

THE  
KILLING OF  
CAMBODIA

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# THE KILLING OF CAMBODIA

## Statement of Purpose:

In April 1975 the Communists under Pol Pot came to power in Cambodia as the government of Democratic Kampuchea (DK). From that date until January 1979, when the Vietnamese took control of Cambodia, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died from starvation or were assassinated by the Khmer Rouge. Historians continue to debate the exact number of Cambodians displaced and murdered from 1975 to 1979. However, most scholars agree that the Pol Pot years in DK represented years of chaos and persecution, as well as possible genocide of the Cambodian people.

## Objectives:

- Students will locate Cambodia and its major cities and rivers;
- Students will develop a chronology of the major events leading up to the Communist takeover in April 1975;
- Students will identify the key individuals, political parties, and nations involved in the Cambodian years of chaos;
- Students will investigate why scholars disagree about the exact number of victims of the Khmer Rouge.

## Learning Activities and Student Materials:

- Using the map provided as Handout C-1, along with a world map or globe, students

should locate Cambodia and identify its neighboring countries. Have students locate:

- The Mekong River -Lomphat
- Tonle Sap -Kampot
- Siem Reap -Samrong

Have students use the scale of kilometers to determine distances between the major cities as well as between countries in the region.

- Handout C-2, "The Killing of Cambodia," presents an overview by David Hawk of the conditions that existed during the Pol Pot years. As students read this article, have them consider the following questions:

- Why does the author claim that genocide has occurred in Cambodia?

- Why, as the author claims, has there been so little reaction to the genocide in Cambodia?

- What rationale did the Pol Pot regime use for its suppression of certain "elements" in the Cambodian population?

- What steps might the world have taken to have prevented the destruction of the Cambodian people?

- Provide students with copies of Handouts C-3 and C-4. These handouts present more recent interpretations of the events which took place in Cambodia during the years from 1975 to 1979. Have students compare and contrast these two articles in terms of the following issues:

- Both authors served in Cambodia and are familiar with the culture and the languages spoken there. Yet, they disagree about the

- exact number of victims of the Khmer Rouge. Why might they disagree? How would you determine which figures are accurate?

- How does David P. Chandler describe conditions in Cambodia after the Communist takeover in 1975?

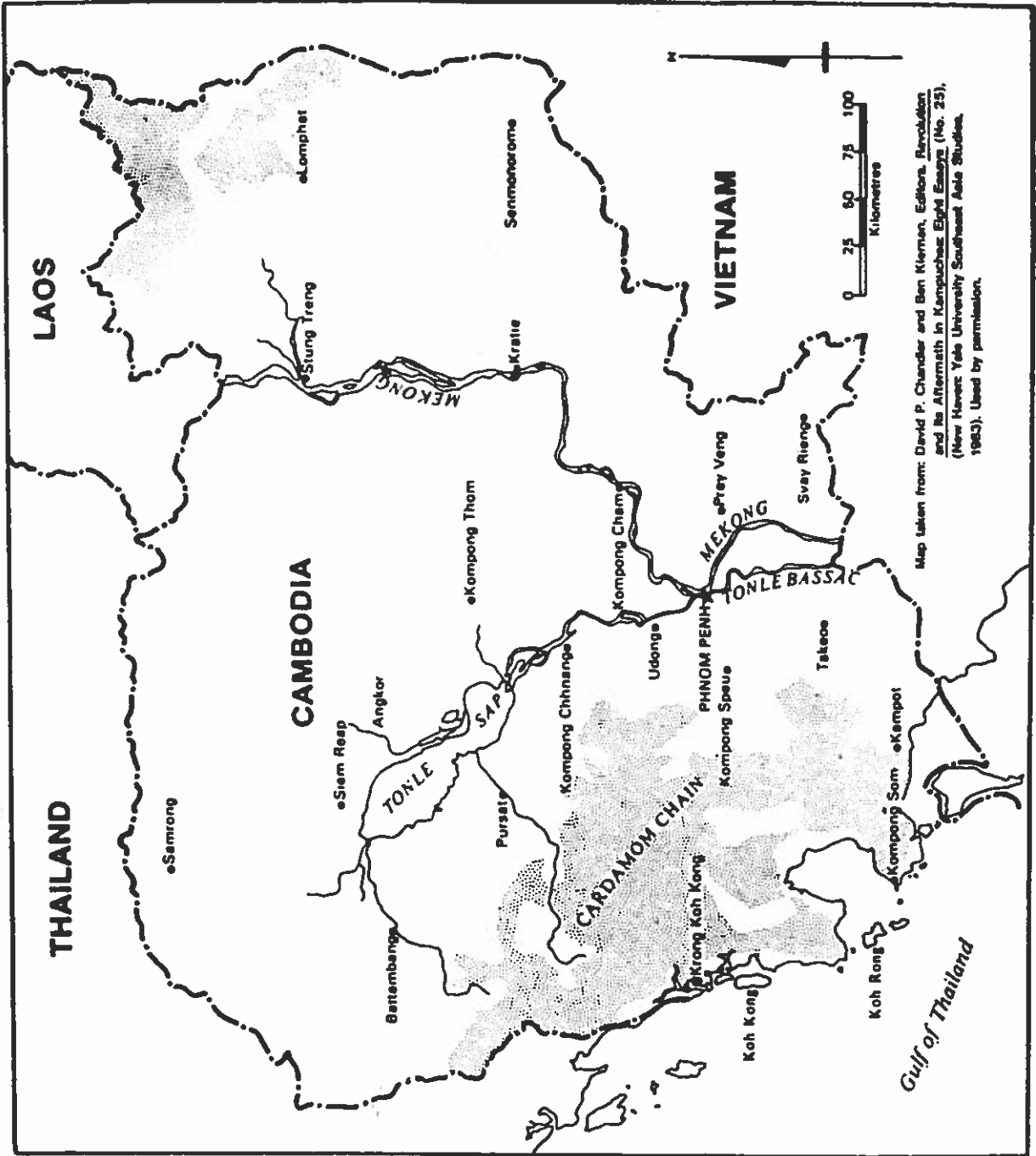
- How does Chandler describe conditions in 1982?

- Why does Chandler title this section of his book "Cambodia in Chaos"?

- How did Michael Vickery determine the number of victims of execution in DK?

- How does Vickery account for the burial pits and mass graves found in Cambodia?

- As a concluding activity for this Unit, you might ask students to consult other sources and references listed in the Bibliography for this volume or in *Readers' Guide* to determine the extent of the destruction of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. A variety of sources, each with their own frames of reference, will help students to formulate their own conclusions about the mass killings, famine, and destruction in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.



LAOS

THAILAND

CAMBODIA

VIETNAM

eSamrong

eSiem Reap

Angkor

Battambang

Pursat

eKampong Thom

Udonga

Kompong Chhnang

Kompong Cham

MEKONG

MEKONG

TONLE BASSAC

PHNOM PENH

Kompong Speu

Takeo

Svay Rieng

Kompong Som

eKampot

Koh Rong

Koh Kong

Cardamom Chain

Stung Treng

eLomphat

Kratie

Samnorom

Gulf of Thailand



Map taken from: David P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan, Editors, *Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays* (No. 25), (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983). Used by permission.

## Handout C-2

### THE KILLING OF CAMBODIA

David Hawk

From the middle of 1975 to the end of 1978, between one million and three million Cambodians, out of a population of about seven million, died at the hands of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Former government employees, army personnel, and "intellectuals" were executed in the hundreds of thousands. Others were killed by disease, exhaustion, and malnutrition during forced urban evacuations, migrations, and compulsory labor. Families were broken apart and communal living established; men and women were compelled to marry partners selected by the state. Education and religious practices were proscribed. These facts and others about Pol Pot's brutal reign are well known. Yet the destruction wrought by Pol Pot overshadowed by the Cambodian famine and refugee crisis of 1979-1981, and the political conflict that followed the ouster of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese and Heng Samrin's dissident Khmer Rouge faction has received scant attention. Except among relief and refugee workers and a handful of scholars and journalists, there has been remarkably little reaction to what was one of the most violent and massive human rights violations of the twentieth century.

Why is this so? Cambodia was a mere "side-show" to Vietnam, and after the war few in the West, particularly in the U.S., wanted to be reminded of Indochina's troubles. The atrocity stories coming out of Cambodia after 1975 quite

Taken from: David Hawk, "The Killing of Cambodia," *The New Republic*, November 15, 1982, pp. 17-21. Reprinted by permission of *The New Republic*, (c) 1982, *The New Republic*, Inc.

simply were not believed. Few at the time could imagine that the intended victims of the brutal bombing campaigns would turn out to be far more indiscriminate executioners than the American B-52s.

