The Terror in Cambodia

By LEO CHERNW

"It appears to have taken six years to kill nine million human beings in Nazi Germany and in the countries it occupied. It took only one day that war to create a catastrophic disaster on more than three million Cambodians."

With these words three years ago Free- dom House, the non-governmental organization, filed an appeal with the UN Commission on Human Rights for an inquiry into the events in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge took over. This year the UN body took three months to respond to that Freedom House appeal—negatively.

Until recently, a few books and articles focused on the government, no government leader or international body had sought to illuminate the silence. Only Chaim Herzog, Israeli ambassador to the UN, raised a solitary voice on the floor of the United Nations. This was the first time Norway's four political parties have invited witnesses from many countries to testify on the matter in Oslo. But in the slow pace of reaction to events in Cambodia there is a morbid parallel to the international blindness that first met the news of the camps in Nazi Germany in which Hitler's "final solution" was being pursued.

The question of why so many Cambodians died in the camps of the last three years? We know that during the first few months of the Khmer Rouge victory and the establishment of the Khmer Rouge government, a great many Cambodians—men, women, and children—perished. We know that the pregnant women in the last days of their pregnancy gave birth along the road, and that few of these children survived the ordeal.

**Net Blindedfolded**

There were roughly 20 international journalists in Phnom Penh at the time of the Khmer Rouge victory. They were interned in the French embassy for the next couple of days, but they were not blind- folded. Diplomats from other embassies were added to their company in that compound, as were the foreign doctors who had accompanied the journalists. The young people of Phnom Penh, a young city with a population of somewhere between three and four million, nearly half the population of the entire country.

We know from the reports of these journalists filed when they were finally released that doctors who were in the midst of surgi- cing were forced to leave their work unfinished. We know that where patients were unable to leave their rooms, some were dragged to the pavement from the windows. We know that others were wheeled in their hospital beds by fellow patients able to do so or family members who rushed to the hospitals to help evacuate those still remaining in the city.

We know from that day to this, Phnom Penh and every other city and town in Cambodia have remained deserted and crumbling. We know that soldiers of the Khmer Rouge emulated and lorded over the towns in each of the towns, some of them tiny indeed, along the roads the journalists travelled when they were transported out of the camps in the fall of 1975. We know that the Stevens and the Perrons of Scandinavian diplomats who were permitted to visit Phnom Penh two months ago that an estimated 30,000 people are trucked in and out of the city daily to perform cer- tain tasks which are still regarded as essential, particularly in the manufacture of certain basic materials—cement, weapons, fabric—that the state continues to require.

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In this case, the parallels to Nazi Germany are even more disturbingly clear. The Khmer Rouge are a primitive people, victim of long years of political and ethnic friction, but they are also a people with widespread clinical experience who have systematically taken the lives of most of the inhabitants of Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge have been responsible for at least 2 million deaths, the majority being children under five and adults over 60. The Khmer Rouge have been responsible for at least 2 million deaths, the majority being children under five and adults over 60. The Khmer Rouge have been responsible for at least 2 million deaths, the majority being children under five and adults over 60. The Khmer Rouge have been responsible for at least 2 million deaths, the majority being children under five and adults over 60. The Khmer Rouge have been responsible for at least 2 million deaths, the majority being children under five and adults over 60.