

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,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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,<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>5</sup>

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?"<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> But in October 1976, he told Patrice De Beer that he had not witnessed any executions, although he had heard "rumors" of them.<sup>8</sup> (Chou Try was later chosen to be the Khmer chief of the entire refugee camp at Aranyaphrethet).

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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> And a Thai journalist working for a Japanese newspaper, elicited from the Thai counterintelligence officer in the border province of Aranyaprathet, the admission that he had posed the scenes in the photos in Thailand.<sup>11</sup> Color prints of the pictures were circulated widely among Cambodian refugees in Aranyaprathet 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

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

<sup>7</sup> CBS Evening News, Jan. 26, 1976.

<sup>8</sup> *The Guardian* (London), Oct. 3, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> "Forced Cambodian Labor Depicted," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 8, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Bangkok Post, Apr. 19, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> "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."<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>12</sup> Reader's Digest, February 1977, p. 8.

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

<sup>14</sup> Ponchaud, *Cambodge*: Anee Zero, p. 10.

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

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> 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 highranking 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup>See, 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."

<sup>18</sup>David 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.

<sup>19</sup>Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré."

<sup>20</sup>Denis Grey, Associated Press dispatch, Bangkok Post, June 25, 1976.

<sup>21</sup>Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup>Ponchaud, *Cambodge: annee zero*, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

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.<sup>24</sup>

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."<sup>25</sup>

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."<sup>26</sup> 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.]<sup>27</sup>

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.<sup>28</sup> 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."<sup>29</sup>

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."<sup>30</sup>

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."<sup>31</sup> 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,"<sup>32</sup> 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,

<sup>24</sup> Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré."

<sup>25</sup> *The Guardian* (London), Feb. 22, 1976.

<sup>26</sup> Barron and Paul, *Reader's Digest*, p. 260.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1976.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Dudman, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Apr. 25, 1976.

<sup>30</sup> *The Guardian* (London), Oct. 3, 1976.

<sup>31</sup> Francois Ponchaud, "Le Monde," Feb. 18, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> 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."

"To rebuild Democratic Kampuchea, a million people is sufficient." This is a sentiment which certain refugees have been eager to attribute to the revolutionary government. This is apparently to suggest that the Cambodian leadership does not care about the loss of several million people in the process of rebuilding Cambodia. But official broadcasts and statements have been hammering away at the opposite theme: that Cambodia is underpopulated and needs to increase its work force.<sup>33</sup> At least one refugee account which appears to be credible indicates that cadres emphasized in political meetings the importance of increasing the population.<sup>34</sup> So the quotation appears to be creation of one refugee's own imagination.<sup>35</sup>

As for the notion of a purge of all educated people, alluded to without supporting documentation by Barron and Paul, it appears totally baseless. Again many refugees have attributed such an intent to the Communist regime,<sup>36</sup> but the evidence now indicates clearly that there was no such policy. Ponchaud points out that there were reports of organized reeducation camps beginning in September 1975.<sup>37</sup> One doctor who lived in a reeducation camp for intellectuals for three months told of a very elaborate indoctrination procedure, including the writing of "autobiographies" as in Vietnam.<sup>38</sup> In a longer account of the experience, the doctor indicates that the Communist officials who were in charge of the reeducation process were respectful toward them and talked of their ability to contribute to the future of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>39</sup> His account hardly supports the popular notion that intellectuals have been viewed as "enemies" by the Communist government.

Cambodians in Paris, who were in a good position to evaluate the allegations of class purge on the basis of friends and relatives who had come out of Cambodia after the end of the war, have rejected the allegation decisively by announcing their intention to return to Kampuchea. On May 23, 1976, 126 educated Cambodians, including a number of former officers and non-Commissioned officers who were forcibly evacuated from Cambodia by their commanders and put in refugee camps in Thailand or in the U.S., denounced the "campaign of poison" which they said was being waged against Democratic Kampuchea. They said they were returning to their country that week after "mature reflection based on the knowledge of authentic facts—political, economic and social. . . ."<sup>40</sup>

It is known that a certain number of high-ranking officials and military men, who were considered by the new government to be "war criminals," were executed soon after the war ended. But the evidence does not support the charge that the government intended to eliminate physically the former military and civilian personnel of the Lon Nol government or any other social category from the old society. The postwar bloodletting which took place was not a consequence of an ideological perversion but of the savagery of the war itself. In a recent analysis on Cambodia, Nayan Chanda quotes a diplomat who spent four years in Phnom Penh until the Communist victory, as saying, "It is important to remember that toward the end of the war, the soldiers of Lon Nol had the habit of eating the livers of their adversaries. Despite the fact that it lasted only five years, the war in Cambodia was the most savage in Indochina."<sup>41</sup> He went on to speculate that, apart from the thirst for vengeance, the "political experience" and "lack of organization" of the Communist cadres and soldiers contributed to the incidence of reprisals.

These reprisals, deplorable as they were, do not qualify the government of Democratic Kampuchea for the title of "genocidal," or any of the other terms of abuse heaped on it. It would seem that such reprisals are not at all beyond the bounds of historical experience following internal wars, or wars involving foreign occupation. Nor should the commonly used "estimates" of 800,000 or 1.4 million dead be taken seriously as indications of the magnitude of the killing. A

<sup>33</sup> Chandler, et al., "The Early Phases of Liberation . . .", pp. 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> The absurdity of this alleged quotation is increased by Ponchaud's insistence that by "prisoners of war," the official meant "the population deported in 1975," that is, the population dispersed from the cities. He presents no evidence for this idea, suggesting that he was again simply accepting the word of a refugee.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, the comments quoted from carefully-selected refugees by Daniel Southerland, *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 4, 1976.

<sup>37</sup> Ponchaud, *Cambodge*: anec zero, p. 94.

