HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA

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*Human Rights in Chile (Part 1).* December 9, 1973; May 7, 23; June 11, 12, and 18, 1974. (Joint hearings by the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements and the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs.)

*Treatment of Israeli POW's in Syria and Their Status Under the Geneva Convention.* February 26, 1974. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements and the full committee.)

*Problems of Protecting Civilians Under International Law in the Middle East Conflict.* April 4, 1974. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)


*Review of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.* June 18 and 20, 1974. (Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)

*Soviet Union: Human Rights and Détente.* July 17 and 25, 1974. (Joint hearings by the Subcommittee on Europe and the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)

*Torture and Oppression in Brazil.* December 11, 1974. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

*Human Rights in South Korea and the Philippines: Implications for U.S. Policy.* May 20, 22; June 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 24, 1975. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)

*Human Rights in Chile (Part 2).* November 19, 1974. (Joint hearing by the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs and the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)

*Human Rights in South Korea: Implications for U.S. Policy.* July 31, August 5, December 20, 1974. (Joint hearings by the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements.)

*Human Rights in Haiti.* November 18, 1975. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

*Human Rights in Chile. December 9, 1975.* (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)


*Human Rights in Indonesia and the Philippines.* December 18 and May 3, 1976. (Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

*Anti-Semitism and Repressions Against Jewish Emigration in the Soviet Union.* May 27, 1976. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

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Human Rights Issues at the Sixth Regular Session of the Organization of American States General Assembly. August 10, 1976. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)


Human Rights in Iran. August 3 and September 8, 1976. (Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

Human Rights in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. June 8 and 9, 1976. (Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

Human Rights in India. June 23, 26, and 29, and September 16 and 23, 1976. (Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)


Human Rights in Argentina. September 28 and 29, 1976. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

Human Rights in North Korea. September 9, 1976. (Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Organizations.)

The Recent Presidential Elections in El Salvador: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy. March 9 and 17, 1977. (Joint hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs.)

1 Document only available from Government Printing Office.
2 Document available from Government Printing Office, or from International Relations Committee.
3 Document available from the International Relations Committee only.
4 Not available.
The subcommittee met at 3:04 p.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Donald M. Fraser (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. FRASER. The subcommittee will come to order.

Today the subcommittee is holding a hearing on the human rights situation in Cambodia.

As part of the subcommittee's ongoing work on human rights situations around the world, we are here to examine the allegations of human rights violations that have taken place with the apparent consent of the present Cambodian Government.

Since the coming to power of the National United Front of Kampuchea (Cambodia) in April 1975, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Democratic Cambodia in January 1976, there have been serious reports of extensive killings in that country; forced mass relocations of the people, often under inhuman conditions; and brutal treatment of the ex-supporters of the previous government.

The United States holds no diplomatic or commercial ties with the Cambodian Government. Consequently, we have very little leverage, but still need to remain informed of developments in Cambodia.

We are happy to welcome testimony from persons who have closely followed and examined the situation in Cambodia. The witnesses are: Dr. Peter A. Poole, adjunct professor of international relations, American University; Dr. Gareth Porter, of the Institute for Policy Studies; Mr. John Barron, senior editor of Reader's Digest; and Dr. David P. Chandler, research associate of the East Asian Research Center, Harvard University.

Dr. Poole, if it is agreeable we will start with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF PETER A. POOLE, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Education:
A.B., Columbia College, N.Y.C. (History) 1956; M.A., Yale University (International Relations) 1957; Ph.D., School of International Service, American University (International Relations) 1968.

Academic positions:
1974 to present, Adjunct Professor of International Relations, American University.
1974-75, Chairman, Southeast Asian Studies, Foreign Service Institute.
1972-74, Associate Professor of International Relations, George Washington University.
1969-72, Associate Professor of International Relations, Howard University.

Research positions:
1968-69, American University Center for Research in Social Systems.
1964-65, Georgetown Research Project, Washington, D.C.

Foreign Service Officer:
1963-64, African Affairs Bureau, U.S. Dept. of State.
1959-60, Language and area training.

Major publications:
America in World Politics, Praeger, 1975.
Indochina: Perspectives for Reconciliation, Univ. of Ohio, 1975.
The United States and Indochina from FDR to Nixon, Dryden, 1973.
Expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia, Univ. of Ohio, 1970.

