

Introduction "My" Cambodia 1960 - 1962

My personal involvement with Cambodia began in 1959 when, as a young American diplomat, I volunteered for Cambodian language training in Washington, DC. I worked in the American Embassy in Phnom Penh as a language officer and a vice-consul in 1960-1962. Because the facts and impressions that I absorbed at that time have colored my views of Cambodia and its history ever since, they need to be dealt with before I can turn to a discussion of the Khmer Rouge regime, whose ferocity took me almost completely by surprise. Incidentally, "Khmer Rouge" or "Red Khmer" in French, was a name bestowed on the Communist movement by Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960s (he called conservatives "Blue") and given the convoluted history of the Cambodian Communist movement, and all the official names it has assumed the label "Khmer Rouge" is convenient for general use and for this paper.

Cambodia in the early 1960s was very different from Cambodia today. It was poor, of course, but *per capita* incomes calculated in 1960s dollars were probably higher than they are today. In other words, many of Cambodia's poor are worse off than they were in the 1960s. After ninety years of French colonial "protection", its people were probably healthier and better fed than they are in 2008. There were also much fewer of them some 6 million in 1962 compared to 13 million today. Phnom Penh had only 400,000 inhabitants (vs. roughly 2 million in 2008). In the city there were no beggars, very little crime, few tourists and almost no traffic. Television and jet-propelled aircraft had not yet arrived.

In those years, foreign investment, aside from a few banks and the French-owned rubber plantations was almost non - existent. Foreign aid, although generous at the time, came from fewer donors and was more

modest than it is today. In general, there were fewer opportunities for corruption and fewer opportunities for social mobility as well. The gap between rich and poor Cambodians is far wider in 2008 than it was in the early 1960s.

Civil servants in the early 1960s were relatively competent and relatively well paid. The French, who had peaceably relinquished their protectorate in 1953, had trained most of the middle ranking and senior officials. France was far more popular in Cambodia than it was in Vietnam, where it had been driven out by force. Many urban Cambodians believed, in fact, that by establishing its protectorate in 1863 France had prevented Thailand and Vietnam from dismembering the kingdom. Rural Khmer had been more or less untouched by colonialism, except in terms of corvee labour and taxes, traditional incursions of the state. When I arrived, French was still Cambodia's official language. Parts of Phnom Penh, laid out by the French, resembled parts of towns in southern France. They still do, but many buildings from this era have recently been torn down. In the early 1960s, Phnom Penh was the prettiest large city in Southeast Asia. The border between the colonial and post-colonial eras was very indistinct. ¹

Then as now, Cambodia was overwhelmingly rural and the rural population were for the most part subsistence farmers. Nearly all of them owned their land and landlordism was not a serious problem. Indebtedness, although widespread, was less severe than it is in 2008. Despite some archaic agricultural techniques, these hard working men and women produced a sizeable surplus of rice every year that was available for export and provided them with cash income. More than half of them were illiterate, and in those days, and later, the more prosperous,

lighter skinned and more urbanized Khmer tended to look down on them. Happily, this disdainful tendency is weaker today than it once was – in part, perhaps, because Cambodia's ruler, Hun Sen, for the first time in the country's history, comes from a rural peasant family.

In general, the rural Cambodians that I knew had a conservative point of view. With little knowledge of the outside world and imagining no alternatives, they accepted the status quo, geared their lives to the agricultural cycle, and to family values as their ancestors had done for millennia. At the same time, they had many ideas of their own, a fierce sense of independence and a vivid sense of right and wrong. Although they adhered to Buddhism, they had no formally structured ideology.

Most young Cambodian men still spent some time as monks before getting married and as an elderly Cambodian once told me, "Even mathematics teachers taught morality". Young people were not encouraged to question their parents or their teachers. The most respected people in Khmer society, in fact, were school + teachers, elderly people and Buddhist monks, who were the curators of the kingdom's backward looking written culture.

Much of this written culture existed alongside the archaeological riches of the country that we know as Angkor had been catalogued and analysed by whose capital was near the modern city of Siem Reap in northwestern Cambodia, the French. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, "Angkor", dominated much of mainland Southeast Asia. Angkor was a mighty belligerent power, capable of subduing peoples to the east, west and north. This civilization, rediscovered by the French in all its

grandeur, was an inspiration to the Khmer and also a reminder of their subsequent weakness and vulnerability.