Moreover, evidence about Pol Pot's brutalities was, and continues to be, shrouded in polemic and rationalization. An early theory was that the evacuation of Phnom Penh was necessary to avert starvation, and that it was sound agricultural policy to turn doctors, students, tradespeople, and city folk into peasant farmers. Then followed the convoluted notion that the early atrocity reports were Thai and American propaganda, magnified by biased news media to prove the "bloodbath theory" (mass murder would follow Communist victory in Indochina) propounded by apologists for U.S. policies in Vietnam. A corollary to this argument was that the accounts of Cambodian refugees (unlike, for example, those of Salvadoran, Chilean, or Soviet emigres) were unreliable and exaggerated. After the Khmer Rouge were ousted by the Vietnamese, their human rights violations were seen as regrettable mistakes. Now, when questions of bloodbaths and genocide are raised, they are deflected as legitimizing Vietnamese expansionism.

The most informative and reliable surveys of the human toll in Cambodia can be found in the 1975-1976 refugee accounts gathered by the governments of Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Norway, the United States, and two human rights organizations, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists. These materials were submitted to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in 1978. Based on these materials, the chairman of the U.N.'s Subcommission, an official body of human rights experts, prepared a report that concluded that the

Cambodian situation was "the most serious that had occurred anywhere in the world since Nazism," and was "nothing less than autogenocide." But the Commission, caught up in the geopolitical realignments that accompanied Vietnam's ouster of Pol Pot, disregarded the Subcommission's report.

Subsequently the Vietnamese Mission to the U.S. submitted the conclusions of a 1979 tribunal held in Phnom Penh. This too has been largely ignored, and the most important part of the proceedings — reportedly over nine hundred pages of personal testimony that corroborates and elaborates upon the early refugee — accounts is virtually impossible to obtain. The problem of Cambodian self-determination has almost entirely superseded the problem of Cambodian genocide. Now the Human Rights Commission is treated to the ironic spectacle of human rights complaints filed by the Khmer Rouge who, when in power, promised to make "mincemeat" of the "imperialist" maneuverers at the Commission.

Propaganda charges and countercharges at the U.N. make it hard to decipher the real issues, and cynical politicization skews the debates. The Soviet bloc, which was not much interested in U.N. consideration of the Cambodian horror when it was going on, has now discovered how bloody it all was. Some of the Western democracies that spoke out before have fallen silent for fear of giving comfort to Vietnam's ally, the Soviet Union. It all serves to obscure the central failure of the international community's response to the Cambodian tragedy: although enough information reached the outside world about the terrible human destruction while it was going on, it failed to believe and failed to act. The United Nations has "risen above principle" and ducked the issue.

## Handout C-2 (cont.)

During a recent trip to Cambodia, my second since Pol Pot's ouster, I was able to see the results of his rule. A year earlier - in the spring of 1981 - I had been to Phnom Penh and to Cambodia's southeast provinces in the course of relief and refugee work. My talks with new refugees and Khmers who had come to the Thai border for food had made it clear that the 1975-1976 refugee accounts had not been exaggerated. From my previous work in human rights, dealing with issues and problems of political imprisonment and torture, I was aware of standards of documentation for human rights violations. On my return from that first trip - after conferring with Cambodia and Indochina scholars, legal experts, and other human rights specialists about ways to investigate what happened in Cambodia between 1975 and 1978 - I applied to the press office in Phnom Penh to visit Cambodia again for further investigations.

I stayed for three weeks. I saw the prison-extermination centers, mass graves, and destroyed Buddhist pagodas that the Pol Pot regime had left in its wake. I listened to the agonized stories of survivors, and saw the hurt, confusion, and bewilderment still in their faces. To see and hear these things is to understand that what happened in Pol Pot's Cambodia was not the all-too-common "consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." It was something more akin to Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany.

There are many ways to assemble the evidence. One can visit and photograph the mass graves - fields of sunken, and now emptied, pits where hundreds to thousands of the executed were buried. An unknown number of the mass graves have been opened, originally to count the skulls and multiply by the number of pits to esti-

mate the number of dead at a given site. Now the skulls and bones are being collected and piled into protected enclosures (I saw one that contained eight thousand skulls), where traditional Buddhist funeral rites are performed to allow the deceased spirits a peaceful passage into the afterlife. These wooden enclosures with their racks of bones, if they survive the tropical elements and the passage of time, may turn out to be the only way the terrible witness will be preserved and remembered. Relief workers and foreign observers who saw the graves in the process of disinterment, as did I in 1981 and 1982, were advised to do so early in the morning, before the midday's tropical heat made the stench unbearable. I saw five of these mass grave sites (at Cheng Ek, Tonle Bati, Ta Mon, Stem Reap, and Krang Ta Chan) in four provinces, sometimes in areas so remote that armed escorts were provided (Khmer Rouge guerrillas are trying to make a comeback), and passengers had to help push the cars over gulleys in the dirt roads.

The authorities in Phnom Penh do not have comprehensive information about the major mass grave sites - locations, estimates of the number buried, methods of execution, or the individual identities of victims. But provincial officials, press office translators, and relief workers have collected some of these details. The image of Pol Pot's Cambodia as a vast graveyard is a plausible one. And the mass graves contain those who were executed - not the old, young, and sick who died along the road during the forced evacuations, and not those who died of malnutrition, of preventable or curable sickness, or from forced labor.

It is not surprising that in a third world country with one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world most of the murder was anonymous and without record. Yet Cambodia was not with-

out its bureaucracy of torture and death, its Asian equivalent of Auschwitz. At the Tuol Sleng, or "S21," prison and execution center in Phnom Penh, Khmer Rouge officials kept meticulous records of their murders, which were left behind when the Vietnamese captured the city in 1979. There are documents on more than fourteen thousand people. Because the materials for June to December 1978 are missing, it is estimated that perhaps fifteen to twenty thousand were exterminated at Tuol Sleng.

"S21" is a former school with four three-story buildings. Some classrooms were used as common cells where forty to one hundred persons were lined up and shackled in leg irons. Others were subdivided into tiny cinderblock cubicles, sixteen or eighteen to a room, where important prisoners or those undergoing interrogation were isolated and shackled to chains cemented into the floor. "S21" held an average of one thousand to fifteen hundred prisoners at a time.

Forty categories of men, women, and children - mostly Khmer Rouge officials and cadre suspected of dissidence, but also including captured foreigners, workers, and intellectuals - were brought to be photographed, interrogated, and tortured into confessing to be agents for the CIA or KGB, naming their contacts, meeting places, and accomplices. They were then executed.

Officials of the successor Cambodian government in Phnom Penh have made the Tuol Sleng prison into a museum of the Cambodian nightmare. One exhibit is a huge wall map of Cambodia constructed of wired-together skulls. But the macabre map seemed superfluous after having seen the torture implements and victims' photographs and having walked through the interrogation rooms and cells.

The former prison rooms on the upper floor of the central building now house the nearly one

## Handout C-2 (cont.)

hundred thousand pages of handwritten prisoners' confessions, summaries of the confessions typed by the Khmer Rouge prison officials for forwarding to Party higher-ups, typed execution schedules, and mug-shot photographs. Phnom Penh officials have given scholars access to these documents. Eventually translations and analyses may afford at least a glimpse into the pathology of the Khmer Rouge. Cambodians come to search among the thousands of photographs for missing relatives.

To look at the file folders containing prisoners' photographs and the piles of confessions overflowing the shelves and stacked on the floor is to be overwhelmed by the incomprehensible; the archives of death for a barely literate peasant society that was run by Paris-educated ideologues who had abolished schooling and prohibited reading and writing. One Tuol Sleng survivor told me of the yearly stages of improvement in the identification tags used to photograph the incoming prisoners.

The international human rights laws and institutions that were established after World War II to guard against such large-scale massacres have failed in some fundamental ways, and ironically, it is the most egregious violations that they are least able to do anything about.

The lawyers and diplomats who drafted the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention provided a flawed but necessary definition of the term "genocide" when they sought to make "this odious scourge" a criminal act under international law. Ninety nation-states, by ratifying or acceding to the treaty, have agreed that an act that caused death or "serious bodily or mental harm," or that inflicted conditions calculated to bring about the destruction "in whole or in part" of a na-

tional, ethnic, racial, or religious group would be an act of genocide.

The Genocide Convention is weak in several ways. Although Americans helped draft the Convention, the U.S. has never ratified it — originally because Senate segregationists blocked it, and later because Presidents who wished to see it ratified had higher priorities in their dealings with the Senate. Thus the U.S. cannot readily take a case of genocide to the U.N. or the World Court. And the final text does not include political or economic groups among those presumably protected against acts of genocide. Obviously a great deal of the Khmer Rouge regime's killing was precisely to eliminate its political or "class" enemies. And much of the slaughter would be more accurately defined in international human rights terminology as "extrajudicial execution." But some social groups specifically covered by the Convention were the objects of executions, massacres, and other acts calculated to bring about their destruction.