Recent articles:

Mr. Poole. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I am Peter A. Poole, of Washington, D.C. By profession, I am a teacher and writer on U.S. foreign policy. In the early 1960's, I was a Foreign Service Officer in Cambodia. I visited the country on a faculty research grant from Howard University in 1971. For the past 2 years, I have served on the staff of Senator Charles H. Percy. However, I speak today as a private citizen, not as a representative of the Senator. And I might add that nobody has reviewed my testimony.

I would like to comment first on the current situation in Cambodia, as I perceive it through very limited sources, mainly Foreign Broadcast Information Service reports and commentaries by people who were in Cambodia near the end of the war.

Then I will respond specifically to the committee's expressed interest in the human rights situation in Cambodia and possible courses of international action.

Comparing the first and second postwar years, there are three main developments in the Cambodian political situation: First, consolidation of the regime's control over the people; second, some movement toward more predictable procedures and policies; and, third, some increased communication with the outside world.

The collective leadership of Cambodia has stated publicly that they no longer face serious internal resistance. They may continue to feel somewhat harassed by their neighbors, but they now seem to regard the danger of an outright invasion as a long-term, rather than an immediate, possibility.

The regime may now seem to the Khmer people less mysterious, though perhaps no less threatening, than it did a year ago. The names and titles of those who are supposed to be the principal leaders have been announced over the radio, as have the goals of the regime. This information has no doubt circulated and been absorbed by some of the
people. It may have helped to make the regime a bit more comprehensible to them.

However, the regime has not hesitated to use terror to enforce its will. This fact and its efforts to stamp out the ancient Khmer culture make me doubt that many of the Khmer people regard it as legitimate.

There has been a certain increase in various kinds of contact with the outside world, including: Official messages and statements, trips abroad by members of the regime to take part in international meetings, establishment of nominal diplomatic ties with many states, and some increase in foreign trade. This trade includes the purchase by Cambodia of some U.S.-made DDT to combat malaria, a very serious problem according to public statements.

I understand that Cambodia may also have shipped some rice to Laos. Cambodia's second postwar harvest may have been large enough to yield a small surplus for export, but there is no way for an outsider to know what this means in terms of the people's welfare.

None of the political tendencies I have described seems to be very strongly pronounced. For example, the regime has not moved very far toward communication with the outside world. It seems likely that the collective leadership remains firmly opposed to the kinds of openness to foreign contact that Prince Sihanouk favored in the years 1953 to 1970.

In July 1976, the Vietnam News Agency broadcast what is described as the English translation of an interview with Premier Pol Pot of Cambodia. "Pol Pot" may be a pseudonym for Saloth Sar, Secretary General of the Khmer Communist movement. Foreign Minister Ieng Sary was said to be present at the interview. He and Saloth Sar are brothers-in-law.

The interview has not been denounced as fraudulent by the Khmer regime. Thus, it may provide some insight into how Khmer leaders viewed their initial accomplishments and their postwar relations with Vietnam.

Premier Pol Pot is said to have told the Vietnam News Agency that his government made no noteworthy achievements during its first year in power, except to mobilize the people to produce enough food for domestic needs.

He said the regime initially faced a certain amount of internal resistance, which he described as United States sponsored. But he said this problem had been largely overcome.

An ambitious irrigation scheme was being built entirely by hand labor, Pol Pot said. He was also recorded as saying that "80 percent of the people's labor were exhausted by malaria." He indicated that imported medical supplies were inadequate for general needs and that locally produced medicines were ineffective. This is one of several comments that seem to mark a slight pragmatic softening of the radical line that Cambodia must be totally isolated from all foreign economic influences.

Pol Pot also said that factories were standing idle because they required imported raw materials, which were unavailable. He expressed the hope that a more sophisticated transportation system would be developed to permit shipment abroad of liquid latex.

When prompted by his Vietnamese interviewer to comment on the "fraternal friendship and militant solidarity" between the peoples of
Cambodia and Vietnam, Pol Pot was only willing to speak of “strengthening” friendly relations and solidarity. He said the relationship was “fine in the past,” and “will be ever more finely developed and consolidated despite all difficulties.”