<sup>38</sup> *Le Figaro*, Feb. 11, 1977.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> "Joint Declaration of Cambodians Before Departure for Democratic Kampuchea," with full list of 126 people and their professions. (mimeographed.)

<sup>41</sup> Nayan Chanda, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 1977, p. 5.

European who worked as a statistician for the Lon Nol government until the end of the war and who interviewed refugees in Thailand with the help of Khmer friends has suggested that the number of killings immediately following the war may have numbered in the "hundreds or thousands"—not the hundreds of thousands charged by these anonymous sources.<sup>42</sup> His estimate, based on the interviews he conducted, and not on the assumption of a particular policy by the government, is likely to be more accurate than those which assume a policy of full-scale purge.

In any case it is clear that the postwar killings in Cambodia do not begin to compare, either in numbers or in central government involvement, to the massacre which took place in Indonesia after the abortive coup of October 1965. Journalists and academic specialists speculated for years that the number of people murdered, with open encouragement by the military regime, was as high as half a million. Last July, Admiral Sudomo, Indonesia's chief of internal security, confirmed officially for the first time in a press conference, that 450,000 to 500,000 "Communists or suspected Communists" were massacred.<sup>43</sup>

The conviction that Cambodia is the most bloodthirsty dictatorship since Hitler's was not deflected for an instant by that public confirmation of the truly massive bloodbath in Indonesia.

### III

The major cause of suffering and death in postwar Cambodia has not been reprisals or purges, as one might expect from the publicity given to allegations to that effect, but the ravages of disease. In the wake of the massive social and economic disruption of the war, already existing medical and health problems became even more desperate. Malaria, the number one menace to the health of the population, apparently became a nationwide epidemic. Prime Minister Pol Pot admitted in an interview with Vietnam News Agency that 80 percent of the work force had been afflicted with malaria to some degree. The strain was particularly virulent, resisting traditional medicines on which the country's anti-malarial effort had depended. Pol Pot admitted, moreover, that, in spite of the construction of many hospitals and dispensaries, "the knowledge of our cadres is still low. We do not have sufficient medicines. Our traditional medicines are abundant, but the effects are not high."<sup>44</sup>

The problem was, of course, not a new one for the Cambodians. A 1972 demographic study of Cambodia concluded that a million people were affected by malaria. Such a conclusion was reinforced by the comment by one Cambodian diplomat who said in 1975 that during the war, for every soldier who was wounded, two had been put out of action by malaria. The very enormity of the health problem during war may well have made the leadership less sensitive to the need for some change in policy to deal with the crisis which developed in 1975 and 1976. The seriousness of the situation did ultimately spur the government to seek help from a variety of sources, in spite of its emphasis on the principle of "self-reliance." In particular, in late 1975 and early 1976, Cambodian officials approached private relief organizations in Europe and the U.S. which had no previous ties to their government about possible medical assistance aimed at combatting malaria. And the Cambodian trade mission in Hong Kong contacted an American firm in 1976 and asked to purchase nearly half a million dollars worth of DDT for anti-malarial purposes.

Still, it was not until late 1976 that Democratic Kampuchea contacted UNICEF, which had declared itself ready to respond to any request for medical help, about the malaria problem. UNICEF had been expelled from Cambodia along with all other international and private agencies when the war ended, and there were apparently political reasons for the hesitation to call on that organization. The failure to move with dispatch to cope with the country's health problem inevitably added to the toll of lives lost and the extent of illness.

Most published reports have put the emphasis, however, on the responsibility of the government for inadequate nutrition and the exhaustion of workers by long working hours. There is little doubt that both nutrition and work schedule played a role in exacerbating the country's medical crisis. But the government of Democratic Kampuchea cannot be held responsible for the fact that food rations were tight in the immediate aftermath of the war. And both nutrition and work schedules appear to have ceased to be significant contributors to Cambodia's health problems.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from W. J. Sampson to *The Economist*, Mar. 26, 1977.

<sup>43</sup> *Washington Post*, July 8, 1976.

<sup>44</sup> *Vietnam News Agency*, July 20, 1976.

A number of refugees who fled to Thailand in late 1975 reported that they had received one milk can of uncooked rice, or about 250 grams of cooked rice, per day per person, before the 1975-76 harvest.<sup>45</sup> This amount was substantially less than the 450 grams per person per day considered by the World Health Organization to be the minimum daily nutritional requirement. But most people apparently were able to supplement that rice ration with fish and vegetables.<sup>46</sup> So those people were not starving during the May-December 1975 period. As one foreign journalist observed after interviewing refugees who had come from Cambodia in late 1975 and early 1976, "None appeared to be suffering from severe malnutrition."<sup>47</sup> What the inadequate diet did do in many cases, was to weaken the defenses of workers against disease.

This problem of malnutrition was not universal by any means, even in the most difficult period. Another refugee who was interviewed in Australia in 1976, reported that each person in his work team south of Battambang received one condensed milk can of uncooked rice per day at the beginning but were given three cans, or 750 grams, per person per day when they were digging a canal in September and October 1975.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, special pains were taken to insure adequate nutrition for children, who were reported by the refugees to have eaten relatively better than adults.<sup>49</sup> Swedish Ambassador Kaj Bjoerk, who spent 2 weeks in Cambodia in March 1976, reported that he had seen "enormous numbers of children who looked quite healthy and quite lively."<sup>50</sup> Bjoerk also reported seeing no starvation.

The problem of nutrition was basically solved with the first major postwar harvest which took place from October 1975 to January 1976. After that harvest, the government announced that it had sufficient rice to provide a minimum of 500 grams of rice per day to each person, with those doing heavier work to get 700 grams per day.<sup>51</sup> While there is no way of verifying that this standard ration was applied everywhere in Cambodia, it is significant that the camp chief Chou Try, reported that prior to his escape into Thailand in January 1976, he was getting two condensed milk cans of rice, or about 500 grams, each day, supplemented by vegetables from his own garden.<sup>52</sup> He was a medical dispensary worker, and that would have been the standard ration for those doing light work.