Such was the case regarding at least one major ethnic minority group, the Cham, and the pre-eminent religious group in Cambodia, the Buddhist monkhood.

The Cham, an Islamic non-Khmer minority group, migrated from the central coastal region of what is now Vietnam between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries and settled in Cambodia. Recognizable by their distinctive dress, religion, and dialect, the Cham lived apart from the Khmer in their own hamlets and communities. Under Pol Pot a policy was instituted to, in effect, "Khmerize" the Cham. Their communities were broken up, community and religious leaders executed, the people dispersed. Islamic practices and the speaking of Arabic or the Cham dialect were rigorously prohibited. According to Mat Ly, an official in the Agriculture Ministry,

some of the Cham resisted "Khmerization." In response to this resistance, massacres began.

There are allegations of entire villages being wiped out. It is reported that as many as forty thousand may have been killed from hamlets in the districts of Kang Meas and Kompong Siem in Kompong Cham province. Estimates of the number of Cham before 1975 range from four hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand; a Cambodian census in 1981 showed a Cham population of roughly two hundred thousand. Mat Ly lost his father, his wife, three married children and their spouses, three grandchildren and, he says, unknown numbers of nephews and nieces. Corroborating stories of the destruction of the Cham are available from 1975-1976 refugee accounts, post-1979 refugee accounts, testimony presented at the 1979 Phnom Penh tribunal, and survivors in Cambodia and in refugee settlements interviewed by scholars and journalists.

Less is known about the Khmer Rouge's treatment of other ethnic minorities. But extrapolations based on 1980 interviews with ethnic Chinese conducted in the refugee camps by a leading American Cambodia scholar would indicate that perhaps as many as half of the urban ethnic Chinese died during the Pol Pot years. Ethnic Thais from the southwestern and western provinces of Cambodia also speak of harsh treatment. A Khmer Buddhist monk, formerly of Seim Reap province, told me that the ethnic Indians there were taken away for execution. Even less is known about the fate of the Shan (Burmese) minority in the Palin area or how the hill tribe (Khmer Leou) fared. Some ethnic Vietnamese remained in Cambodia during the Lon Nol and Pol Pot regimes. Given the Khmer Rouge's effort to purge Cambodia of Cambodians considered insufficiently hostile to Viet-

## Handout C-2 (cont.)

nam, it is reasonable to assume that the remaining ethnic Vietnamese were subjected to a massacre. At Tur-a-Kur village in Pursat province, I encountered a middle-aged Cambodian peasant, Heng Chan, who was running a roadside tea stall. His wife had been of Vietnamese descent. He told me that the Khmer Rouge had killed not only her, but five of their sons, three of their daughters, three of their grandchildren, and sixteen other members of his wife's family.

The destruction of the Buddhist monkhood is another clear-cut case of a genocidal act. The Khmer Rouge had a general animus against religion. The Catholic cathedral in Phnom Penh, apparently a symbol of French colonialism and Vietnamese colonization, was removed stone by stone from its former site on Monivong Avenue. Protestant churches and Moslem mosques were destroyed or converted into warehouses. But the antireligious animus fell most heavily on Buddhism. Before 1975 Buddhism was the established state religion. For centuries it was the main source of learning and transmitter of culture. It had been the focus of life in the villages, where most Cambodians lived until the U.S. bombing and the Lon Nol-Khmer Rouge war drove people to the cities in the early 1970s. Like Roman Catholicism in Poland, Buddhism to a large extent represented Cambodia's tradition, culture, and identity.

According to a surviving monk, during the struggle against Lon Nol, at least in his area, the Khmer Rouge respected the monks and the Buddha. Many of the "country monks," he said, had been sympathetic to the Khmer Rouge, in part because of its alliance with Prince Sihanouk and because these monks "were not very familiar with Communist doctrine." But once in power the ultra-revolutionaries prevailed, and

the Khmer Rouge began to desecrate and destroy Buddhist books, statues, and holy objects. Worship, prayer, and meditation were prohibited, as were Pali and Sanskrit, the languages of Khmer Buddhist scripture.

Buddhist temples too were destroyed or converted into warehouses or workshops. One surviving monk made a list for me of the temples destroyed in his former district of Prey Veng province: Kok Sandek, Vihear Thom, Tangkok, Wat Thmei. . . . After listing nine such places, he stopped, sighed, and wrote, "etc." I saw many ruined temples along the roads of Cambodia with quaint names such as "Temple of the Satisfied Crocodile" and "Temple of the Three Tamarind Trees."

The Khmer Rouge policy toward Buddhism was one of the most brutal and thoroughgoing suppressions of religion in modern history. The monkhood was disbanded, disbanded, and destroyed. Of an estimated pre-1975 population of forty thousand to sixty thousand monks, only eight hundred to one thousand survived and returned to their former monastery sites, where bamboo and thatch temples now rise on the foundations of the destroyed brick-and-tile temples that once were as much a fixture of the Cambodian landscape as coconut palms. Conversations with surviving monks inside Cambodia and in the refugee camps reveal regional variations but tell the same basic story: some of the most venerated monks were taken away for execution; others died of malnutrition, sickness, and exhaustion; others were forced to marry; and many others were sent to their native villages or elsewhere, and their fate is unknown.

How extensive were the abuses perpetrated by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge? The demographers and Khmer scholars need to develop the statistics more precisely, but according to the most sophis-

ticated study currently available, *Kampuchea: A Demographic Disaster*, by the CIA's National Foreign Assessment Center, there was an absolute or gross population decline of 1.2 million to 1.8 million Cambodians during the three-and-one-half years under Pol Pot. Inasmuch as there were births during these years, the number of deaths would be higher. And Cambodian scholars now believe that the death toll for 1978 -- an unusually bloody year even by Khmer Rouge standards -- was substantially higher than the CIA assumed.

Whether or not human destruction of this magnitude -- one-seventh to one-third of the Cambodian population -- fits the Genocide Convention's provisional definition of the partial destruction of a "national group" is something lawyers can consider. But as one legal expert noted, "this type of murder is precisely the type of crime the Convention was intended to prevent." There is no language in the Convention to preclude responsibility because the destruction was carried out by a nation's leaders against its own people.

Most important, the will and means must be sought to deter recurring outbursts of political massacre. It may not matter so much what the human destruction in Cambodia is called, so long as it does not continue to be overlooked by the international community. Yet the Genocide Convention remains particularly relevant to Cambodia, because, unlike Uganda, for example, Cambodia -- and specifically the "Democratic Kampuchea" regime of Pol Pot -- is a Continuing Party to the Genocide Convention. And the Genocide Convention, based on the revolution against Nazi genocide and on the Nuremberg experience, is unlike subsequent international human rights treaties in that it introduces the notion, if not the means, of pun-

## Handout C-2 (cont.)

ishing those responsible for the crime, "whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials, or private individuals." Yet Democratic Kampuchea remains the internationally recognized government of Cambodia, and Ieng Sary, usually considered number-two man in the Khmer Rouge, represents Cambodia in the U.N., while his brother-in-law, Pol Pot, remains the presumed head of the again-clandestine Khmer Rouge Communist Party and the public commander of its guerrilla army.

Considerable interest and energy go into trying to hold various countries to the human rights provisions of their executive agreements and legally binding treaties. Why should the application of international law, as limited as it is, be suspended regarding Cambodia? What precedent does this set for tomorrow's Pol Pots and Idi Amins? Genocides and other kinds of large-scale political murder more often than not happen in distant lands, away from the TV cameras, to globally unimportant peoples whose suffering is quickly forgotten in the vagaries of international politics. This was a major and severe problem of the world in the 1970s and, most likely, will continue to be in the 1980s: in addition to Cambodia and Uganda there have been East Timor, East Pakistan, Paraguay, Rwanda, Burundi, Guatemala, and more. The murders are in the millions. But now, for Cambodia, it remains to be explained how the issue of self-determination can be justly resolved without first confronting the reality of the Khmer Rouge genocide.

## Handout C-3

### CAMBODIA IN CHAOS

David P. Chandler

The debate between radicals and republicans, stifled in the 1950s and 1960s, reemerged on a small scale after 1967 when Communist insurgency against Sihanouk began and took the form of a full-scale civil war after Sihanouk was overthrown, in large part by remnants of the Democratic party, in the spring of 1970. For the next five years, while Phnom Penh and a few other urban centers were governed by the Khmer Republic, the Cambodian landscape was laid waste by U.S. bombing and by a civil war, fought with the uncompromising ferocity of Jayavarman's campaigns against Champa and the wars of the nineteenth century. When the Communists under Pol Pot came to power in 1975 as the government of Democratic Kampuchea, millions of Cambodians were displaced, and hundreds of thousands starved to death or were assassinated by supporters of the new regime. From that point on, the entire society was mobilized, under frequently fearsome conditions, to "build and defend" the country, first against class enemies, "feudal remnants" of the Lon Nol period, and then against the outside world, in particular against Cambodia's "traditional enemies," the Vietnamese.