This tendency to accept conditions as they were and to draw inspiration from a glorious, half-buried past – celebrated in Cambodia's national anthem – was targeted by the Khmer Rouge when they tried to turn Cambodia into a socialist state. They wanted to change the way that Cambodians related to each other by eliminating subservience, exploitation and hierarchies. Their grandiose social experiment failed, as we shall see, at enormous human cost. In the early 1960s, however, no Cambodians except for those in the small, concealed and powerless Communist Party could have predicted the experiment, or what the experiment might involve.

In those days, Cambodia called itself an "island of peace" (*koh santhepeap*). It was in no position to go to war with anyone but, sadly, it has never been an island, and was frequently invaded by its neighbours, colonized by the French in the 1860s, and drawn into the first Indo-China War (1946–1954) between France and the Vietnamese-dominated resistance.

When I first lived in the country, Prince Norodom Sihanouk (1922. –) dominated Cambodian life. The French had placed him on the Cambodian throne in 1941 when he was only nineteen. Soon after Cambodia gained its independence in 1954, Sihanouk abdicated to become a full-time politician, and his political movement called the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (Peoples' Socialist Community) swept four successive national elections. For fifteen years, Sihanouk's patriotism, personal honesty, capacity for hard work and nimble footwork on the

world stage endeared him to most of his subjects, who forgave or failed to see that his narcissism, his recklessness, his refusal to admit mistakes and his fondness for revenge might counter-balance his virtues to an extent. Encouraged by his entourage, the Prince came to believe that he *was* Cambodia and personified the kingdom.

In those days, people opposed to the Prince, like members of the Communist Party, attracted little support and were severely dealt with. Sihanouk was a popular despot. He was in love with Cambodia's rural poor, whom he called his "children", and they returned his affection. He had no interest in altering Cambodia's social arrangements, or in awakening his subjects to the complexities and challenges of modernity, but he worked hard to expand education, to attract foreign assistance and to keep Cambodia out of the Second Indo-China war.

Many elderly Cambodians nowadays identify the Prince's years in power as a golden age. So does the alert but aging Prince, who spends most of his time these days in self-imposed semi-exile in Beijing. In 1970, he was swept aside by a coup staged by alienated members of the Sino-Khmer elite and by geopolitical forces that he was unable to control. These included the Second Indochina War, East-West tensions, a radical phase of Chinese politics (which inspired the Khmer Rouge) and a feeling among the world's young people, even in Cambodia, that almost any political arrangements, and especially untested radical ones, were preferable to the status quo.

The regime led by General Lon Nol that succeeded Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge regime which replaced Lon Nol's so-called Khmer Republic, both shared some characteristics with the Sangkum regime

which, with hindsight, was not as competent, just or responsive as people who are nostalgic for it nowadays would like to believe. Moreover, all three regimes drew on traditions of political behaviour and cultural preferences that stretched back into the distant past and, unknowingly, forward into the twenty-first century as well.

The Cambodian political process, for those engaged in it, has always been characterized by contending factions, by a fondness for single-party, top-down, winner takes all politics and by bouts of violence that have accompanied changes of regime. The Khmer Republic and Democratic Kampuchea (DK) also drew on a fund of anti-Vietnamese xenophobia and on the widespread, erroneous belief that Cambodia was intrinsically more gifted and more important than its neighbours were. To the visionary men who ran Cambodia in the 1970s, Cambodia was uniquely equipped to withstand foreign influences, to defeat its enemies and, after 1975, to perform the miracles that the Khmer Rouge leadership asked its people to perform.

Soon after I left Cambodia in December 1962, the Second Indo-China War broke out in earnest in Vietnam. Soon after that, it flooded into Cambodia. The war that ensued in 1970-1975 destroyed Cambodia's isolation, reduced French influence, damaged the economy, killed tens of thousands of Cambodians and devastated the country that I had come to love. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge came to power, and wrought further devastation. Their victory took everyone but the Khmer Rouge by surprise. In fact, however, the movement had long, a partly concealed history stretching back to the closing months of the Second World War.

Origins of the Khmer Rouge

The Cambodian Communist movement, unlike its counterparts in Thailand and Vietnam, was not a native growth. Instead, it was created by and nurtured by the Vietnamese, and was a by-product of the First Indo China War (1946-1954) in which overwhelmingly Vietnamese military forces, under the leadership of the Indochina Communist Party (ICP), eventually drove the French from Indo-China. ²

In March 1945, Japanese forces which had been stationed throughout Indochina with French permission while the French remained in administrative control carried out a *coup de force*, imprisoning French officials and urging local leaders, including King Norodom Sihanouk, to declare their countries' independence. The coup allowed Vietnamese Communist politico-military cadre, bottled up by the French in the mountains of northern Vietnam, to take power in much of the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam, but Vietnamese in the south were slower to react.