The record of Democratic Kampuchea's food policy cannot be fairly assessed without putting it against the background of truly massive starvation during the war in the zones controlled by the old regime, as well as the great privation endured by those in the NUFK zones, particularly during the bombing. The problem of malnutrition in the cities of Cambodia was primarily a function of the influx of some 3 million refugees into Phnom Penh and a few other provincial enclaves, fleeing the war and American bombing, and of the refusal of the United States or the Government of the Khmer Republic to take responsibility for providing food for them.<sup>53</sup> For nearly 4 years, there was no significant food distribution program for the neediest population in and around the cities, and hundreds of thousands if not millions, slid into chronic malnutrition. Finally, some 450,000 registered refugees received a minimal 150 grams of rice per person per day—only one-third of the minimum daily requirements. But the more than 2 million unregistered refugees got nothing, and the unemployed as well as large numbers of workers and families of civil servants and soldiers as well went hungry.

But it was the children in the cities and refugee camps who were most seriously affected by this nutritional crisis, especially those under 6 years of age. As early as November 1973, a survey of the refugee camps around Phnom Penh revealed that a significant proportion of the children, ranging from 16 to 31 percent, were "severely malnourished." Half the children in Phnom Penh itself were considered to be "moderately malnourished" by early 1974, and large numbers were already suffering permanent damage to their physical and mental development. During the next year, the nutritional situation deteriorated disastrously, and when a study mission from the Office of the Inspector General of

<sup>45</sup> Christian Science Monitor, Feb. 4, 1976; Washington Post, Feb. 12, 1976.

<sup>46</sup> Washington Post, Feb. 12, 1976.

<sup>47</sup> Christian Science Monitor, Feb. 4, 1976.

<sup>48</sup> Chandler et al., "The Early Phases of Liberation . . .", p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Le Monde, Nov. 8, 1975.

<sup>50</sup> Toronto Globe and Mail, Mar. 8, 1976.

<sup>51</sup> Le Monde, Apr. 18-19, 1976.

<sup>52</sup> New York Times, Jan. 21, 1976.

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed analysis of the problem of starvation in the GKR zone of control, see, Hildebrand and Porter, "Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution," pp. 19-38. All the data in these paragraphs is documented in that discussion.

Foreign Assistance visited Phnom Penh in early 1975, it concluded that children in Phnom Penh were "starving to death." By the most conservative estimate, at least 15,000 people, mostly small children, died of starvation and diseases complicated by malnutrition in the last 3 months of the war alone and the curve was rising rapidly when the war ended. The number of children who were seriously damaged by malnutrition must have been in the hundreds of thousands.

With as many as 2 million or more people from Phnom Penh moderately to severely malnourished at the end of the war, the population's vulnerability to disease was obviously far greater than it would normally have been. One of the primary reasons for the urgency of the Communist leadership in clearing Phnom Penh population and getting it to the countryside was the threat of major epidemics of cholera and plague in a city where massive overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, unsafe water supplies and lack of normal services would have been the postwar conditions.<sup>54</sup> If the exodus from the capital city cost the lives of hundreds or even thousands of people, it is also a hard fact that many thousands and possibly tens of thousands could have died in the chaos of postwar Phnom Penh had radical action not been taken.

Even more important, however, in assessing the food policy of the new revolutionary government is the fact that it did, in fact, ward off the mass starvation which had been forecast in no uncertain terms by Western officials and other observers. Because its policy throughout the war had been to carefully store and ration food supplies in order to simultaneously feed its own civilian population and take care of its military needs, and because it began to stock a surplus to help feed refugees from the cities long before the final offensive, the revolutionary organization was able to take care of the population from the cities not only during the trip to the countryside, but during the months between the end of the war and the first major harvest. It was able to do so in large part because of significant advances in water control and irrigation which permitted the harvesting of a dry season crop in large parts of the NUFK zone in 1974 and 1975.<sup>55</sup>

The significance of the achievement of the revolutionary regime in nutrition becomes clear if one recalls that, even during the period before the harvest the most unfortunate workers in postwar Cambodia, who received only 250 grams of rice per day, were significantly better off than the average poor refugee or worker in Phnom Penh, who was getting substantially less than that and was unable to supplement it with any fish, fruit or vegetables. Moreover, in contrast to wartime Phnom Penh, where the children were the hardest hit by the malnutrition, postwar Democratic Kampuchea has, by all accounts, taken care that the children were least affected by tight food supplies. One is forced to conclude that the revolutionary regime has undoubtedly saved the lives of countless numbers of children which would have been lost had the U.S.-supported status quo continued for any longer in Phnom Penh. Since the U.S. policy of subordinating human needs to its interests in keeping the Lon Nol government in the war was directly responsible for thousands of deaths by starvation, there is hardly any basis for criticism of the new government on terms of nutrition in Cambodia.

The human cost of the change in power in April 1975 must, of course, take into account the fact that nutritional problems were further exacerbated by the heavy work schedule which was in effect during 1975 throughout Kampuchea. The Communist leadership, which had already radically reorganized the population to increase agricultural production during the war, undoubtedly saw an opportunity to continue what was, in effect, a wartime labor regime after the war ended not only to adequately feed the population but to gain momentum and begin the process of economic development once again.

It deployed its labor force so as to construct as many water control projects as possible in the shortest time. That meant a ten-hour workday for most workers, beginning at about 6:00 a.m. and continuing until about noon and then again from 1:00 p.m. until about 5:00 p.m.<sup>56</sup> In addition, they often worked additional hours under moonlight or by the light of lanterns. This might not have proven so severe under normal circumstances, but marginal nutrition and the prevalence of malaria meant that a large percentage of the workers were exhausted.

