

'I watched them saw him 3 days'

TUOL SAMPEOU, Cambodia—Twenty-five-year-old Sanguon Preap had been serving in the Khmer Rouge for only three months when he witnessed a display of ruthlessness that led him to flee to the sanctuary of this refugee village some eight miles southwest of Phnom Penh.

"I was very frightened when I saw the Khmer Rouge saw off the neck of a civilian with the sharp edge of sugar palm leaves," said Preap, standing amid a cluster of refugees beside a row of flimsy huts.

"They spent three days cutting his head off," said Preap. "They sawed a little one morning, and then in the evening, and finally the following day in the morning and then in the evening, and finally the following day in the morning and night."

"**THEY MADE THE** victim stand up while they were cutting in front of hundreds of people living in the Khmer Rouge area. Then they held him up when he could stand no longer."

The episode was not just an isolated case but one of many I heard during visits to refugee camps. Khmer Rouge soldiers also have



Fleeing Cambodian refugees.

used the knife-like edges of sugar palm leaves to lop off the heads of Cambodian officers captured while overrunning nearby towns and military installations.

"They want the victims to suffer more and to serve as examples for people," said one informant. "They denounce them as traitors before the crowd."

"I had to join the Khmer Rouge army or they would have killed me," said Preap. "Those who refuse to serve they send to their deaths. They walk thru villages telling the people to follow them, and the people must obey."

Another refugee, who fled here with his wife and nine children from an area some 50 miles to the east, said that he had never personally witnessed any executions.

"They tied up people by putting both hands behind their backs and telling them they were sending them to the high command," said the refugee Lach Pech, "Whenever they did that, then we knew the man would be sent to his death in the forests. It was a secret why they killed people, and nobody dared ask why."

Lach Pech said that in his village Buddhist monks were forced to dig up the roots of large trees—and then throw bodies into the ground where the roots had been.

"There is no real security around here," said one village leader. "There are government soldiers somewhere, but there are not enough of them. We worry the enemy will come back again, and we will be in danger. They are only a mile away."

Donald Kirk