In Cambodia, Sihanouk went along with Japanese demands and a pro-Japanese Khmer prime minister named Son Ngoc Thanh believed, absurdly, that the country could remain independent after Japan's surrender to the Allies in September 1945.

Just before the surrender occurred, Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the ICP, speaking in Hanoi, proclaimed Vietnam's independence. Over the next few months, before the French could return to Vietnam in force, Ho established a coherent administration centred on Hanoi. The ICP was unable to secure control over southern Vietnam before the Japanese

surrendered, French officials had been freed from imprisonment, and small units of French troops had arrived to "liberate" the region.

At that point, the French arrested Son Ngoc Thanh and arranged a compromise with Sihanouk, whereby he remained on the throne in exchange for the French allowing the kingdom to a constitution and political parties. Sihanouk, then as always an astute geopolitician, welcomed the return of the French. The resumption of French protection occurred without bloodshed, but a small cohort of young Khmer, excited by the prospect of fighting for independence, went into the maquis.

In 1946, sporadic anti-French fighting which the French described as banditry had broken out in the Cambodian countryside, especially in the provinces bordering Vietnam, where the nationalist guerrillas teamed up with bands of armed Vietnamese, or Viet Minh, and soon came under the operational control of the ICP, which had been founded in 1930 but never had many Cambodian members.

Young Khmer were drawn into these irregular forces seeking excitement, advancement and approval. Those favoured by the ICP were often the poorest peasants living on the margins of society. Many of them found the egalitarian ideas of the Communists appealing. They were also attracted by promises of a better future that had never been made to them before. Joining the guerrillas gave them new identities, new status and greater self-respect. Xenophobia toward the French and a generalized resentment of the rich and powerful also helped the Viet Minh in their recruiting efforts. As Mao Zedong has remarked, the mobilization of hatred is a powerful political weapon.

Serious fighting between the Viet Minh and the French broke out in northern Vietnam at the end of 1946. The First Indo-China War was fought mainly in northern and central Vietnam, but Viet Minh guerrillas were active in the Mekong Delta and in Cambodian provinces bordering Vietnam.

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A Communist Party Takes Shape

In early 1951, the ICP, claiming to have "dissolved", established three new Communist parties. The senior party was the newly created Vietnamese Workers Party (VWP), which came into the open. The ICP itself and relatively rudimentary parties established in Laos and Cambodia at this time remained hidden. The Cambodian grouping, the Khmer Peoples' Revolutionary Party (KPRP) came into being in mid-1951. Its statutes were written in Vietnamese and translated into Khmer. They said nothing about Marx, Lenin or the international Communist movement. Cambodians joining the group were told that the Party's primary aim, under Vietnamese guidance, was to bring social justice to Cambodia and to drive the French from Indo-China.

Interestingly, the Cambodian Peoples' Party (CPP) that dominates Cambodian politics today dates its formation to June 1951, thus claiming direct descent from the KPRP.

In a seemingly unrelated development, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, several Cambodian students, drawn from Cambodia's small, educated elite, were awarded scholarships to study in France. Some of them, including an unobtrusive student named Saloth Sar (later known as Pol Pot) joined the French Communist Party soon after they arrived. They

were attracted by the Party's fervour, its tight organization, its popularity among students and, above all, its anti-colonial stance. The Party was at that time probably the most *uncompromisingly Stalinist* Communist Party in Western Europe. There was no room in its ranks for dilettantes or fellow travellers.³

Saloth Sar returned to Cambodia in 1953, where he briefly joined a Viet Minh unit on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border and was initiated into the ICP. Unlike most of his colleagues in the movement, Sar was a member of Cambodia's small, urban, Francophone elite. Unlike them, he had received no training from Vietnam. He was never a fluent speaker of Vietnamese.

At the time when Sar was attached to the Viet Minh, France granted Cambodia de facto independence, but fighting continued for several months and Viet Minh guerrillas and their Khmer protégés controlled large parts of the country. When peace was formally signed in Geneva in 1954, over a thousand Cambodians who had fought alongside the Viet Minh chose to go into exile in northern Vietnam, while Saloth Sar and a few others were encouraged by their ICP mentors to return to Phnom Penh and to work for left-wing candidates running for office in the national elections scheduled for 1955.