In response to what was apparently perceived as a serious health crisis, sometime early in 1976, the government changed the work schedule in order to give additional rest to the workers during the hottest part of the day. According to a broadcast in April 1976, work began at 5:00 a.m., and continued until 10:00,

<sup>54</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>55</sup> This point is documented in *Ibid.*, pp. 57-94.

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1976.

then was suspended until 3:00 p.m. when it resumed for another three hours. During the hours of greatest heat, the workers wove baskets and repaired their tools in the shade and at lunch.<sup>57</sup> Khieu Samphan, in a speech marking the second anniversary of the Communist victory, noted "there are rest hours to enable workers to renew their strength."<sup>58</sup>

Even though both insufficient food and severe working schedules exacerbated the medical situation during the first several months following the war, both those conditions were eased significantly by early 1976. And during 1976 and early 1977 the government carried out a series of anti-malarial programs, consisting primarily of spraying with DDT, and apparently acquired more medicines in the latter half of 1976.<sup>59</sup> By April 1977, it claimed that the problem of malaria had been reduced by comparison with previous years, "almost all of the working forces" had participated in the harvest, according to Samphan, in contrast to the previous year, when Pol Pot had emphasized how many had been unable to work because of illness. Samphan did not claim, however, that malaria is not still a serious problem.

There appears to be no way to estimate the toll of death from disease, in post-war Cambodia. But there is no reason whatever to credit the numbers put forward by observers in Bangkok of 800,000, 1 million or 1.4 million—from just over 10 percent to nearly 20 percent of the population. Such estimates are meaningless in the absence of some indication of the assumptions on which they are based. It must be noted that the same official sources who were claiming such a death toll had been saying in June 1975 that a million people were certain to die of starvation in the next year because there were simply no food stocks available in Cambodia to provide for them.<sup>60</sup> These anonymous officials, who were clearly hostile to the new government, had an obvious vested interest not admitting their failure to understand the capacity of the new regime to feed its people. They are therefore tainted by serious bias and should not be taken seriously.

In the longer perspective, it seems most likely that the new government will gain control over its medical problems over the next two or three years, through a combination of better nutrition and the use of the labor force, spraying programs and increased application of medicines and medical skills. From that point on, any assessment of the new Cambodia will increasingly have to balance positive accomplishments in economic development and the improvement of people's material conditions and social status against the loss of other kinds of values: traditional religious practices, traditional values associated with a more hierarchical social structures and easy-going lifestyles, and personal freedoms.

The debate over the balancing of those positive and negative features of revolutionary change in Cambodia will go on for many years. The hanger is that the old society will be portrayed in more glowing terms than it deserves—that its human cost will be minimized or ignored altogether, as has always been the case when revolutions are analyzed in a society fundamentally hostile to revolutionary change. That would be unfortunate, because the old society, however unattractive to the foreigner in its gentleness and placidity, was economically and socially backward. And like all such countries, it offered mostly hardship and misery to the poor.

This is reflected most clearly in the problem of infant mortality in Cambodia.<sup>61</sup> The most recent study suggested that there are about 25 deaths in utero and still births per 1,000 live births, while an older study suggested 20 to 30 still births per 1,000 live births. In various studies over the years, it was found that the number of deaths of children from birth to 12 months was somewhere between 100 and 200 per 1,000 live births. Three different studies, done in 1955, 1958, and 1967, indicated between 150 and 200 deaths during the first year per 1,000 live births. Another 20 to 30 per 1,000 are thought to die between ages of 1 and 4 years. As for the women giving birth, one writer observed after studying the problem in 1958-59, "The number of deaths of women who are giving birth to an infant cannot be calculated but was striking."

<sup>57</sup> Phnom Penh Domestic Service, Apr. 8, 1976. Cited in Ponchaud, "Cambodge Libéré".

<sup>58</sup> Phnom Penh Domestic Service, Apr. 15, 1977.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> The 1 million figure was suggested by a U.S. intelligence study on Cambodia leaked by Henry Kissinger to the press. See Washington Post, June 23, 1975; Far Eastern Economic Review, July 25, 1975.

<sup>61</sup> The data in this paragraph is taken from Jacques Migozzi, "Cambodge: Faits et Problemes de Population" (Paris: Editions de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1973), pp. 185-198.

Illiteracy, lack of sanitation and modern medical care in the countryside, and generally poor health, which are typical of all underdeveloped countries, are reflected in such high mortality rates for children and mothers, and in shorter life spans for adults. They take a toll in human life and in suffering which does not end in a year or two years but which goes on year after year, for generations. Yet the peculiar American angle of vision on revolutionary change is such that this human cost is hardly ever even weighed in the balance when a country is undergoing a revolution, let alone considered an appropriate subject for moral outrage.

Beyond the physical cost of the old regime in terms of life and health, there is the intangible cost of the social inequality between educated and uneducated, between wealthy and poor, which was clearly as much a reality in the old Cambodian society as it is in any other backward society. When a movement for revolutionary social change appears in such a society, it should not be surprising that there is a positive response from the poor peasant. That response may not be visible, of course, to the outside observer, who usually comes into the village only in the company of soldiers and officials of the old regime, if at all. Thus it is not surprising that virtually every journalist who has written about postwar Cambodia has assumed that the vast majority of the people were hostile to the revolutionary government from the beginning, as asserted by the refugees in Thailand. It may be difficult for such observers to understand how Communist cadres could have developed not merely relations of authority and obedience but strong bonds of affection and trust with the people during five years of war. Yet the one account of the revolutionary zone from a Khmer observer who was in a position to report objectively indicated precisely such relationships. Ith Sarin, former Inspector of Primary Education for the Lon Nol government, who spent most of 1972 as a candidate Communist party member, before returning to Phnom Penh to report on his experience, wrote the following in 1973:

"Another effective point in Khmer Rouge 'Psychological Activity' toward peasants is help during troubles. If a peasant in a phum is sick, the Khmer Rouge will often go to the house to give an injection or leave medicine even at night or during a storm. In ploughing, transplanting, harvesting, or threshing seasons, each bureau must send out its members to help. This being 'together with the people' in order to 'serve the people,' closely associating with the people, is the implementation of one of the Khmer Rouge theories in educating Khmer Rouge cadre.