The consensus among United States and foreign diplomats whom I have talked with is that both Cambodia and Vietnam regard their present relationship as unsatisfactory. By contrast, Cambodian and Thai diplomats are inclined to describe relations between the two countries as satisfactory or even good, in spite of ideological differences and occasional border clashes.

Cambodia now has ties with many countries, though only a few are allowed to open embassies in Phnom Penh, and even these are subject to severe restrictions.

In September 1976, Pol Pot delivered a long eulogy for Mao Tse-tung, who had just died. In his speech, Pol Pot linked the Chinese Communist Party and the “Cambodian revolutionary organization” as “fraternal” and “Marxist-Leninist.” The Chinese ambassador replied in kind. This is the closest the Phnom Penh regime has ever come to stating publicly that they are Communist.

Two days later, Pol Pot was granted “temporary” leave from office for reasons of health, according to Radio Phnom Penh. He was replaced by Nuon Chea. The latter name is that of a Khmer figure of the anti-French resistance in the 1940’s. He may still be active in Cambodian politics, or his name may have been borrowed by another member of the regime.

Premier Pol Pot’s leadership may not have been “collective” enough to suit his colleagues. Chief of State Khieu Samphan, in an obvious reference to Prince Sihanouk has said that collective leaders make fewer mistakes than single leaders and avoid extreme positions. Pol Pot may have been regarded as too outspoken, but his statements have not been either retracted or repeated by his colleagues.

The Khmer regime’s unwillingness to be labeled Communist is rather puzzling. They may not have wished to link an ideology they revere with the harsh measures they felt compelled to take after seizing power. If that is so, the tendency toward somewhat greater openness, which I have described, may indicate the regime’s growing self-confidence.

Khmer leaders have publicly acknowledged that some class enemies were killed after the war. Refugee reports indicate that not only political crimes but also the most petty breaches of “revolutionary discipline” were punished by death.

At least initially, the regime’s only instrument of political control was an army of ignorant peasant teenagers. Refugee reports also suggest that there was less killing in the second postwar year. But personal rights and freedom seem to be entirely subordinated to the goals of a ruthless collective leadership.

President Carter has expressed interest in having diplomatic relations with all established governments, including Cambodia and some 13 other potential or former adversaries. However, judging by their refusal to meet with the Woodcock mission, Cambodia’s present leaders still have no wish to deal with the United States. We cannot change that attitude, but we should be willing to reestablish ties when eventually that attitude does change.
I can think of no form of direct U.S. action, apart from humanitarian acts such as approving the sale of DDT, that would alter the present situation in Cambodia for the better.

However, broad-gaged U.S. support for the development of the ASEAN states, bilaterally and through institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, could make a lot of difference in whether those countries realize their full potential. This in turn might have some effect on the long-term evolution of Cambodia.

Mr. Fraser. Thank you very much. If the witnesses are agreeable, we will hear statements from the panel. Then we will submit questions to the witnesses on the panel.

Since Dr. Porter is not here at this time, we will go to Mr. John Barron, senior editor of Reader's Digest. Mr. Barron.

STATEMENT OF JOHN BARRON, SENIOR EDITOR, READER'S DIGEST

John Barron grew up in Texas and attended the University of Missouri School of Journalism, from which he received bachelor and masters degrees. During the Korean War he served aboard ship in the Western Pacific, studied Russian at the Naval Intelligence School and subsequently was stationed in Berlin for two years as an intelligence officer.

Upon release from the Navy in 1957, Mr. Barron went to work for the Washington Star as a reporter. His investigative reporting in the early 1960s brought him national attention and numerous journalistic honors. These included the George Polk Award for National Reporting; the Raymond Clapper Award for the most distinguished Washington correspondent of 1964; the Washington Newspaper Guild's Grand Award of 1964; the Guild's Front Page Award for National Reporting; and an award from the American Political Science Association for "distinguished reporting of public affairs."

Mr. Barron joined the Reader's Digest in 1965 as a staff writer. He became an Associate Editor of the magazine the next year and a Senior Editor in 1971. Beginning in 1969, Mr. Barron directed a worldwide Digest research project to amass data about the Soviet KGB. The project culminated in 1974 with publication of his book "KGB: The Secret Works of Soviet Secret Agents," which became a bestseller in the United States and Western Europe.