By the time elections took place, King Sihanouk had abdicated the throne and formed his own political movement, the Sangkum, which won all the seats in the National Assembly. Sar and his Communist colleagues, were dismayed by the election results. Later on, in 1963 and in 1967 they went underground in Phnom Penh.

With independence, the Khmer Communist movement quickly lost momentum. Most of its rural members resumed their pre-war lives. Sihanouk's popularity was another obstacle for the Communists. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Saloth Sar and his colleagues - including fellow Communists like Ieng Sary and Son Sen, coming home from France - waited impatiently for history to change course. These years marked the nadir of the Cambodian Communist movement. In Steve Heder's phrasing, "what was left of a Communist movement in Cambodia, and this was not much, was without a party, and was largely bitter, or new, or both".⁴

Prince Sihanouk in the meantime pursued anti- communist policies at home and anti-American ones abroad. This seemingly contradictory position kept his local opponents off balance and fearful of arrest , gave him room for manoeuvre and attracted foreign aid from both sides in the Cold War.

In September 1960, as Communist resistance to the pro-American regime in South Vietnam intensified, twenty-one Cambodian Communists convened a secret meeting in Phnom Penh and established a central committee for a new Communist Party, calling itself the Khmer Workers' Party (KWP). It's likely that the meeting was convened with encouragement from Hanoi. As Steve Heder has written, "The KWP treated the situation in Cambodia as if it were virtually identical to the situation in southern Vietnam"⁵ and took on board Vietnamese policies toward land reform, for instance, that were inapplicable among the Khmer. All but one of the members of the newly formed central committee was already members of the ICP. The exception, Ieng Sary, had been in France with Saloth Sar and the two men had married sisters.

The party still operated in secret, and the meeting, like the identity of its leaders, escaped the notice of US intelligence and Sihanouk's police.

Two years later, the secretary of the Party's central committee, a veteran cadre trained in Vietnam named Tou Samouth, was arrested and killed, probably by Sihanouk's police. Saloth Sar, who had been Samouth's assistant, took his place. Fearing arrest, Sar and several colleagues fled Phnom Penh in February 1963. They took refuge in a Vietnamese Communist military camp, known as Office 100, on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. The party's second in command, Nuon Chea (who in 2008 was facing trial in Phnom Penh) remained behind to supervise the Party's urban branch. In Office 100, Sar and his colleagues, removed from Khmer society, became full time revolutionaries and hostages to the Vietnamese. Cooped up in Office 100, they were unable to accomplish much, but they used this humiliating period to bond with each other and to formulate some of the radical policies that they hoped to set in motion when and if they came to power. They did so in secret and in isolation, developing "their ideology to the fullest in their own closed and ingrown world", as Francois Ponchaud has written.⁶

Some Turning Points

Between June 1965 and September 1966 Saloth Sar and a few colleagues travelled from Office 100 to North Vietnam and China. They had probably been invited by the Vietnamese Communists who wanted to insure that their Cambodian subordinates would help them to overthrow the pro-American regime in South Vietnam, now bolstered by hundreds of thousands of American forces. The Vietnamese in Hanoi also wanted to familiarize themselves with Tou Samouth's thirty-seven year old

successor. Saloth Sar for his part wanted to explain the KWP's ambitious plans for armed struggle against Sihanouk and a freestanding Cambodian revolution. These had been developed, it seems, in Office 100.⁷

Sar made most of the voyage north on foot, and it took him three months to reach Hanoi, where he had ceremonial meetings with Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan, the secretary of the VWP and gave lectures to the Cambodian Communists who had been living in North Vietnam since 1955. He had several formal meetings with Le Duan, who rejected his blueprint for a Khmer revolution, and urged him to postpone armed struggle against Sihanouk until after the liberation of South Vietnam. Sar was in no position to fight back, but his anger and sense of humiliation are easy to imagine. Le Duan, it seemed, did not regard him as the leader of a Party in a sovereign state. Sar found this position hurtful and demeaning but he knew that the WPK needed continuing Vietnamese support, especially when the time arrived to initiate armed struggle, so he held his tongue and bided his time.

After his time in Hanoi, Sar spent several weeks in China. He was encouraged to go there by the Vietnamese. He arrived in Beijing several months before Mao inaugurated the Cultural Revolution, but as Philip Short has written, "there was already an impassioned, radical edge to the political climate " in the Chinese capital, an atmosphere that Sar must have found refreshing after the treatment he had been given in Hanoi.⁸ Although Chinese officials also urged him to postpone armed struggle against Sihanouk, who was still a helpful ally to Beijing, several of them, including two men who were later members of the Gang of Four, took pains in private to praise his radical, independent stance. Sar returned to

Hanoi believing that he had gained an important new ally, but he was careful not to inform his mentors in Vietnam.