"These kinds of psycholological activities were really successful and deeply affected the people more than the instruction in theory did. The farming people of the base areas who knew nothing of socialist revolution quickly began to love and support the Angkar because of its sentiments of openness and friendliness."<sup>42</sup>

When foreign observers discuss the costs and the benefits of the new regime in Cambodia, therefore, they must be careful not to impose on the debate assumptions about popular political attitudes, which are based on most superficial acquaintance with the experiences of Cambodian people and their revolution.

In assessing the costs of revolutionary change and the costs of the old society, it is also necessary to take into account the violence brought to bear from outside the country in order to maintain the old order. It is true that the U.S. intervention gave the critical historical impetus to the Cambodian Communist movement by its invasion of May 1970 and the consequent Vietnamese move into the interior of the country, organizing and arming local resistance groups as it did so, and by its bombing, which made the recruitment of resistance fighters so much easier. It is also true that it was the American war in Cambodia, like the French and American wars in Vietnam, which made the change from a traditional, stagnant economy and society to a tightly organized and disciplined, dynamic society so costly and painful to Cambodia.

Regardless of what mistakes have been committed by Cambodia's revolutionary leadership, or the excesses of its soldiers or cadres, the human cost of the revolutionary change is dwarfed by the magnitude of suffering and death which attended the war and its aftermath. There is no way for the U.S., as the foreign power whose resources and power alone kept the war going for five years, to deny its overall responsibility for the Cambodian tragedy. The problems of food,

<sup>42</sup> Excerpt from *Regrets for the Khmer Soul*, translated by Timothy M. Carney, in Carney, "Communist Party Power in Kampuchea (Cambodia): Documents and Discussion," Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper, no. 106, January 1977, p. 46.

disease and large-scale internal migration have been largely the consequence of that war. It is the worst kind of historical myopia and hypocrisy to express more moral outrage at the revolutionary government for its weaknesses than at the cause of overwhelmingly greater suffering: the U.S. policy in Cambodia from 1970 to 1975.

Mr. FRASER. Mr. Solarz.

Mr. SOLARZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, that I think you are to be complimented not only for your continuing concern over the human rights issue in general, but for your willingness to hold this hearing on Cambodia in particular.

Based on the testimony we have heard today, and on reading which I have done on this issue, and on my conversations with Cambodian refugees in Aranyaprathet, and with our Cambodia watchers in Bangkok, I must say that, compared to Khieu Samphan, General Pinochet, President Park, President Suharto, and some of the other national leaders whom your committee has investigated, are candidates for the man of the year award of the American Civil Liberties Union.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SOLARZ. I find myself, in a way, appalled by what has been said here today. We sit here and we listen to this testimony and people in the audience look pretty much the same way people look at hearings on far more prosaic subjects. I think somehow maybe we have lost sight of the fact that in the course of the last 2 years or so there have been a million or more people who have been murdered in another country.

I think that this is really one of the most monstrous crimes in the history of the human race, and I think it calls for and requires a response which is appropriate to the situation.

To me, the holocaust in which 6 million Jews lost their lives at the hands of Hitler is the central existential fact not only of our time, but of human history, because it provides an indication of the depths of depravity to which the human spirit can sink.

And I might have hoped that, after Hitler, the world would have finally learned its lesson on genocide, and that holocausts would have been something of the past. Obviously, it hasn't. In its own way, the indifference of the world to the events in Cambodia is almost as appalling as what has happened there itself.

One of the things that strikes me is the disproportion between what has been happening there and the response of the world. Can anybody believe, for example, that if the Soviet Union embarked on an effort to systematically exterminate the 3 million Jews who remain in Russia, the people of our country or the rest of the world would remain silent?

It almost seems to me that there is a kind of implicit racism in our response, in the sense that they are not whites or Jews or westerners who are being murdered, but orientals. Perhaps to us, oriental life isn't worth as much as Western life.

I simply cannot believe that, if what is happening in Cambodia were happening in some of the countries of the western world, involving Jews or other groups with which we are more familiar we would talk about sending DDT to the offending nation in an effort to ameliorate the situation.

Some of the justifications or explanations which we have heard for the events of the last year have been frankly, in my judgment, both

cowardly and contemptible. They are, as I see it, very much the same kind of justifications that were offered to justify the murder of the Jews by Hitler in the 1940's.

I hold no brief for what we did in Cambodia. I fully agree that we bear a measure of the responsibility for setting in motion a course of events which ultimately led to this most monstrous evil. But how anybody can suggest, by virtue of that fact, that we are morally absolved of any obligation to attempt to deal with this crime seems to me an act of moral insensitivity.

So I think we have to consider what we can do. I don't know necessarily that speaking out is the answer, although I am convinced that keeping silent is not. Clearly there are others whose credentials are less tarnished than our own who might more effectively champion this cause. The problem is that nobody has assumed the banner.

And I don't know that it absolves us of our moral responsibility to prevent a continuation of what has been happening in Cambodia simply because others haven't taken the initiative.

I would like to ask the witnesses to comment on a number of questions which I have, because I do believe we have to give some thought to the most effective potential kind of international response possible.