The book earned enthusiastic acclaim from liberal and conservative critics alike. Newsweek said: "In hard, geopolitical importance, this book outranks and helps illuminate Solzhenitsyn's 'The Gulag Archipelago.'" The noted British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper in a New York Times review said: "... the book inspires confidence ... It is as accurate a general study of the KGB's secret activities as we are likely to get. It is also the work of a highly intelligent man who can analyze and explain as well as gather and narrate ... remarkable work of synthesis." The Columbia Broadcasting System called the book "a devastating masterpiece of investigative reporting."


Mr. Barron. I appreciate the invitation of the committee to share with its members all that I and my colleagues have learned about the events which have occurred in Cambodia since April 17, 1975.

In our judgment, a tragedy of terrible proportions has befallen and continues to afflict the people of that land. And I fear that, so long as democratic legislatures throughout the world remain silent about their plight, most are condemned to suffer in inhumane conditions bereft of elementary human rights.

To enable the committee better to evaluate what I must report, I will briefly outline the methodology and research that led to our findings and conclusions.
Under the sponsorship of the Reader's Digest, I and Anthony Paul, an Australian who is our far eastern editor, understood in the autumn of 1975 to write a book about what happened in the country after the war. We were extensively assisted by two experienced journalists, Ursula Naccache, an associate editor in our Paris office, and Katharine Clark, a senior reporter in our Washington office.

Between October 1975 and November 1976, we interviewed more than 300 Cambodian refugees, mainly in Thailand but also in Malaysia, France, and the United States. The men, women, and teenagers interviewed fled from different sections of Cambodia at different times during the 13 months of our initial research. They represented all socio-economic strata and all age groups, except the very young.

Only a minority could fairly be classified as having been supporters of the Lon Nol government toppled by the Communists, and some had actively opposed it. The large majority of those interviewed professed to have welcomed the Communist victory at first because they craved peace above all else.

Additionally, we studied the broadcasts of Radio Phnom Penh as published by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. With the help from our Research Department in New York and our various foreign editions, we tried to read all reported about Cambodia in the foreign press.

In Asia, France, and the United States, we sought counsel and guidance from scholars specializing in Cambodian studies.

Finally, we consulted a number of intelligence agencies, American and foreign, in an effort to check our data with that which they had gathered by their own means.

In March of 1977, Anthony Paul returned to the camps along the Thai-Cambodian border searching for recently arrived refugees with first-hand information about current conditions in Cambodia.

He summarized the results of his interviews in a letter to me March 28. Although his letter was intended only for me, I think it is so revealing that I am appending a verbatim copy to this prepared statement.

Parenthetically, I think it important to emphasize that more than 20,000 Cambodians are known to have fled the country since April 17, 1975. They represent a very heterogeneous lot, and, while it is true that the initial news contained a disproportionate number of educated and wealthy, the latter refugees have been composed in large part of poor people of the peasantry.

This heterogeneous body, I submit, does provide an important means of ascertaining what has and is happening in the country.

[The letter follows:


Dear John—I have just returned from a 1,200-kilometer swing through Thailand's camps for Cambodian refugees—at Aranyaprathet, Trad, Kamput and Laem Sing. I had expected some evidence of slackening terror in Cambodia. It is true that fewer refugees are escaping from that country into Thailand—the present rate is about 100 a month—but the stories they bring suggest that the killings have not yet stopped. Daily, acts of unspeakable barbarism continue to be perpetrated in the name of this once-gentle country's communist revolution. As Ian Ward of the London "Daily Telegraph" recently put it, after a tour of the same camps, "At least 2 million Cambodians have probably perished by now, in the most gruesome display of man's inhumanity to man since World War Two."

Man Hom is a 27-year-old philosophy student whose studies at a Phnom Penh
pre-university school were interrupted by the city's fall to communist forces in April 1975. He was taken north by train to Preah Neth Preah, near Sisophon town, in late May or early June 1975. At the time he arrived, he remembers seeing perhaps a hundred bodies in the fields around Preah Neth Preah village.

About 300 "emigrant" families lived in the village, along with another 150 families of former inhabitants. Workers were offered two tins of rice per day for digging each day irrigation ditches one meter deep and four meters long. "No one could manage that," said Mam, "so the Khmer Rouge gave us somewhat less than two tins because we could not fulfill the norm they set."