In February 1966, he set out for home. Two months later, he found Office 100 abandoned by his colleagues, who wanted to avoid US aerial bombardment. His colleagues in his absence had shifted the Party's headquarters northwards into the sparsely populated province of Ratanakiri. This new camp, Office 104, also enjoyed Vietnamese military protection but was well inside Cambodia, as Office 100 was not. It remained the Party's headquarters until 1969. When Sar arrived there in mid-1966 one of his first actions was to secretly rename the WPK the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), a name it retained into the 1990s that placed it semantically on the same level as the Communist Party of China, and above the VWP. This hubristic legerdemain, performed out of sight of Hanoi, was a way of avenging the disdain he had encountered there.

While he had been away, the fighting in Vietnam had developed into a full-scale war and Sihanouk had begun to lose his grip on Cambodian political life. These apparently unrelated events (as well as the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in China) meant that many Khmer students, for example, were now drawn away from the status quo toward radicalism and the concealed CPK. One teen-ager student who joined the Khmer Rouge at this time was Hun Sen, who defected from the movement in 1977 and has been Prime Minister of Cambodia since 1985.

At this time networks to support the struggle in Vietnam that had been established in the First Indo-China War in eastern Cambodia were reactivated. These men and women provided logistical support for

Vietnamese Communist troops stationed in Cambodia and for combat units inside Vietnam. Like their forebears in the 1940s and 1950s, they received a Marxist-Leninist education, via Vietnamese indoctrination sessions where they learned about the international aspects and obligations of Communism and fighting the Second Indochina war, rather than about the uniqueness and superiority of the Khmer. In this way, fissures developed inside the CPK between those working with Vietnam and those holed up in Office 104 who was planning a more Cambodian revolution.

An anti-government revolt in Samlaut in northwestern Cambodia in 1967, brutally surpassed by Sihanouk's army, lacked micromanagement from the CPK and received scant attention in Party histories, probably because it failed. The uprising nonetheless played into the hands of the CPK because its exposed severe inequities in the countryside produced hundreds of martyrs and drew recruits into the Communist movement. The revolt also showed that Sihanouk's regime, when challenged, could be extremely harsh, and for rural people in the region the Prince lost some of his allure. After the uprising had been crushed, the forests near Samlaut became a revolutionary base.

CPK-sponsored armed struggle officially broke out in February 1968, with a CPK raid on a police post in northwestern Cambodia, not far from Samlaut. Over the next few months, small units of armed Khmer Rouge engaged in fighting Sihanouk's inexperienced army and police. The fighting baffled the Prince, who assumed that the Khmer Rouge guerrillas were acting under Vietnamese control, which was no longer the case. By early 1970, insurgent forces had occupied or rendered unsafe nearly a fifth of Cambodian territory.

In the meantime, members of Cambodia's small urban elite, angered by Sihanouk's narcissism, his indifference to the economy and what seemed to be his pro-Communist stance, plotted to remove him from power. For some time, the Prince's capacity to influence events had fallen victim to local pressures and geopolitical realities that he could neither deflect nor control. Perhaps sensing what was in store, he spent much of 1968-1969 writing, directing and acting in self-regarding popular films.

The Anti-Sihanouk Coup and Civil War, 1970 – 1975

When Sihanouk went to France for medical treatment (a trip he made every year) at the start of 1970, plotting against him accelerated and on 17 March 1970, as the Prince was travelling home via Moscow and Beijing, the National Assembly, following a procedure that was technically constitutional but had been unthinkable beforehand, voted to remove him as Cambodia's chief of state. The coup was popular in Phnom Penh, but met with anger and dismay in the countryside. Lon Nol, the new prime minister, soon developed racialist policies vis a vis Vietnam that foreshadowed the ones developed by Pol Pot in 1977 – 1978.

Sihanouk learned about the coup in Moscow and flew to Beijing, where his old friend Zhou en Lai urged him to lead a united front against the usurpers in Phnom Penh. The North Vietnamese Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong, who was in Beijing at the time, offered the Prince extensive Vietnamese military support. Sihanouk eagerly accepted these arrangements. Over the next five years, he presided benignly over a government in exile in Beijing. He soon discovered that his government

was a façade, and that real power was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge guerrillas and their leaders, all of whom were concealed from view.