The first is: Can any of you explain why what happened in Cambodia actually happened? This, after all, is a relatively unprecedented historic event. Here is a revolutionary regime presumably imbued with Marxist ideology. Marx talked about the triumph of the proletariat, not the elimination of the proletariat. Even the Chinese, who come to power on the basis of what was essentially an agrarian revolution, made no effort to completely depopulate their cities and transfer the urban population to the countryside.

I wonder if you have any sense of the kind of ideological justification for what has happened in Cambodia, as presented by the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea—what they hope to accomplish—what led to the development of the kind of ideology which led them to embark on what I think is a virtually unprecedented effort to completely uproot the social and economic bases of their society, to embark on a systematic slaughter of an inordinately high percentage of their own people?

I have no doubt that the dropping of 500,000 tons of bombs may have enraged them, but we dropped infinitely more tonnage on Vietnam and, whatever the situation may be there, I don't know that they are systematically destroying their own people.

There are plenty of other countries that have suffered grievously in war which, when a new government came to power, didn't embark on what has been going on in Cambodia.

So I think it is rather simplistic to suggest that the only explanation for this is that we dropped some bombs on them, however unfortunate it was that we dropped those bombs in the first place.

I wonder if any of you could respond to that.

Mr. POOLE. I think I have some ideas in response to that. I think, first of all, that what has happened to Cambodia is a 7-year story, not a 2-year story, and I think you have more or less indicated you see that.

In that perspective, the people who are running Cambodia, whose names we still don't know for certain, inherited a society that was in ruins when they took over 2 years ago. And, as the then Cambodian

Ambassador to this country put it to a group of people at the Asia Society, talking about the *Mayaguez* incident, "those people don't have anything with which to run the country, except a bunch of teenagers with guns in their hands. What do you expect of them?"

And this is not, Mr. Congressman, a morally insensitive person, the Ambassador to this country. He was a very decent human being and he had a lot of sympathy with the problem they were faced with as leaders of that destroyed country.

Mr. FRASER. Will the gentleman yield? Is that the Ambassador who was present at the time that the government fell?

Mr. POOLE. Yes.

**STATEMENT OF GARETH PORTER, INSTITUTE FOR POLICY  
STUDIES, WASHINGTON, D.C.<sup>1</sup>**

Gareth Porter was born in Independence, Kans., on June 18, 1942. He received his B.A. from the University of Illinois in 1964, his M.A. in international relations from the University of Chicago in 1966 and his Ph. D. from Cornell University in 1976. He was correspondent and bureau chief for Dispatch News Service International in Saigon in 1971. He was then named research associate at Cornell University's International Relations of East Asia project in 1972. He was codirector of Indochina Resource Center from 1974 through 1976. He is now an associate at the Institute for Policy Studies. He is author of "A Peace Denied: the United States, Vietnam, and the Paris Agreement" (1976) and "Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution" (with George C. Hildebrand) (1976). He is a member of the Southeast Asia Regional Council of the Association of Asian Studies.

Mr. PORTER. Congressman Solarz, could I perhaps step back one or two paces, because I must say that I cannot accept the premise of your question, which is that it is a fact that 1 million people have been murdered systematically or that the Government of Cambodia is systematically slaughtering its people.

Mr. SOLARZ. I know there are still people publishing books contesting whether 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler. I don't know whether 1 million were killed or 1.2 million were killed or 800,000 were killed. Unfortunately, nobody will ever know.

But I would suspect, in light of everything that has come out already, that it would be rather difficult for someone to sustain a proposition that hundreds of thousands of Cambodians have not been murdered by their own countrymen since the fall of the Lon Nol regime.

Now, if you care to proceed along those lines, feel perfectly free to do so, but I hope you will forgive me if I consider any such effort to be essentially contemptible.

Mr. PORTER. Well, you will excuse me for saying so. I came here on the assumption that the committee was interested in hearing views on the facts of the matter, rather than—

Mr. SOLARZ. I only speak for myself, not for my colleagues, but I must tell you that, if Professor Butz from Northwestern or wherever he teaches, who just published a book denying that 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler, were invited to testify before a congressional committee about the evidence he had uncovered, I for one would not accord his views much respect.

And, while I don't necessarily mean to compare you with Professor Butz, it seems to me there is such an ample amount of documenta-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Porter's prepared statement appears on p. 19.

tion about what has been happening there, that it is beyond belief to me that anyone could seriously argue that this hasn't been going on.

At least some of the other witnesses have had the intellectual decency not to deny it, but to attempt, in a perverted kind of way, to justify it. I don't think it can be justified either, but how anybody can deny it is beyond me.

Mr. PORTER. I repeat that I am not in a position of trying to justify anything. What I attempt to do in my study of this subject is to ascertain what the facts are, and I would like to simply point out, as a basis for beginning this kind of discussion, that there are forms of documentation and there are forms of documentation. I just want to make two brief points on this matter.

One is that you have said that this, as far as you know, is an unprecedented systematic slaughter of innocents.

Mr. SOLARZ. By their own people.

Mr. PORTER. And I would remind you that it was not a few years ago that your President, President Nixon, was telling the American people in a very solemn way in public speeches that anywhere between 500,000 and 1 million people were killed by the North Vietnamese regime from 1954 to 1956.

Now, as a specialist in Southeast Asia and particularly in Indochina, more particularly in Vietnam, I made it my business to investigate very carefully the documentation on which this kind of charge was based, and I have written a monograph which, as far as I know, is the first careful attempt to reconstruct what happened in the land reform in Vietnam.

What I concluded was that the number of people who were killed during the land reform was not as President Nixon and some others have maintained over the years, 500,000 to 1 million, but rather probably 2,500 at the maximum.