Despite its sweeping revolutionary claims, the Pol Pot regime resembled the Cambodian governments that had immediately preceded it in three important ways. First, it showed no pa-

Taken from: David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 191-193. Reprinted by permission of Westview Press from *A History of Cambodia* by David P. Chandler. Copyright (c) 1983 Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

tience with or compassion toward political opponents, including or perhaps especially those with socialist credentials. Thousands of these people were tortured to death at the interrogation center at Tuol Sleng on the outskirts of Phnom Penh in 1976-1978. Second, the regime did little to alleviate shortages of food or to remedy the inadequacies of education and hygiene among Cambodia's rural poor, in whose name the revolution was allegedly being carried out. This is because the authorities in charge of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) were interested in power, organization, warfare, and ideology but paid little attention to the costs or consequences involved. Neither, as we have seen, did Jayavarman VII. Finally, the regime made no attempt to live in peace with its immediate neighbors.

It is tempting, indeed, to seek some parallels to this behavior in the actions of rulers throughout Cambodian history.<sup>31</sup> Those in command in the Pol Pot years were a kind of ruling family; they had been in clandestine association for more than twenty years; they were convinced that they had, in a sense, been born to rule the Cambodian people. But their time together, and the behavior of the regimes they successively opposed, intensified what may have been a shared suspiciousness among them. Ironically, their suspicions increased with victory. From 1975 to 1978, politics at the center came to resemble the factional politics of the eighteenth century, mixed with the kind of impositions favored by Jayavarman VII. Was the DK government strong or weak?

<sup>31</sup> Some of the ideas that follow can be traced to David P. Chandler, "The Tragedy of Cambodian History," *PA*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Fall 1979):410-419; and to my conversations over the last four years or so with Ben Kiernan, Michael Vickery, and Milton Osborne. See also William E. Willmott, "Analytical Errors of the Kampuchean Communist Party," *PA*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (Summer 1981):209-227; and Kiernan and Thion, *Khmers Rouges' passim*.

Like nearly all the governments that had preceded it, it was too weak to trust itself to the people it "consumed." Like very few of them, it was strong enough, right up to the end, to impose its will on the *sruk*, assassinating hundreds and perhaps thousands of cadres who urged, or were thought to believe in, a compromise with Vietnam. It was not, like Hitler's Third Reich, a popular dictatorship, except among "liberated" segments of the society and then only for a couple of years. At the same time, it commanded sufficient loyalty among the armed forces and cadres to keep the entire country at work, without pay or material incentives, on what was often a starvation diet for three and a half years. Had war not broken out with Vietnam, it is conceivable that the DK regime would have lasted a good deal longer.

Relations between Democratic Kampuchea and Communist Vietnam were never good, and with hindsight it appears that the war that broke out between the two countries in 1977-1978 was more or less inevitable. Pol Pot's regime often boasted that it had brought to an end "two thousand years" of Cambodia's history. Spokesmen for Democratic Kampuchea claimed that liberated peasants and workers owed nothing to Cambodia's past. Interestingly, however, the regime chose to pursue an anti-Vietnamese foreign policy that closely resembled policies followed by Lon Nol's ill-fated Khmer Republic and by Sihanouk in the 1950s and 1960s. Pol Pot chose to stress this continuity for many reasons, including his alliance with China, which was also anti-Vietnamese, but largely because the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea were fearful of the "special relationship" that the Vietnamese claimed to perceive between the Vietnamese Communist party and its counterpart in Cambodia. Moreover, the ideology of Democratic Kampuchea was ferociously nationalistic; many

### Handout C-3 (cont.)

speakers emphasized the "sacredness" of Cambodia's territory; and quarrels arose with Vietnam about the ownership of offshore islands as early as July 1975. In 1976-1977, conflict between the two countries intensified. Full-scale warfare broke out toward the end of 1977. In December 1978 and January 1979, Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia in strength; within two weeks they were in control of almost all of the country. Pol Pot and perhaps fifty thousand supporters, including most of his army, escaped - in many cases by rail - to the northwestern corner of Cambodia. Meanwhile, in Phnom Penh, the Vietnamese installed a government sympathetic to them made up of defectors from Pol Pot's Communist party, survivors from earlier regimes, and Cambodians trained in Hanoi in the 1950s and 1960s - a group that had been decimated by Pol Pot's faction when they were infiltrated into Cambodia by Vietnamese in the early 1970s.

As these lines are written (December 1982) most of Cambodia is occupied, quite peaceably, by Vietnamese troops and governed from Phnom Penh by a pro-Vietnamese group of radical Cambodians, styling themselves the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The systematic killings of certain opponents in Phnom Penh and the countryside have stopped. But guerrillas loyal to Pol Pot, or to the DK's form of revolution, and others loyal, perhaps, to Cambodia's precommunist past, as exemplified by Sihanouk and one of his former ministers, Son Sann, are poised along the Thai frontier, clashing occasionally with Vietnamese troops, occasionally with each other, while seeking foreign assistance and support. In the meantime, tens of thousands of Cambodia's bourgeoisie have taken up residence in the West. Others with less

affluent connections are holed up in refugee camps in Thailand, fearful of going home and unable to find shelter somewhere else. Hundreds of thousands of Khmer of all social classes have had their families decimated over the last eleven years by warfare, starvation, assassination, purges, and disease. The PRK, in other words, is a society of survivors, like Germany or Japan in 1945-1946. With these two examples in mind, moreover, it is hazardous to talk about the "survival" or "extinction" of Cambodia.

It is less hazardous to point out some of the changes that have occurred. Over the past few years, the Cambodian people, removed for so long from the pages of their history, have burst upon the consciousness and conscience of other cultures as diplomatic playthings in a game of realpolitik, objects of pity, emblems of guilt, or exemplars of revolution. At enormous cost to themselves, only partly inflicted on them by outsiders, and without asking for the privilege, they have also come into their own history, perhaps only briefly, but probably for a longer time.

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## Handout C-4

### THE HUMAN COST

Michael Vickery

Democratic Kampuchea (DK) has suffered almost universal condemnation because of the numbers of people who were executed or who died unnecessarily from hunger or illness.

Such a judgment is valid, even though, as Chomsky and Herman demonstrated, it was made too soon and for the wrong reasons. It was also often made by the wrong people. A news magazine which considers the killing of half a million people in Indonesia to be "the West's best news for years in Asia" has no business adopting a high moral tone about DK; and those who are complacent about close U.S. ties to a country in which one-third of the youth (16 million persons) "are growing up in circumstances so deprived that they are unlikely ever to play a useful role in modern society" and which within 20 years "will be burdened with millions of adults so undernourished, unskilled and uncultured that they will be impervious to any kind of civilizing process" should be able to view Pol Pot's DK with equanimity, unless they wished to argue explicitly that brutalities are legitimate when imposed on the lower orders, but become atrocities when the tables are turned.<sup>300</sup>

The Bangkok-based journalists who so eagerly purveyed stories of DK hardships would have been more credible if they had also noticed that "many school children, especially in rural

areas, were starved and suffering malnutrition" in Thailand, that perhaps even "eight per cent of the Thai children have been under the malnutrition classification," or that "the most dreadful problem is pervasive poverty in 37 provinces (over half the country)," or that outside of Bangkok "one doctor served between 30,000 and 50,000 people in rural areas," a ratio approximating that prevailing in Cambodia at the end of the war in April 1975.<sup>301</sup>

The strictures against DK, whatever their factual validity, have rarely been set in a proper comparative context nor have they taken into account that the conditions in which the country was left in April 1975 would have meant large death tolls over normal, whatever regime came to power, not just from hunger and illness, but also from violence caused by the near total breakdown of ordered society. Democratic Kampuchea only deserves special blame to the extent that a 'normal' figure, if it could be determined, were (sic) exceeded.

I do not believe it is possible to determine with any precision the number of people who died of starvation, illness, or execution, but because of the attention directed to this aspect of DK, some discussion is unavoidable. There is no point in reviewing all of the various estimates of deaths or population decline which appeared during 1975-79, and which ranged from tens of thousands to the 3 million which appeared in the account of Dith Pran, a former associate of foreign journalists in Cambodia<sup>302</sup> and which was also adopted as the view of the Vietnamese and the

PRK (People's Republic of Kampuchea) government. Most were nothing more than *ad hoc* extrapolations and subject to the imprecision of all such guesses. One attempt at statistical precision was made by the CIA, which claimed that by January 1979 the population had been reduced from over 7 million to 5.8 million.<sup>303</sup>

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In their report on Cambodian demography, the CIA used a figure of just over 7 million for 1970, which is as good a guess as any for our purposes, and 7.3 million by April 17, 1975, which means they accepted both a decrease in the rate of growth and a war loss of over 500,000.<sup>304</sup> Of that 7.3 million, there were about 200,000 Vietnamese who were immediately repatriated to Vietnam, leaving 7.1 million Cambodians (including Chinese and Chams) for the starting DK population.