The new balance of forces in March 1970 was exhilarating to Saloth Sar and his colleagues in the CPK. After seven years in hiding and on the run, the Party and its military wing now became indigenous components in the struggle to defeat the "fascist" regime in Phnom Penh and ostensibly to return Prince Sihanouk to power. In terms of recruitment, the CPK benefited from the shock wave that the coup had caused in rural areas, where many people regarded Sihanouk as semi-divine and assumed that he would be Cambodia's chief of state for life. For the next two years, The Khmer Rouge army also benefited enormously from Vietnamese military training and equipment. By the time that Vietnamese assistance was formally withdrawn, the Khmer Rouge had become a formidable fighting force.

Vietnamese support, the military incompetence of the Khmer Republic and the massive US aerial bombardment of Cambodia in 1973, which angered rural people, all contributed to the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975. So did the tenaciousness of the Khmer Rouge forces, informed in periodic political meetings that they were fighting a corrupt and inhumane regime, and that an entirely new, egalitarian Cambodia would flow from an "inevitable" Khmer Rouge victory.

After 1971, the Khmer Republic mounted no major offensives and the CPK concentrated on taking control of rural areas and on introducing some of their radical social policies, in a process that they called the National Democratic Revolution. To rural Khmer, they played down Vietnamese assistance and occasionally said that Sihanouk would return

when victory was won. Outside the CPK itself, Marxism-Leninism was never mentioned. CPK cadre encouraged rural people to hate the urban Khmer, and to resent the social inequities that had marked Cambodian society for millennia. CPK documents stated that class warfare – previously unknown in Cambodia – was to be the basis of the revolution. One of them asserted that peasants were to be the victors in the class war and were to form the vanguard of the revolution. Another ominously warned that "sometimes people join the revolution, but their hearts remain attached to the enemy" – a sentence that foreshadowed the paranoia that swept through the higher echelons of the CPK beginning in late 1976.⁹

In late 1972, the Vietnamese Communists withdrew most of their troops from Cambodia, as part of the cease-fire agreements they had reached with the United States. The Khmer Rouge leaders ignored the Vietnamese or American rationales for the cease-fire, which benefited both sides. Instead, they interpreted the move as a deliberate Vietnamese betrayal of the Khmer. They began secretly to kill the Cambodian Communists who had come south from Hanoi to help the revolution. From then on, despite occasional expressions of solidarity, Vietnam became, in secret, the movement's "Enemy Number One".

Because no cease-fire came into effect in Cambodia, it became, as a US General remarked, "The only war in town", and for the first nine months of 1973, the United States dropped several hundred thousand tons of bombs onto rural areas of Cambodia – a country with which America was not at war. The campaign achieved its military objective, which was to avert a Communist victory in Cambodia while fighting continued in Vietnam. Partly because of casualties inflicted by the bombing, Khmer

Rouge forces were unable to mount a planned offensive against Phnom Penh in 1974. The number of people killed by the bombardment, which was halted by the US Congress, has never been assessed, but may well have been about 600,000.¹⁰

As the bombing was taking place, parts of Cambodia under CPK control were brutally collectivised and terrified men and women, coming into the cities told of expropriations, the defrocking of Buddhist monks and executions of "class enemies".

A military deadlock continued through 1974, but by the end of the year all roads to the capital had been cut. On New Years' Day 1975, the Khmer Rouge began shelling the city with rockets and artillery.

Four years later, the same sounds would be heard in Phnom Penh, on the eve of the Vietnamese invasion.

In the following month, sensing victory, the CPK Central Committee convened a meeting of Party cadre and set out the radical policies that they planned to set in motion. These included the decision to empty the capital and all other towns controlled by the Khmer Republic, driving over two million people into the countryside where they would pose no threat to the Party and could theoretically engage in agricultural work. Other policies aimed at flattening Cambodian society by abolishing money, markets and private property, thereby crushing what were seen as the exploiting classes and the capitalist institutions, which they controlled. The CPK also planned to close down schools, limit freedom of movement and freedom of speech, suppress Buddhism, break off

diplomatic relations with all "unfriendly" powers and dismantle the apparatus of the vanquished Khmer Republic.