There was no rule of law, Mam told me. The slightest form of irregular behavior was punished with summary execution, which often took especially brutal forms. In January of this year for example, a girl of about 20 years was caught reading an English-language textbook. Khmer Rouge soldiers seized her, tied her arms behind her back and led her away. Two days later, while walking along a jungle trail about one kilometer from the village, Mam caught sight of the girl, who was about 15 feet away from him. She had been buried up to the neck. She was still alive—her head and mouth were moving, but no words came. Afraid of suffering a similar fate if he helped her, Mam hurried past. Other villagers told that the girl had later died.

A crude but apparently effective system of spying operates in many villages. The Khmer Rouge often make a distinction between the former inhabitants of a village and the new arrivals, the so-called "people of the Emigration" (those Cambodians evacuated from cities, towns and villages and sent into the countryside in the days following the communist victory). Long Ly, a 29-year-old former official of the Agriculture Ministry in Thmar Puok told me that the former inhabitants of his village were ordered by the Khmer Rouge to report on the newcomers. For thus cooperating with their communist guards, these villagers were given more rice than the displaced city-folk.

Anyone willing to inform on the emigrants finds ready listeners among the Khmer Rouge, whose paranoia appears to be boundless. Thirty-one-year-old Khao Thiem Ly is a former air traffic controller at Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport, who managed to conceal, until a day or so before last February, his service to the former government. The village to which he was "emigrated" in April 1975 was Prey Bhan village in the Chouk district, some 41 kilometers northwest of the port of Kampot by road. It is a small village—a population of about 360 at the moment—and of no particular importance. Yet, in the time he was there no fewer than 20 persons were executed for being "American spies," about five of these having been "uncovered" by Khmer Rouge late last year and early this year. Khao, who had managed to convince the communists that he worked for the Khmer Airline at Pochentong rather than the government, was denounced by a visitor to the village who had known him when he was a government employee. He escaped from Prey Bhan in February and took about a month to reach Thailand.

With some minor local variations, conditions at Prey Bhan were similar to all other villages from which refugees had recently escaped. The work schedule: rise at 5 a.m., work until 10:30 a.m. Begin work again at 12:30 p.m., work until 5:00 p.m. Further work on most nights, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. No weekends or days off of any kind. One tin of rice per person per day until January, then slightly more following the introduction of a communal kitchen. Malaria and dysentery were rife—about ten people died of these diseases. Persons talking in groups of three or more; persons talking at night or moving at night from hut to hut or village to village; persons killing poultry without permission from Angka—all risked summary execution. Only former inhabitants of the Prey Bhan were permitted near the communal kitchen without Angka's specific permission. The "emigrants" were allowed there only at their allotted meal times.

One of the most heinous crimes at Prey Bhan is to carry an affliction known to the Khmer Rouge as khael chak, literally "old scurf" or "old dandruff." This is the Cambodian revolutionary's metaphor for memories of other days—the car or house or family left behind in Phnom Penh, for example. The charge "You have old dandruff" is levelled at anyone who, for whatever reason, incurs the displeasure of the communists. Says Khao, "A villager is given no more than two warnings about having 'old dandruff,' then he disappears."

To anyone familiar with what has been happening in Cambodia over the past couple of years, such stories, of course, are commonplace. Unfortunately for my own humanity, they have ceased to shock me. I confess, however, that I was shaken by an interview at Kamput, Thailand, on March 28, with Chbav Kean, a
42-year-old carpenter from the sugar factory in Kampong Kol village, in Battambang province's Sdau district.

Shortly after the communist takeover, says Chhav, the Khmer Rouge sent a large number of their men to the factory to work beside all the existing skilled labor, each Khmer Rouge learning the job of one of the former staff-members. This system prevailed until early March of this year.

Then about March 4, a group of about 40 of the former factory workers, who had earlier been taken from the mill and assigned to work in the canefields, suddenly disappeared. Their children, who came to the factory looking for them, were told they had gone away. Over the next few days, another 40 or so technicians were taken away from the factory in groups of a few at a time and failed to return.

The remaining technicians' concern for their own future was heightened by the sight of one of these men who had disappeared. He was seen to be held for a night under the Khmer Rouge chiefs but, then blindfolded in the morning and led away. His body, battered about the head and neck, was seen by Chhav at an often-used execution spot 1 1/4 kilometers from the factory.