Now, it is not an unprecedented phenomenon for a kernel of truth, which is that there have been executions in Cambodia, to be taken and turned into a vast exaggeration on a scale of many-fold.

What I wish to argue is that this is the case in Cambodia as well. I think there is documentation on the basis of refugee accounts which contradicts the account which Reader's Digest has published and accounts which have been given in much shorter form, much briefer form, and in much sketchier form by journalists who have interviewed Cambodian refugees in Thailand.

If you are willing, I would be interested in just presenting what that evidence is.

Mr. SOLARZ. Well, let me ask you two questions first. Are you familiar with Khieu Samphan's interview with Oriana Fallaci?

Mr. PORTER. I don't think it was an interview with Oriana Fallaci. It was an interview with Familia Christiana, if you are referring to the same document I am thinking of.

Mr. SOLARZ. We are talking about the same interview. Didn't he in effect acknowledge in that interview that somewhere in the vicinity of 1 million had been killed since the war?

Mr. PORTER. No, he did not. I would like to, if I may, put into the record of this hearing the text of that interview, and I would simply point out that the context of the questions and answers which had to do with how many millions of people there were in Cambodia before

the war and how many millions of people there are today was a series of questions in which the interviewer was attempting to get Khieu Samphan to comment on the treatment of war criminals. This was a term that was used by the interviewer, not Khieu Samphan.<sup>1</sup>

And Khieu Samphan bridled at the question and initially said that the people wanted the war criminals to be executed and "we cannot understand why you would care so much about these criminals." He was referring to the seven supertraitors who normally are mentioned in regard to the question of executions of war criminals in Cambodia.

The interviewer then returned to the subject two more times, and it was after that that the interviewer then asked the question: How many Cambodians were there at the beginning of the war? And the answer was: 7 million. I am sorry. It was the reverse. The first question was: What is the present population of Cambodia? According to the transcript, the answer was: The present population of democratic Cambodia is 5 million.

Now, I must insert parenthetically here that I find it very difficult to believe that Khieu Samphan would put forward the figure of 5 million, since the officials of the regime have repeatedly stated that the population is 7.7 million today in Cambodia.

Mr. SOLARZ. But the interview does report that he said 5 million.

Mr. PORTER. That is correct. Then the next question is: At the start of the war there were 7 million people living in Cambodia. This is the statement made by the questioner. If 1 million died in the war, what happened to the rest?

The answer, according to the account, is: It is incredible how you westerners care about what happens to war criminals.

In any case, if you want an accurate account, you must consider the number of Cambodians who left for Thailand, France, the United States, and other countries.

Now, at no point did he say that 1 million people had been killed since the end of the war or had died since the end of the war.

Mr. SOLARZ. I should have thought that if 1 million hadn't been known he would have had ample opportunity in the context of such a question to clear it up.

Let me ask you this. Do you believe that 6 million Jews were killed by the Nazis during World War II?

Mr. PORTER. I have no reason to think otherwise, although I don't know obviously what the figure was.

Mr. SOLARZ. Do you think that possibly that is an exaggeration, an exaggerated figure, that maybe only a couple of hundred thousand—

Mr. PORTER. I have no reason to believe that. Of course not.

Mr. SOLARZ. Do you think 1 million Armenians were killed by the Turks?

Mr. PORTER. I don't think that this is really relevant to the question here. I don't agree to the parallel.

Mr. SOLARZ. You were talking before about the number of people who were killed or weren't killed by the North Vietnamese, which you seemed to think was relevant, as a way of demonstrating—

Mr. PORTER. Yes, I do.

<sup>1</sup> Not reproduced in this volume.

Mr. SOLARZ. So far as the Armenians are concerned, do you think that figure of 1 million is accurate?

Mr. PORTER. I have no idea what the accurate figure is for Armenians. I have never studied that.

Mr. SOLARZ. And you have no idea what the accurate figure is for the number of Jews who were killed by Hitler?

Mr. PORTER. I have heard the figure of 6 million, and I have no reason to believe that that is false.

Mr. SOLARZ. OK. Now, why do you have no reason to believe that that is false, but you do appear to have reason to believe that the figure used for the Cambodians is false?

Mr. PORTER. Yes. I am glad you asked that question. If I may, I would like to mention three sources of documentation on this. The first is a letter to the Economist magazine by a gentleman named W. J. Sampson who lives in Brussels. It is a rather long letter which I would also like to enter into the record of the hearing.<sup>1</sup>

In the letter, he says that, after being in Phnom Penh the last year of the war as a statistician for the Lon Nol government, he then left the country and stayed in touch with Khmer friends and interviewed Khmer refugees in camps in Thailand.

On the basis of this information which he got from Cambodian friends and from the refugees, he said—and I quote:

We heard about the shooting of some prominent politicians and the lynching of hated bomber pilots in Phnom Penh. A European friend who cycled around Phnom Penh for many days after its fall saw and heard of no other executions. Only one refugee reported elimination of collaborators, and this at third-hand. I feel that such executions could be numbered in hundreds or thousands rather than in hundreds of thousands.

Mr. SOLARZ. Do you know who this fellow is?

Mr. PORTER. He is identified here in the Economist as a statistician in Phnom Penh until the end of March 1975. His job involved close contact with the government's central statistics office.

Mr. SOLARZ. That is how he is identified there. Do you know anything about him?

Mr. PORTER. No, I do not.

Mr. SOLARZ. OK. So, for all you know, this fellow could be a psychotic, right? Do you know anything about the person who wrote—

Mr. PORTER. Theoretically, yes.

Mr. SOLARZ. And this is in the form of a letter to the editor, right? What is your next evidence?

Mr. PORTER. The next document is an article by Ben Kiernan of Monash University in the Melbourne Journal of Politics.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. SOLARZ. Who is he? Do you know who this fellow is?

