interview. We met a former student who over the past 3 years so completely had forgotten the language he had studied that an interpreter had to help us communicate with him. He said that he was happy to be taking part in a mobile work brigade which moves from building site to building site throughout the year.

Mobilization and Not Resettlement

The new authorities have on several occasions divulged the reasons for their decision to abandon the towns.

Those who saw Phnom Penh and other towns did not find it difficult to deduce that this mobilization had been quick and vigorous, because in town houses furniture, crockery and even clothes remain untouched, just as they were at the moment when the decision to abandon the towns was taken. This can best be seen in Phnom Penh where there are many houses that have not been opened since the day their inhabitants left them. Coffee cups are on the tables, clothes in the cupboards, and in garages are cars untouched since that date. Yet our hosts told us that about 200,000 inhabitants live in the capital and its surroundings, and there is no reason to doubt that statement.

However, with the exception of a few buildings taken by foreign diplomats or foreign experts, the passers-by in the busiest boulevards in the center of the town within an hour can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Even when an inhabitant is seen now and again he turns out to be a member of a work brigade responsible for town maintenance. Insofar as the maintenance of the streets, parks and even the facades of abandoned buildings is concerned, these people are invariably members of work brigades who, as far as we were able to see, do not live in the center of the town but come here every morning from the suburbs.

The only people here are those responsible for city security, who cannot be seen by day, but whose presence can be felt at night. However, they too avoid living in modern airconditioned city buildings or in buildings with rusted refrigerators. They live in the adjoining courtyards of these same buildings. It is due to them that former parks have become plantations of coconuts and other tropical trees, while cabbages are sometimes grown in flowerpots.

Water and electricity are available only on the streets where traffic leads into the town from the airport or on streets in the areas with accommodations for foreign

guests and diplomats. When night falls Phnom Penh does not look like a capital of a country even to those who live in these lit up parts of the city.

The entire life of this town which one had half a million inhabitants, and which during the war was a city of 1 million, goes on in four premises marked specifically for that purpose: The "Friendship Cinema" which opens its doors only when a foreign statesman arrives, the "Hostel" for guests, where official diplomatic dinners are given, the theater and the diplomatic club. Even big ministry buildings do not have anything inside that would give away their function because the officials in them

can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

They too have to work and be educated through labor. Fruit and the vegetable plots were being cultivated by officials from the ministries. These were the very people we asked if the policy of abandoning towns is a long-term or a passing stage of the Cambodian revolution, but we could not conclude from their replies whether it is the former or the latter. If it was an imperative decision dictated by temporary conditions which could jeopardize the achievements of the liberation victory, then the task of shifting the center of gravity from the towns into Cambodian villages has been carried to completion.

Cambodia Refuses Negotiations

The following are excerpts of the Vietnam Hanoi International Service release of March 20:

Since mid-1975, the Kampuchean authorities have harped on Vietnam's aggression while their armed forces nibbled into Vietnamese territory. They killed Vietnamese civilians, plundered rice and burned down Vietnamese villages along the border region, saying Vietnam looted property and killed Kampucheans. They even massacred Kampucheans and Vietnamese residents now living honestly in Kampuchea, photographed them, and then accused Vietnam of the crimes.

Inside Kampuchea, they launched a campaign claiming Ho Chi Minh City as part of Kampuchea. They say moreover that wherever there are trees, that place belongs to Kampuchea and must be liberated. Their argument that Vietnam intends to force Kampuchea into an Indochinese federation goes on like a cracked record. Now they say that they want to establish friendly relations with neighboring countries but unceasingly tell their people and soldiers that Vietnam is Kampuchea's traditional enemy.

Justice and popular support can never belong to those criminals who commit crimes and blame others. Some Kampuchean leaders have been so outspoken in their policy of national enmity against Vietnam and their policy of white terror against their own people that the world public cannot help raising the question: What type of regime is running Kampuchea?

The Kampuchean authorities cannot hide the truth. Neither can they hope to use repeated crooked slanders to deceive people. That is one of the reasons the three-

point proposal put forth by the Government of the SRV has now won support from broad public opinion. Vietnam's three-point proposal has been internationally recognized as fair and reasonable and as a solid basis to peacefully settle the problems concerning Vietnam-Kampuchea relations in the interests of peace and security in Southeast Asia.

Rude Pravo, organ of the communist party of Czechoslovakia, wrote on February 7:

Fairness and deception will be brought to light. This depends on whether Kampuchea will accept Vietnam's latest and most concrete proposals. If Phnom Penh refuses to change its attitude, all its charges against Vietnam will be seen as lies.

By slandering Vietnam, the Kampuchean authorities want to justify their hostility toward Vietnam and to deceive public opinion which is urging them to negotiate with Vietnam to jointly solve the border problem. Moreover, they intend to use this false pretext to repress their people and to purge their opponents, the genuine Kampuchean revolutionaries who do not approve of their dangerous home and foreign policies and are trying to preserve the time-honored solidarity and friendship between the peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea.

But one thing is certain. The Kampuchean authorities slanders against Vietnam cannot deceive people forever. Revolts against the hell-on-earth conditions within Kampuchea and worldwide condemnation of Kampuchea's hostility toward Vietnam prove this. We are confident that justice will prevail, the solidarity and friendship between the peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea will be restored.