The Khmer Rouge Are Victorious

On 17 April 1975 several thousand Khmer Rouge troops – heavily armed, ominously silent and often alarmingly young – entered Phnom Penh from three directions. At first the city's population welcomed the invaders. They were exhausted after five years of war. They saw themselves as fellow Khmers, and they wanted to help the victors rebuild the country. They might not have known about the ferocity with which the civil war had been pursued - all prisoners of war were swiftly executed, for example - or that the Khmer Rouge viewed them not as human beings, but as enemies (*khmang*). Soon after they entered the city Khmer Rouge cadre summarily executed the Republican officials who offered to negotiate with them. Over the next few weeks, several hundred former officers in the Republican Army were also killed, and so were men and women who were identified as having held responsible positions in the defunct regime.

In less than a week, Phnom Penh was empty, except for Khmer Rouge soldiers. Perhaps as many as 20, 000 city-dwellers -labelled "April 17 people" or "new people" by the victors - died as they walked in the hottest month of the year to rural destinations. Some of the voyages took several weeks. People who had supported the revolution or had failed to escape it inhabited the countryside. These men and women were known as "base people" and were given a certain amount of preferential treatment by the Khmer Rouge. Some of them had undergone nearly two years of political indoctrination.

Saloth Sar and other high-ranking CPK officials arrived in the capital a few days after the evacuation. Although they were exhilarated by the victory, they also believed that secrecy was all- important. For this reason, and to differentiate them from the Vietnam, whose army "liberated" Saigon two weeks later, they hid the existence of the CPK from outsiders and concealed the names of its leaders. They governed under the name *angkar* ("the organization") - a faceless body that soon controlled every aspect of Cambodian life, and was said in a contemporary adage to have "as many eyes as a pineapple"

The leaders of the CPK were unprepared for the monumental tasks that they now faced. They needed to establish control over the army and to set up a national administration. They also needed to preside over rice planting on a national scale and to establish themselves diplomatically as an independent twentieth century state. Saloth Sar and his colleagues had no experience of governance, no respect for existing institutions and no affection for anyone who had failed to support them in the war. "New people" - including all those evacuated from Phnom Penh - were expendable. In the chilling sentence that many survivors remember being told, "Keeping you is no gain, losing you is no loss".

Spokespeople for *angkar* also boasted that there were no precedents for the transformations that were biting into the fabric of Cambodian society. Professional people were discredited. Doctors and engineers were lumped together with other enemies or *khmang*, and were seldom if ever consulted later on. Many of them, in fact, were imprisoned as class enemies and summarily put to death. As part of what the new regime called its "independence-mastery", foreign aid, except what was

surreptitiously provided by China, was ostentatiously refused. Sweden's offer of \$5 million in humanitarian assistance, for example, was rejected, but only after a considerable delay.

Foreigners were forbidden to enter the country, most foreign diplomats and all foreign journalists were expelled, and Cambodians were forbidden to leave. In an ominous foreshadowing of later policies, the Vietnamese minority, over 100,000 people, were expelled, *en masse*.

Almost miraculously, the army was reorganized and a national administration of sorts was established that gave considerable autonomy to regional CPK cadre-autonomy that accounts in part for the differences between the way the revolution was carried out in different parts of the country.¹¹ In late 1975 and early 1976, rice was harvested throughout the country. Somehow, Cambodia survived and the "bloodbath" predicted by United States officials failed to occur - just yet.

For the remainder of 1975, living conditions throughout the country were severe, especially for "new people" unaccustomed to physical labour, but for the first time in several years Cambodia was at peace. In most areas, there was enough to eat, there were relatively few executions and full-scale communalisation had not yet taken place.

During these months, the new regime, which now called itself Democratic Kampuchea (DK) set in motion policies that were new, baffling and painful to most Khmer and especially to those evacuated from the towns. In January 1976, a CPK spokesman declared that "two thousand years of Cambodian history" had come to an end. What the spokesman probably meant was that the time-honoured social

arrangements that had characterized Cambodia throughout its history had been done away with, formally and for good. Along with history, the new regime abolished money, markets, formal education, law, private property, Buddhist practices, books, diverse clothing styles and freedom of movement.

Angkar claimed to have ended exploitation, but it was a thoroughly exploitative regime. By beginning of 1976, for "new people" and "base people" alike, Cambodia had become a gigantic prison farm.

The concealed CPK Central Committee was seldom told bad news, but a dozen copies of the typewritten minutes of its meetings from late 1975 and early 1976 give us insights into DK as it formally took shape. The documents throw light on relations with Thailand, for example, on the fate of Sihanouk and the conduct of national elections. Diplomatic relations with Thailand, the committee decided, was too problematic, Sihanouk was to be placed under house arrest for the duration of DK and the elections were to be stage-managed.¹² Similar documents from 1977 and 1978, unfortunately, have not survived. The minutes also suggest that the committee hoped that the CPK could accomplish its revolutionary agenda swiftly and without much foreign assistance largely by mobilizing the people's collective revolutionary will. The decision to wage the revolution, in other words, sprang from the untested conviction that a revolution in Cambodia (like revolutions everywhere in the world) *needed to occur*. The fact that the CPK's Utopian agenda was unprecedented, however pleasing this idea may have been to the CPK's leaders, should have suggested to them that disasters lay ahead.