Now thoroughly alarmed, the remaining 40 or so workers staged a mass escape on the evening of March 8. About one day west of Kampong Kol en route to Thailand, Chhav, a well-built man and somewhat faster than his co-workers, was walking some meters ahead of the main party as they pushed their way through the jungle. He heard shouts, then sustained shooting of automatic weapons. After hiding for some time in the bushes, he managed to reach the Thai border. He believes himself to be the sole survivor of the former Kampong Kol sugar factory, whose non-communist workers appear to have been liquidated simply because they were too bourgeois for the Khmer Rouge.

Of all my recent interviews, however, probably the most disturbing was that with Sek Sa Moun, the 33-year-old former driver of a gas tanker, who escaped from Phnom Svay Sor, a village in the Krakor district on Cambodia's Highway Five. This road, which was restored to reasonably good condition shortly after the war ended, links Phnom Penh with Battambang, which was the old Cambodia's second biggest city. Because the Krakor district is on such a main highway, one can make some assumptions about this community.

For example, if there is any rice in Cambodia, it must be possible to get it to Krakor. If there is any medicine in Cambodia, it must be possible to supply it to Krakor. If any community in Cambodia is in touch with the latest directives of the communist administration in Phnom Penh, it is surely Krakor. Krakor's easy access makes even more terrible the implications of refugee Sek's story.

Immediately after the fall of Battambang in April 1975, Sek was one of thousands of people from that city sent to Svay Sor village, just outside Krakor town. Shortly after he arrived, Khmer Rouge told the emigrants that the population of their newly constituted community was 12,750.

Almost from the beginning, Krakor's scanty food rations began to take their toll. Bodies weakened by malnutrition became increasingly susceptible to tropical diseases. The resultant death toll was swollen, of course, by the fairly constant stream of executions— or sudden disappearances— of Cambodians who had for whatever reason offended Angka Loun, the Khmer Rouge "Organization on High."

Sek remembers that the worst period began late in the dry season of last year— about April or May. The rate of deaths by starvation and disease began picking up. "By June or July," says Sek, "about five people a day were dying. Sometimes in one day 20 to 30 people died of disease, their bodies swollen by malnutrition." The famine and plagues were accompanied by an increase in the rate of executions. Sek estimated that, from the end of the dry season to about November of last year, about 600 must have been eliminated. The program embraced soldiers, teachers, students and anyone who knew a foreign language. The Khmer Rouge were not reticent about letting the villagers see their victims. "We often found their bodies later," says Sek. "Usually, their throats had been cut."

A lull in the killings appears to have occurred in November. By then, one assumes, it was becoming increasingly difficult to find amongst Krakor's, thoroughly terrorized and cowed villagers anyone sufficiently interesting to kill.

And what was the total cost of the terror to Krakor? One evening last December, Sek was working in a field with about 70 other villagers, when the local communist cadre, a man of about 35 whom they knew only as Mit Hom (or Comrade Hom) strode out the darkness. Flanked by two armed guards and another soldier carrying a flaming torch, Hom ordered the workers to sit together, then
made a speech. The population of Krakor had been 12,750, said Hom. It was now about 6,000. There was, of course, no apology from Hom for this grim attrition. The purpose of the speech was simply to exhort his wretched charge to ever greater efforts in the ricefields. "Because the population of Krakor is half what it was," said Hom, "you must all now work twice as hard.

Needless to say, if Hom’s figures are correct, if Sek has reported him accurately—and I found the refugee a highly convincing witness—Krakor’s fate suggests that our earlier estimates of the death toll in Cambodia since April 1975 are underestimated—indeed, grossly underestimated.

Best,

TONY
(ANTHONY M. PAUL),
Reader’s Digest Roving Editor (Asia and Pacific)

Mr. Barron. Our accumulated data, I believe, conclusively demonstrate that the following has happened in Cambodia:

Within a few hours after occupying Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the Communists, known among Cambodians as the Khmer Rouge, ordered the capital evacuated. Within the next days, the entire population, estimated to have numbered at the time approximately 3 million, was expelled at gunpoint.

Hospitals and convalescent homes were emptied and their patients, regardless of conditions, swept away with the masses. Numerous people who protested or were perceived to be resisting the evacuation order were summarily shot.