In an earlier publication on this subject I accepted some of the CIA premises, but modified the death rates in an *ad hoc* manner based on impressionistic differences among 'good' and 'bad' regions, and proposed a total population figure for early 1979 of 6.5 to 6.7 million, which I considered tenuous at the time, and probably too high due to lacunae inherent in the CIA data. Nevertheless, by the end of 1980 the U.N. and FAO organizations were estimating the Cambodian population at 6 million, then 6.5 million.<sup>305</sup> Their figures were also limited to population within Cambodia, excluding an estimated half million in the various border camps

<sup>300</sup> *Nation Review* (Bangkok, September 29, 1980), quoting from Tia Kai', 8-16-81; *Bangkok Post*, October 18, 1981.

<sup>301</sup> *New York Times*, October 12, 1979.

Taken from: Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: 1975-1982* (1984), published by South End Press, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA 02116.

<sup>302</sup> "Kampuchea: A Demographic Disaster."

<sup>303</sup> "Kampuchea: a Demographic Catastrophe," 7.1 million (1970) compounded annually by 2.2 would have produced over 7.9 million by 1975.

<sup>304</sup> FEER, November 14, 1980, p. 9; and December 19, 1980, p. 37.

#### Handout C-4 (cont.)

and refugee centers, which meant that Cambodian survivors from the DK period totalled 6.5 to 7 million; and if a 2.2 percent growth rate had prevailed throughout 1979-80 there would have been between 6.2 and 6.7 million survivors in early 1979, virtually the same as my own *ad hoc* extrapolations.

That would still represent a serious decline from a projection for 1979 (7,745,000) which assumed normal growth after the end of the war (the 7.1 million estimate for 1975 increased by 2.2 percent per year), and it is an absolute decline of at least 400,000 from the 1975 estimate. Of course all such conclusions depend on the base figure from which calculations are started, and the true figure could vary either way.

By mid-1981 the Cambodian government (PRK) was suggesting a total population figure of 6.8 million within the country, but admitted that it was only a projection.<sup>407</sup> More precise statistics were the numbers of people registered in *krom samakki* ("solidarity groups"), a total of 6,353,690, which would comprise most of the rural working population. Since there were possibly 3,400,000 in the larger towns (Phnom Penh, Battambang) unregistered in solidarity groups and some unregistered in the countryside, a total population figure of 6.8 million is not unreasonable, and including people who had fled the country since early 1979, a figure of 7.1 (million) living Cambodians could be postulated. Assuming they had increased at 2.2 percent per annum since early 1979, the number of DK survivors at that date would have again been over 6.7 million; and if the rate of increase in 1979 was less, which seems likely, the total for early 1979 would have been even higher.

<sup>407</sup> Interview with Mat Ly, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, August 28, 1981.

Thus accepting the CIA figure for 1975 and the latest population estimates, it is only possible to suggest that an absolute decrease of about 400,000 between 1975 and January 1979 is likely,<sup>408</sup> and there are various ways to theoretically account for it. If, for example, as some people were saying in 1976, all Cambodian women were becoming sterile, the excess of deaths over births could perhaps be accounted for by a zero birth rate, and one would not have to postulate executions at all. In fact, given the normal pre-war death of 18 per thousand, there would have been at least 511,200 natural deaths. Of course we know that such a projection of Cambodian birth rates was incorrect and that at least tens of thousands of executions did occur. The qualitative assessment of the population decline depends on the reasons for the excess of deaths over births; and this in turn depends on the birth rate.

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Given the lack of precision inherent in all the data and estimates, it is impossible to reach more accurate final totals, or to more precisely apportion the decrease among executions, deaths from illness and hunger, or failure to reproduce due to changed living circumstances. Some of the burial pits discovered provide the evidence that mass executions occurred, but there is as yet no way to count the number of exe-

<sup>408</sup> Projections of a 1980 population based on the assumption of peacetime conditions since the census of 1962, and which thus show a total of nearly 10 million, are irrelevant for an assessment of the DK period. Examples are Serge Baudouin, "La volonté de vivre du peuple cambodgien," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1982, p. 16; and Meng-Try Ea, "Population in Kampuchea: an Assessment," presented at Kampuchea in the 1980s: Prospects and Problems, An International Conference hosted by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, November 12-14, 1982.

cutions separately from death due to other causes. Yathay pointed out that in Pursat in 1976-77 mass graves were for those who died of hunger and illness, while executions took place in isolation in the forest.<sup>411</sup> Moreover, some of the 500,000 war victims are buried in mass graves, and without forensic tests it is probably impossible to determine whether death occurred before or after 1975. A decline of 400,000 does, I would say, indicate failure of the DK system, but some of the more extreme estimates of deaths from execution and hunger must be relegated to the realm of black propaganda. It is simply impossible to take the generally accepted population figure for April 1975, the population alive today, demographically acceptable birth rates, and project an extermination figure of 1-2,000,000.

<sup>411</sup> Yathay, p. 149

# HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CAMBODIA

## Statement of Purpose:

This unit serves as a continuing introduction to the concept of human rights. Violations of human rights continue in Cambodia under Vietnamese Communist rule. As students study the readings included in this unit, they will make connections between the human rights violations in Cambodia and those described in Unit II. With this background, students can apply the concept of human rights to other case studies of persecution and genocide.

## Objectives:

- Students will continue to define their concepts of human rights and apply them to the present situation in Kampuchea (Cambodia);
- Students will describe the present conditions in Kampuchea;
- Students will explain how the Vietnamese came to power in Kampuchea;
- Students will describe the official United States position regarding Kampuchea;
- Students will explain why the United States should be concerned about conditions in Kampuchea.

## Learning Activities and Student Materials:

- Begin this unit by asking students to restate their concepts of human rights. Ask students

to review the concept of human rights as applied in Unit II, "Human Rights Violations in Ukraine." Help students to refine their concepts of human rights by providing them with additional examples of human rights cases. Students should also refer to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- Handout D-1 presents an official (United States Department of State) position in regard to Kampuchea as expressed by former U.S. representative to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick. Ambassador Kirkpatrick presented this statement before the UN General Assembly on October 30, 1984. Ask students to read this statement and respond to the following questions:

- How does Ambassador Kirkpatrick describe conditions in Kampuchea?
- According to Ambassador Kirkpatrick, what were Vietnam's reasons for invading and occupying Cambodia?
- How is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam violating human rights in Cambodia?
- What does Ambassador Kirkpatrick want Vietnam to do to help resolve the situation in Kampuchea?
- How could the United States help to resolve the problem?

Have students compare Kirkpatrick's remarks with a more recent Department of State statement on the situation in Kampuchea. Ask stu-

dents to continue to follow and report on the changing conditions in Kampuchea.

- Handout D-2 serves as a more recent appraisal of conditions in Cambodia as presented by an Australian researcher. Stephen J. Morris, author of this handout, visited Cambodia in 1983 and 1984 and is presently working at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. As students read his account of Cambodia, have them compare and contrast it to the other handouts about conditions there. Ask students to prepare written reports that summarize the changing conditions in Cambodia (Kampuchea) from the Communist Khmer Rouge take-over in April 1975 to the present. Have students prescribe a role for the United States in Cambodia.

## Handout D-1

### SITUATION IN KAMPUCHEA

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

Statement before the UN General Assembly on October 30, 1984.<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Kirkpatrick was former U.S. Representative to the United Nations.

A principal purpose of this United Nations is to preserve the right to self-determination, independence, security, and sovereignty of all nations. The Charter is clear, so is the history of the United Nations in emphasizing and encouraging self-determination and independence of nations. The United Nations can, indeed, be proud of its role in advancing self-determination for millions of people and in working to preserve the independence of all nations. There is no principle that was more widely shared or more basic than that one nation should not use force to invade and subjugate another people.

The people of Cambodia, however, continue in occupation by a foreign power, denied their right to self-determination and independence by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which invaded and continues illegally to occupy Cambodia. Five times the world community has called on Vietnam to withdraw its illegal expeditionary force and to restore to the Khmer people their right to seek their own destiny under a freely chosen government without outside interference. The overwhelming margins which have supported the General Assembly's call for withdrawal of foreign forces reflect the concern of the

great majority of the world's nations at the continuing tragedy in Cambodia.