Mr. CHANDLER. He is a student of mine.

Mr. SOLARZ. Do you know him?

Mr. PORTER. I do not know him personally. No, sir.

Mr. SOLARZ. Do you know anything about him?

Mr. PORTER. I know that he is a specialist on Cambodia.

Mr. SOLARZ. OK. By the way, was he a student of yours, Dr. Chandler? Then you presumably know this fellow. Do you believe that the number of people, Dr. Chandler, who have been killed in Cambodia

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 1, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed in this volume.

since the end of the war is anywhere near the number that has been estimated since that period of time, or do you think, like the gentleman who is speaking now, that this is an enormous exaggeration based on a kernel of truth?

Mr. CHANDLER. No, I don't think it is an enormous exaggeration.

Mr. SOLARZ. So presumably we are about to hear evidence from a student of yours to the effect that this is all an enormous exaggeration, but you know the student and you are convinced that, despite what we are about to hear, the fact is that an enormous number of people have been killed, leaving aside the justification for it or who is to blame. These killings have in fact taken place.

OK. Do you want to tell us what this student of Dr. Chandler's has to say?

Mr. PORTER. Yes. This student has interviewed a number of Khmer refugees in Thailand and in Australia, and he points out in this article that one gets contradictory accounts, and I simply want to mention one of these contradictions which I think bears directly on the question of whether in fact it was the policy of the—

Mr. SOLARZ. The witness will forgive me, but there is nothing that has happened in the course of human history about which there haven't been contradictory accounts. To this day there are still contradictory accounts about what happened to the Jews at the hands of Hitler and there are people who deny that. So it is interesting to hear what the contradictions are, but the mere fact that there are contradictory accounts, in and of itself, establishes nothing. Please continue.

Mr. PORTER. Thank you. I will, first of all, read the several sentences from one account, which was that—the question was: What happened to the Lon Nol soldiers when the Khmer Rouge evacuated the town of Battambang? I should state parenthetically that it is from Battambang and Siem Reap where the vast majority of the refugee accounts come from, in terms of large numbers of executions of Lon Nol military and civilian officials and intellectuals.

The answer is: They were all killed after being taken to Thmar Knol. Question: How many of them were there? Answer: About 3,000 or 4,000. Question: Did you see them all killed? Answer: Yes. Question: With your own eyes? Answer: No, I heard the shots. Question: Did you go to Thmar Puok as soon as you left Battambang? Answer: No. I went to O Prasat and a friend there told me that the soldiers had been shot at Thmar Knol. Actually, he heard the shots.

Then the author goes on to state that another refugee whom he interviewed for 5 hours in Melbourne, Australia, in early July 1976 was also in Battambang when the Khmer Rouge took the town. According to him, high-ranking officers were shot, middle-ranking officers were taken to Thmar Knol, noncommissioned officers and ordinary soldiers, who were the great majority, were taken to O Pornng Moan, but they came back with their families 3 months later.

So the point is that, while one of these Khmer refugees testified that all of the 3,000 or 4,000 had simply been taken out and shot, the other, who had been there in Battambang as well, testified that only the high-ranking officers—

Mr. SOLARZ. Let me tell you something, Mr. Porter. I don't know anything about this student of Dr. Chandler's, whom the professor disbelieves, or anything about this anonymous letter writer—

Mr. PORTER. I don't believe Dr. Chandler said he disbelieved—

Mr. SOLARZ. Disbelieves the argument that only a handful have been killed. Let me tell you something. I have had the chance, as my good friend from Illinois knows, to travel a good deal in the course of the last 2 years as a member of this committee, and I have met a lot of our foreign service people in different posts around the world.

Absolutely one of the most impressive and most intelligent and most dedicated, and one of the best people I have met in our foreign service during that period of time, is a fellow by the name of Charles Twining, who is posted to the Embassy in Bangkok, who is our Cambodia watcher in that country.

He spent a year learning Khmer, and, ever since the fall of the Lon Nol regime, he has spent virtually all of his time systematically interviewing refugees who have escaped from the country; monitoring the Cambodian radio; reading the Cambodian newspaper. I understand they have a publication which comes out once a week. He has been talking to foreign diplomats who have entered the country.

I have had the chance to talk with him twice now in the course of the last year in rather extended conversations in Bangkok. He is someone in whose judgment I personally have enormous confidence, and I can tell you that his judgment is, in effect, that these allegations concerning mass murders and continuing brutalities are absolutely correct.

You may find someone here and there who disputes it. I don't know about the other members of the committee or anybody else in the country or the world. For my part, I literally have absolutely no doubt that what is alleged to have gone on there has gone on there. I think the only relevant question before this committee is not the effort to determine whether it happened, because, outside of yourself, I don't think there are many people who doubt it, but what we can do about it.

I gather we are going to have to cast a vote, Mr. Chairman. The question I was going to ask—and maybe it could be best answered after we return—is whether there is something the international community can do about this. And I am not simply talking about passing resolutions.

Would it be helpful to have perhaps some kind of an international boycott of Cambodia? Would it make sense to consider the establishment of a kind of international police force under the authority of the United Nations?

I mean, if ever there was a situation that cried out for affirmative action, this seems to me to be the one. Maybe that is utterly impractical. I don't underestimate the political difficulties, but it seems to me that this situation calls for a lot more than ways of figuring out how to send DDT into the country so that they can deal with the malaria problem or to consider a resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and democratic Kampuchea.

Maybe ultimately nothing can be done, but I certainly think that we have a moral obligation to consider every conceivable possibility of doing something about the situation. I am not simply talking about making statements so that we can wallow in our own sense of virtue. I am talking about doing something which can bring a criminal regime to its senses and can prevent a repetition or a continuation of what has happened.