Soon other Cambodian cities, harboring all together approximately half a million people, were similarly evacuated. And later, probably another half a million were driven from the larger villages to the territories controlled by the Government prior to April 17.

While draining the cities of all human life, the Khmer Rouge mounted a methodical assault on the physical symbols and sinews of preexisting Cambodian society and culture. Troops ransacked libraries, offices, and homes, burning books by the hundreds of thousands, along with written matter.

They smashed hospital equipment, wrecked furniture, and hurled the contents of homes into the streets to ruin. Temples were despoiled and sacked, and automobiles by the thousands were overturned and vandalized.

The purpose here, it seems to me, was to obliterate every vestige of Cambodian culture as it existed prior to April 1975.

Simultaneously, the Khmer Rouge commenced killing former military officers and civil servants of the Lon Nol government. Thousands were slaughtered in organized massacres conducted outside the cities according to the same basic pattern.

Personnel who had been induced to surrender en masse were taken, usually by truck or bus, under various guises to outlying fields, where Communist troops waited in ambush. The actual extermination was accomplished by differing means, which included artillery fire, explosions of hand grenades and land mines, machinegun and automatic rifle fire, bayoneting, stabbing, and bludgeoning.

Officers and senior civil servants who managed initially to conceal their past identity were killed whenever and wherever unmasked. In a number of cases described by eye witnesses, their families, including children and infants, were killed along with them. I should say that normally children and women are killed by being stabbed in the throat or hit in the back of the neck with hoes.
Congestion on the highways and roads out of the cities made driving almost impossible, and cars soon were confiscated anyway. Some people brought along bicycles or pushcarts on which they carried enfeebled relatives and such belongings as they were able to bundle together before their sudden evacuation. But most of the outcasts proceeded from the cities toward the bush and jungle on foot.

Soldiers guarding and goading the exiles along the lines of march frequently shot those who refused or were unable to keep pace.

On the five national highways leading out of Phnom Penh, the midday temperature in those last days of April rose above 100 degrees. Yet the nights were cold. The dry season now ending had parched the flatlands and evaporated the rice paddies, leaving behind stagnant, fetid pools and ponds increasingly fouled by bodies and excrement.

Virtually no stores of potable water, no stocks of food, no shelter had been prepared for the millions of outcasts. They slept wherever they could, often in fields and ditches. Along some stretches of the highways, trucks did haphazardly distribute small quantities of American rice brought from Phnom Penh, but most families received none.

The very young and the very old were the first to die. Adults and children alike slaked their thirst in roadside ditches. Consequently, acute dysentery racked and sapped life from bodies already weakened by hunger and fatigue.

A Cambodian physician, Dr. Vann Hay, who on April 17 was rousted from a Phnom Penh clinic along with all his patients, spent almost a month on various roads and trails before escaping to Vietnam.

Dr. Hay told us:

"We must have passed the body of a child every 200 yards. Most of them died of gastrointestinal afflictions which cause complete dehydration. I had some medication with me, but most children brought to me required massive dosages and lengthy rest afterward. Neither was available.

Thinking of all the bodies I saw, plus the sick who came to see me, between 20 and 30 every day, half of whom were not going to live, I figure that between 20,000 and 30,000 people must have died the first month, just in the area described (the route along which he walked to Vietnam)."

Now, some of these exiles were fortunate enough to be consigned to new settlements relatively close to the cities and thus, for them, the ordeal of the march lasted relatively a short time. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of others marched for weeks, goaded ever onward into the countryside without knowing what their ultimate destination or fate would be.

The eventual destination of most was a new settlement. Thousands of these new settlements were hewn out of the bush, scrubland, and jungle. Typically, upon arriving, a new villager family would be ordered to construct a hut out of bamboo leaves, whatever could be foraged from the jungle, and then were put into a work group normally comprised of 10 families.

The work groups labored and still do labor from 5 or 6 a.m. in the morning to the midday break and then until 5 or 6 p.m. at night. On moonlit nights, in many areas work continued from 7 to 10 p.m. And this all goes on 7 days a week.

There were in many areas a lack of agricultural implements, tools, and so much of the work had to be done by hand by people who were unaccustomed to arduous physical labor.