What has occurred in the wake of these resolutions? Hanoi, aided and abetted by the Soviet Union, ignores those resolutions, continuing its illegal occupation of Cambodia and its oppression of the Cambodian people in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and in defiance of the expressed will of the General Assembly, offering to the Cambodian people no opportunity for self-determination or self-government. The need to address the situation in Cambodia for the sixth time is testimony to the stubborn policy of military conquest and colonization being pursued by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

During the past two decades, Cambodia's people have endured unmatched suffering. Hanoi's use of Cambodian territory in its war against the South and the war between the Khmer Republic and the Communist Khmer Rouge, aided by Hanoi, destroyed Cambodia's economy. Khmer Rouge victory in 1975 brought a horror the world still struggles to comprehend. Systematic political murder and starvation took the lives of more than 1 million Cambodians and nearly destroyed an ancient culture.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam must bear a full measure of responsibility for the tragic tyranny of the Khmer Rouge. Vietnam's support was critical to the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. Hanoi's claim that it invaded Cambodia to liberate the Khmer people from Pol Pot and that it remains there only to prevent his return to power is a transparent deception. Vietnam deposed Pol Pot only when it became apparent that it could not dominate and control the Khmer Rouge. No one laments the demise of the Khmer Rouge, a regime detested universally. But Hanoi did not invade Cambodia for the purpose of returning Cambodia to its people. Instead, Viet-

nam did so in order to install a puppet regime largely comprising former followers of Pol Pot, including the hated Heng Samrin himself.

Now, the Cambodian people are threatened with the loss of their homeland and the extinction of their culture. Thousands of Vietnamese nationals have settled throughout Cambodia, abetted and encouraged by Hanoi. Independent observers have estimated their number to exceed 500,000. Vietnam's clients in Phnom Penh have been instructed to assist Vietnamese, both former residents and new immigrants, in any way possible and to consult with their Vietnamese superiors before taking any action affecting Vietnamese settlers. Vietnamese immigrants are also given extraterritorial status and many have reportedly received Cambodian citizenship. This officially sanctioned Vietnamese immigration raises serious questions about Hanoi's long-term intentions toward Cambodia. It will be the ultimate tragedy if Cambodia, decimated by war and famine, should now be extinguished as an entity, overrun, submerged, and colonized by its expansionist neighbor.

Nearly 250,000 Khmer civilians remain encamped along the Thai-Cambodian border, unable or unwilling to return to their homes. Assistance to them remains an international responsibility. The United States will continue to do its share and urges other nations to continue their support for this program of humanitarian assistance. We offer our sincere appreciation to the Secretary General and his Special Representative for Humanitarian Assistance to the Kampuchean People, Dr. Tatsuro Kungu, for their efforts on behalf of the Khmer people uprooted by invasion and war. The staffs of the UN border relief operation, the World Food Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and other specialized UN agencies, the Interna-

<sup>1</sup> USUN press release 106 of Oct. 30, 1984.

Taken from: Jeane J. Kirkpatrick. "Situation in Kampuchea," *Department of State Bulletin* (Washington, DC, 1985), pp. 57-58.

## Handout D-1 (cont.)

tional Committee of the Red Cross, and the various voluntary organizations continue their important and untiring work in providing emergency food and medical care to the displaced Cambodian people, often under dangerous conditions caused by Vietnamese attacks. Their efforts have earned the commendations of the international community and our admiration. Special thanks are also due to the Royal Thai Government for its aid to the Khmer people, particularly during the fighting earlier this year.

Vietnam's invasion and occupation of Cambodia is a challenge to the UN system and to the international community. The challenge is to induce Vietnam to withdraw its army and to restore Cambodia's independence, sovereignty, and neutrality without permitting a return to power of the Khmer Rouge. The members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have provided the world the leadership to meet the challenge here at the United Nations and beyond.

The 1981 UN-sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea, in its final declaration, worked out the principles which must guide a settlement of the Cambodian problem: a ceasefire and withdrawal of all foreign forces under UN supervision; free elections under international auspices; and arrangements to ensure that armed groups do not interfere in free elections and respect the results of those elections. Ninety-four nations participated in that conference. Its principles have been endorsed by five successive resolutions of the General Assembly. They provide the best basis for meeting the challenge posed by the Cambodia crisis. The United States supports these principles and extends its appreciation to Mr. Willibald Pahr, Chairman of

the International Conference on Kampuchea, and to Ambassador Massamba Sarre and his colleagues of the *ad hoc* committee for their continuing efforts in seeking a settlement in Cambodia.

The United States affirms its support for Mr. Pahr's recent proposal to internationalize the temple complex surrounding Angkor Wat so that these ruins can be restored free from danger of war. Mr. Pahr's proposals merit international support. The ruins at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom represent the greatest achievements left by classical Khmer civilization and are a cultural treasure of importance to the entire world. Their destruction through neglect and war would be a tragic loss to us all. Despite political concerns, the ASEAN nations have endorsed Mr. Pahr's initiative. Unfortunately, Phnom Penh and its Vietnamese masters have denounced the proposal. It is not surprising that Hanoi shows no interest in preserving these relics of Cambodia's glorious cultural heritage. But it is sad that Hanoi's Cambodian clients are unable to assert enough independence even to save the enduring symbol of Khmer civilization.

Vietnam, unfortunately, rejects the reasonable proposals of the ICK (the International Conference on Kampuchea), insisting that the situation in Cambodia is irreversible. ASEAN has sought to work out the framework of a settlement which preserves the legitimate security concerns of Cambodia's neighbors, including Vietnam, as long as the key elements of Vietnamese withdrawal and free elections are preserved. The September 1983 ASEAN "Appeal for Kampuchean Independence" proposed a territorially-phased Vietnamese withdrawal, coupled with an international peacekeeping force and reconstruction aid in the area vacated, as part of a Vietnamese commitment to a com-

plete withdrawal and elections. Hanoi rejects this proposal, insisting that it will maintain its clients in Phnom Penh for as long as necessary until the world finally accepts its domination of Cambodia. Hanoi ultimately seeks, then, the legitimization of its client regime.

But that regime clearly does not represent the Cambodian people and its pretensions to do so have been repeatedly rejected by the people of Cambodia, by its neighbors and by the General Assembly. Vietnam no longer offers its clients as claimants to Cambodia's seat at this Assembly. Their regime remains dependent on Vietnamese soldiers and Vietnamese officials to remain in place. The growing appeal of the nationalist organizations led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and former Prime Minister Son Sann is indicative of the fact that the Khmer people are unwilling to accept a regime established on the bayonets of a foreign army. The United States welcomes the presence in this debate of Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann. They and the organizations they lead are the true embodiment of Khmer nationalism and the hopes of Cambodians for a future which is neither Khmer Rouge nor Vietnamese.

To what lengths will Vietnam's rulers go to impose their will on others? The war in Cambodia, and the confrontation with China it has engendered, have drained Vietnam's economy. With a per capita income far lower than any of its ASEAN neighbors, indeed, one of the lowest in the world, Vietnam supports the world's third largest standing army. Unable to pay the costs itself, Vietnam has turned increasingly to the Soviet Union for assistance. Massive Soviet aid meets Hanoi's military needs but cannot meet the needs of the Vietnam people, thousands of whom have risked their lives to flee in small boats rather than remain in a Vietnam op-

## Handout D-1 (cont.)

pressed and destitute. Other nations have reduced their aid because of their opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. Moscow has traded on its aid to increase its military presence in Vietnam establishing now a major air and naval base at Cam Ranh Bay and underlining the falseness of Vietnam's claim to be a non-aligned nation.

Even Vietnam's rulers have begun to realize that their efforts to control Cambodia have failed and that they face an increasingly difficult situation. In recent months Hanoi has tried to demonstrate to the world its willingness to reach a political settlement. In speeches and interviews, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister has hinted at Hanoi's willingness to negotiate a settlement at a conference and its willingness to consider peacekeeping activities in Cambodia.

Genuine Vietnamese willingness to negotiate a settlement in Cambodia based upon the principles of the International Conference on Kampuchea and successive resolutions of the United Nations would be a welcome development, above all, for the Cambodian people. But Hanoi apparently still views a political settlement simply as a means, one more tactic, to legitimize its client regime and secure it against the threat from the Cambodian resistance. Then, Vietnam says, it will withdraw the "bulk" of its army. The world rejects this concept of a settlement and will continue to reject it.

It should be noted that Vietnam put on its "peace mask" in March of this year during its Foreign Minister's trip to Indonesia and Australia. Days after his return to Hanoi, the Vietnamese Army launched its dry season offensive along the Thai-Cambodian border. In March and April of this year, Vietnamese forces launched a series of assaults, backed by armor

and heavy artillery, against the civilian encampments, there forcing more than 80,000 people to flee to safety inside Thailand. Nearly 50,000 of these civilians still remain in temporary encampments, unable to return because of the ever-present threat of Vietnamese shelling or attack. Even as Hanoi talks of a settlement and negotiations today, the Vietnamese Army is building up its forces near Thailand, threatening the civilian encampments which house 250,000 Cambodians. New units have moved up near the border and artillery fire continues to threaten the residents of these camps. It is an ominous harbinger for the coming dry season, which may begin only after this General Assembly completes its work. The world will mark Vietnam's actions in Cambodia as well as hear its words.

In time, the Cambodians' quiet, heroic determination will convince its leaders that they cannot subjugate the Khmer people. We hope that realization will lead to a settlement of the Cambodia problem to the satisfaction of all parties, most importantly the Cambodian people. The way to a fair and just settlement has been shown by the international community. The General Assembly resolutions on Cambodia, the 1981 International Conference on Kampuchea, and ASEAN's "Appeal for Kampuchean Independence" all outline a basis for a comprehensive settlement for Cambodia involving complete withdrawal of foreign forces, UN-supervised free elections and nonintervention and noninterference in Cambodia internal affairs. Such a settlement would guarantee a free and neutral Cambodia and constitute a threat to none of its neighbors. It would also end Vietnam's international isolation, restore Vietnam's dignity and freedom of action and permit Vietnam to turn to the task of building its own economy and uplift.

ing the living conditions of the long-suffering Vietnamese people.

The United States looks forward to that day and in the meanwhile offers its full support to the efforts of the Secretary General and his representatives, to the ASEAN countries and, above all, to the people of Cambodia in their struggle.

## Handout D-2

### VIETNAM'S VIETNAM

Stephen J. Morris

Few nations in modern history have suffered a fate as terrible as that endured by what used to be known as Cambodia. Cambodia's recent past has included a five-year war, which began in April of 1970, followed by a Communist revolution, which lasted until 1978, followed by foreign invasion and famine. All told, these calamities killed somewhere between two and three million Cambodians from 1970 to 1980, which was between 20 and 35 percent of the pre-war population.

Approximately 75 to 80 percent of these deaths occurred in peacetime. At least three to four times the number of people died during the three and a half years of "peace" wrought by the Khmer Rouge, the Cambodian Communist revolutionary movement led by Pol Pot, as died from the bullets, rockets, shells, and bombs of the previous five years of war. Perhaps half as many died of starvation during the first year of the country's "liberation" by Vietnam, which invaded Cambodia in December of 1978, as died in those same five years of war. These deaths were not the product of the "American war," as radical apologists have suggested. They were the result of the policy calculations of the victors — the Communist regimes that won the wars in Indochina.

Today the suffering of the Cambodian people continues. It may not involve enormous popula-

tion losses like those of the previous decade — though Cambodians still die in battle for one side or another. But there is deep psychological suffering all the same, because Cambodia, after twenty-five years of independence, is once again under the direct occupation of a hated foreign army.

The Khmer Rouge, the regime that ruled Cambodia — or Democratic Kampuchea, as it was officially titled — from April, 1975, to January, 1979, was not a small clique of "fascists," as Vietnamese propaganda has suggested. It was, rather, like the regime in Hanoi, committed to a form of Marxism-Leninism. Unlike the Hanoi regime, however, the Khmer Rouge was inspired by the agrarian communism of Mao Tse-tung's China in particular Mao's abortive Great Leap Forward of 1958-1959 and his Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-1969. The policies introduced inside Democratic Kampuchea — the mass executions, the depopulation of the cities, the abolition of money, the communication of all aspects of social life, and the suppression of religion — took Maoist concepts to an extreme. But these policies were carefully planned by the central Party leadership, and systematically pursued by a disciplined Communist Party and its military apparatus at the grass roots. Indeed, these policies had already been tried out in the "liberated zones" of Cambodia long before the war against the Khmer Republic was completed. (Khmer is the linguistic and racial designation of the dominant ethnic group in Cambodia.)

When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, they were at first regarded as liberators who had broken the iron grip of the Khmer Rouge over the Cambodian population. Initially they introduced conciliatory policies, such as the dissolution of the large communes, the reunion of di-

vided families, a return to the native villages, and free religious practice. But the popular sense of relief did not last.

In 1979 the Vietnamese leaders were responsible for a widespread famine that killed tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Cambodians. The invasion prevented the planting of the 1979 rice crop. Also, in pursuing the retreating Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese army adopted a "scorched earth" policy in many areas. By May of 1979 most of Cambodia's grain reserves had been consumed. The country was on the edge of famine. Because of the deterioration of the transportation infrastructure — airports, docks, cranes, and trucks — during the Khmer Rouge era, adequate international relief aid could not get through. The little aid that did trickle in was partly siphoned off by the Vietnamese army. Realizing this, several international relief agencies, including the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee, advocated feeding the starving population by means of a "land bridge" of trucks coming in from Thailand. Their plea was tardily supported by the Carter Administration. But the Vietnamese, fearing that their authority would be undermined by the independent activities of capable international relief organizations, and fearing that such a "land bridge" would also feed the Khmer Rouge, angrily refused the offer. In order to justify their decision, the Vietnamese Communists denied that there was a food shortage. In spite of this decision by Hanoi, on the Thai border the Khmer Rouge and some lucky civilians were fed, but in the interior tens of thousands of Cambodian civilians died of starvation. The CIA estimate is that 350,000 civilians died in 1979. The extent of starvation has been challenged in an important new book by William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy*. But Shawcross

Taken from: Stephen J. Morris. "Vietnam's Vietnam," *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1985, pp. 71-72; 80-82. © 1985 by The Atlantic Monthly Co., Boston, Massachusetts. Reprinted with permission.

## Handout D-2 (cont.)

does not know how many thousands actually did die.

The Vietnamese army, rather than giving the Cambodians a chance to choose their own leaders, as the United Nations was demanding, installed a regime trained and chosen by the Hanoi politburo. It thus became obvious very quickly that the Vietnamese role in Cambodia was a colonial one. By the use of conscription the Vietnamese have built an indigenous army - popularly referred to as the Heng Samrin army, after its nominal head - of about 30,000. But that army is virtually useless as a fighting force on behalf of the Vietnamese. Fraternization with anti-Vietnamese resistance forces - which sprung up all over the country as soon as the Vietnamese occupation began - has become endemic, with agreements between the sides not to engage each other.

Hanoi's failure to construct a viable surrogate army in Cambodia can be attributed to two factors. The first is widespread resentment among ordinary Cambodians at Vietnamese military and political control over all major institutions. The Vietnamese historically have looked down upon the Cambodians as inferiors, and racial and cultural chauvinism has not dissipated with the advent of a Communist regime in Hanoi. But the Cambodian population is also enraged that the Hanoi regime is allowing, and to some extent directly organizing, the migration to Cambodia of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese civilians, who now hold many visible urban jobs - as merchants, cafe owners, technicians, and mechanics. Many Vietnamese girls have come to the cities to work as "taxi girls" - prostitutes - for the Vietnamese army and civilians.

Equally important, Vietnamese civilians

have come as fishermen, to work on the Tonle Sap (or Great Lake), long the source of ample food for the Cambodian people. The older generation of Cambodians, remembering pre-war abundance, attribute food shortages in the country to pillaging by these Vietnamese settlers.

The Hanoi regime insists that the settlers are merely former residents of Cambodia, evicted by the anti-Vietnamese policies of the governments of Lon Nol (the U.S.-backed general who ruled Cambodia from 1970 to 1975) and Pol Pot, and that they are now returning to their homes and occupations. But refugees from Phnom Penh, whom I have interviewed in the non-Communist resistance village of Rithisen, are adamant that many of the settlers have never lived in Cambodia before and that, unlike former residents, these new people do not understand the Khmer language.

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Should the United States care about what is happening to Cambodia today? I believe it should, for two reasons: American national interests, and the most basic issues of international human rights. What the United States does or does not do will affect both.

American interests are involved because the struggle for Cambodia is important to the security of Southeast Asia, which is in turn central to the vital economic and strategic interests that the United States has in the entire East Asia and Pacific region.

What are the United States' economic interests in the region? U.S. trade with East Asia and the Pacific is greater than U.S. trade with any other region of the world. Japan is the second most important trading partner of the United States, after Canada. More than ten percent of

U.S. foreign investment goes to the region, principally to Japan and Australia, though the proportion going to the Southeast Asian nations is growing. The growth of all the East Asian nations (China excepted) has been based upon a high volume of international trade. Japan in particular is totally dependent upon imports for its raw-material resources. Thus the security of the sea-lanes of East Asia, and in particular those of Southeast Asia (through which most of Japan's energy resources pass), is vital for the economic well-being of East Asia and the Pacific.

Here is where the economic and strategic interests of the United States intertwine. All of the countries of East Asia and the Pacific, with the exception of Vietnam, North Korea, and Laos, are friendly to the United States. Six of them - Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand - have defense treaties with the United States. Australia provides communications bases that are vital to U.S. strategic forces, particularly the nuclear submarine fleet. Thus the security of the international trade routes is essential to the economic survival of the East Asian and Pacific nations. And the economic viability and pro-Western political orientation of the East Asian and Pacific nations are important to both the United States' economy and its strategic position.

The greatest potential threat to these interests comes from Vietnam in concert with the Soviet Union. Since the fall of Saigon the Communist government of Vietnam has allowed the Soviet Union increasing access to naval and air-port facilities, particularly those constructed by the United States at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang. The Soviet Union, whose trade in the Southeast Asian region is minuscule and whose

## Handout D-2 (cont.)

economy is marginally oriented toward international trade, has no vital defensive interests in the region. The only conceivable purposes of the increasing Soviet military presence in Vietnam are offensive: to enhance the capacity of the Soviet Union, particularly its naval forces, to interdict the vital sea-lanes of the pro-Western countries of the region and the United States; to provide a convenient logistic supply depot for its highly militarized client state; and to sustain that country's ground offensives against pro-Western governments on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

The first motive is not open to serious discussion. The interdiction capacity has been realized. Also, in the event of future conflict (on the Korean peninsula or in the Philippines), Soviet logistic reach could be a real menace. Fifteen years ago the United States was the dominant force in the Pacific Basin; today it has a powerful rival.

The second motive hinges upon an interpretation of Vietnamese behavior, and it may be somewhat more difficult for Westerners to comprehend. Of course, as we have seen, there can be little doubt that Vietnam aims at colonizing Cambodia permanently. But why should anyone fear further expansion of Vietnamese power and influence beyond Cambodia? One way of demonstrating Vietnamese ambitions is by presenting what the Vietnamese leaders say. Le Duan, in *The Vietnamese Revolution*, wrote:

The fundamental interest of the proletariat, the people, and the nations of the world lies in *safeguarding world peace while promoting the revolution in various countries*. These two objectives are organically linked together; each is the premise of the other. Both are perfectly attainable once

the Communists, thoroughly conscious of the strategically offensive position of the world revolution, are successful in setting up a united front bringing together all currents of the world revolution, all forces fighting for peace, national independence, democracy, and socialism, and are resolved to crush all imperialist aggression, repel every one of imperialism's belligerent moves and schemes, drive it back step by step, destroy it piecemeal, and eventually overthrow it entirely.

But more important than what Hanoi leaders say is what they do. The Vietnamese Communists are training guerrillas to fight in several neighboring countries. Most significant is the training of Thai Communist guerrillas in Laos. The Thai insurgency began to unravel after its principal patron, China, cut off aid. Vietnamese attempts to revivify that insurgency, though not immediately dangerous, pose a long-term threat and indicate long-term intentions. And Vietnam's one million-man army, armed with Soviet weapons, represents a menacing colossus that could be decisive in the absence of countervailing power.

Thus the activities of the Vietnamese army and the increase in and positioning of Soviet air and naval forces on Vietnamese territory pose a significant threat to American political and economic interests in the Far East.

But there is a second reason why Americans should be concerned about the outcome of the struggle for Cambodia, and that is the issue of human rights. The deprivation of human rights in Cambodia over the past decade has been one of the most profound in the modern world. This disaster did not, as some argue, happen because the United States brought the Vietnam War to Cambodia. The Vietnamese Communists did

that first by using Cambodia as a supply route and a sanctuary from which to wage war on South Vietnam, and thereby eventually attracting a "secret" American air response (which received Sihanouk's qualified acquiescence); second, and more important, by launching a full-scale military assault against the new Lon Nol government in early April of 1970, one month before American ground troops entered the country. Although many in the West believe that the March, 1970, palace coup that overthrew Sihanouk and brought Lon Nol to power was instigated by the CIA, no credible evidence supports this contention, as Stanley Karnow and others have pointed out.

The real basis of American obligation to Cambodia is that the United States abandoned that nation in 1975. The United States had intervened to support the Lon Nol government in 1970, but, exhausted by ten years of war in Indochina, Congress cut back military aid to the Cambodian government just as the Chinese were increasing their aid to the Khmer Rouge insurgents. The cut in U.S. aid made the Khmer Rouge's victory inevitable. And although by 1976 everyone knew that the victors had wrought a terrible bloodbath inside Cambodia, the United States, like the rest of the world, sat back and did nothing.

Guilt should not be the sole basis for moral action. But a desire to provide some restitution to the victims of a failed policy certainly can be

There are four policy options open to the United States. The first is to recognize Vietnamese hegemony over Cambodia as a fait accompli, and do whatever is necessary to ease the process of integration. The arguments usually presented in support of such a move are that the Cambodians prefer the Vietnamese to Pol Pot and that it would help wean the Vietnamese

## Handout D-2 (cont.)

away from the Soviet Union and make them more amenable to Western influence.

This option is totally inconsistent with the United States' professed concern for human rights. Whether or not the Cambodians prefer the Vietnamese to Pol Pot could be determined by a general election, such as the United Nations has been demanding. But the Vietnamese and Pol Pot are the only choices available to Cambodia. The suggestion that they are reminding one of the argument made by Stalin's apologists that the Soviet army was the only alternative that East Europeans had to the Nazis.

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The second option is to continue pursuing the current policy — giving economic and diplomatic support to the Son Sann and Sihanouk forces while making proper gestures of abhorrence toward their coalition partner. This policy lacks a concrete military element and is useless, because it does not redress the imbalance in the quality of weapons, which favors Vietnam. It leaves the Pol Pot forces dominant within the resistance coalition, and thereby reinforces Vietnamese propaganda that the main choice Cambodians face is between Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge. Finally, it is defective in that it leaves all effective anti-Vietnamese leadership in the region in China's hands. This is dangerous for two reasons. First, it enables Moscow and Hanoi to divide the ASEAN bloc, by playing upon Indonesia's and possibly Malaysia's fears of China. Second, it guarantees that the political outcome of the conflict will be decided by the Soviet Union and China. The United States, which has strategic interests at stake, has no influence via the Cambodian forces involved.

The third option is for the United States to give military assistance to all segments of the resistance. This policy would make sense from a purely Asian realpolitik perspective, because it would be likely to result in serious reverses for the Soviets and the Vietnamese. It would be pleasing to China, a strategic partner of the United States, because it would assist China's client, the Khmer Rouge, as well as impede China's enemies. But, most important, it would anger most of this country's European allies, and it would not be acceptable to the American Congress and the public, because it would be quite inconsistent with even the minimal standards of a human-rights policy.

This leads us to the final option, which is the only one that is simultaneously consistent with a concern for human rights and supportive of American economic and strategic interests. The United States should provide military assistance to the non-Communist resistance of Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann. These forces are the only ones that represent nontotalitarian Cambodian nationalism. And they are not clients of America's major adversary, the Soviet Union. That is why they have the enthusiastic backing of the ASEAN nations, the United States' major allies in the area. Interestingly, despite their commitment to the Khmer Rouge, the Chinese have indicated privately that even they would like the United States to give military aid to the non-Communist forces....

That the non-Communist forces not only have survived but also continue to grow, in the face of 180,000 heavily armed Vietnamese, while receiving limited external aid, testifies to their grass-roots support. If rifles, ammunition, field radios, and — most important — anti-tank weapons were provided, the non-Communists could expand their manpower and effectiveness dra-

atically. This would not in itself drive out the Vietnamese army. But by breaking that army's protective shield of Soviet-supplied armor, the non-Communists would inflict heavy losses. (The Vietnamese conscripts fighting in Cambodia, especially the southerners, absolutely lack motivation for this fight.) And the growth of the non-Communist forces would make them equal to, if not more powerful than, the Khmer Rouge. These two factors are crucial. Only if the Vietnamese are forced to pay heavily for their aggression are they going to contemplate a negotiated solution. And only if they have a powerful opponent other than the Khmer Rouge, which they regard as an implacable enemy, will they have an incentive to negotiate. A major increase in the strength of the non-Communists would be necessary to allay the fears of the Vietnamese, and of many Cambodians, that a Vietnamese withdrawal would lead to a takeover by the Khmer Rouge.

Those who today denounce the Khmer Rouge holocaust should explain what they have in mind to prevent such a thing from happening again. Helping Son Sann and Sihanouk will not bring back the two million Cambodians who died in "peace" and under "socialism." But it will give the living a better chance to avoid a similar fate.

United States help to the non-Communists probably would not be countered by an escalation on the other side. The Vietnamese army, occupying Laos as well as Cambodia, and pinned down by China to the north, cannot escalate much further. The Soviet Union, burdened by its aid to the desperate Polish, Cuban, and Vietnamese economies, and still unable to deal with its own Afghanistan quagmire, is in no position for large-scale intervention in Cambodia.

Aiding the non-Communists in Cambodia

**Handout D-2 (cont.)**

would not be the prelude to "another Vietnam" for the United States, because no American troops, and perhaps no Americans at all, need be directly involved. (ASEAN would gladly act as a conduit.) It would instead lay the groundwork for "Vietnam's Vietnam."

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