DK's heady, unprecedented radicalism attracted praise from the anti-Soviet regimes in China and North Korea and from similarly oriented movements in other countries, such as the Sweden -Kampuchean Friendship Association, founded in 1977, that favoured China's Cultural Revolution over what they saw as "revisionism" in the Soviet Union.

While optimism in *angkar's* public statements still ran high and before the regime turned its attention to its real and imagined enemies, DK formally came into being in January 1976, when a constitution was promulgated, followed soon afterwards by national elections in which no parties campaigned and "new people" were not allowed to vote. The constitution and the elections were intended primarily for overseas consumption, as secret CPK documents admit. They passed almost unnoticed inside the country.

Behind this façade, the secretive cabal that had run the CPK since their time in Office 100 continued to run the country. Some of these men and women assumed "cabinet" responsibilities. Ieng Sary, for example, took charge of foreign affairs, while Son Sen assumed the portfolio of national defence. These two presided over sizeable bureaucracies, but the offices of education and social welfare, for example, established for foreign consumption, would have been meaningless and may never have existed. The standing committee of the Central Committee, the so-called Party Center, was a close-knit, collective body that made the major policy decisions throughout the lifetime of DK.

Interestingly, DK produced an extensive bureaucratic record while many foreign observers felt that Cambodia, largely because of its assault on the Khmer bourgeoisie, had descended into an era of illiterate barbarism. In

fact, hundreds of thousands of pages of typewritten material relating to foreign trade, defence, commerce and foreign affairs, for example, have survived. So has a large portion of the archive from DK's secret interrogation facility known by its code name S-21. Gaps in these archives suggest that thousands of other pages and even entire archives have disappeared. The surviving archives have enabled scholars to develop a more nuanced and detailed picture of the Khmer Rouge era than would have been possible using only oral sources.

How popular were the Khmer Rouge? The depth and extent of popular support clearly declined from 1975 to 1978, but was probably always stronger than outside observers of DK or the authors of survivors' accounts have suggested. Support extended well beyond the structure of the CPK, which in the lifetime of DK may never have had more than 20,000 members. However, to run the country and maintain a loyal military establishment, DK needed to count on at least 100,000 people who probably thought of themselves as revolutionaries in some sense and certainly as loyal followers of *angkar*. Very few of these people were "genocidal-murderers", but many of them stood by, along with terrified opponents of the regime, as atrocities were committed, and many, as the poignant volume *Stilled Lives* relates, lost members of their families to malnutrition, overwork and purges.¹³

A related difficulty in analysing the DK era springs from the fact that most survivors' accounts, concentrating on victimhood, include no sustained social analysis and fail to display any empathy for the sufferings of the poor in pre-revolutionary Cambodia. There is no sense in these often eloquent books that genuine injustices and had persisted in Cambodia for hundreds of years. Most survivors' accounts were written

by members of Cambodia's miniscule pre-revolutionary middle class. The authors did not see themselves or their parents as oppressors. They had probably never thought about "class", and indeed the systematic naming of classes in Cambodian society began only under DK, with the categories ("poor peasant", lower middle peasant" and so on) imported *en bloc* from China and Vietnam. Before that, most Cambodians had thought of society in dyadic terms, as divided between the "haves" (*neak mean*) and the "deprived" (*neak kro*), sometimes also perceived as those who gave commands (*neak prao*) and those who obeyed (*neak bomrao*). Behind the façade of class categories which were meaningless now that material wealth had been abolished, a new set of "haves" (former "have nots") took power, and a new age of exploitation, with the tables turned, came into being.

The Khmer Rouge redefinition of society and its war against privilege, therefore, which was novel and appealing to many people at the "bottom" of the old society, and especially to the young, was incomprehensible to many of these middle-class writers, who took their privileged status for granted and had imagined that all Cambodians lived harmoniously, at ease with the social differences between them. Averse to change, they believed in a consensus model of society, rather than a model of society in war between "friends" and "enemies" like the Khmer Rouge. Because of their failure to empathize with the "inferior" people who were treating them so badly (an understandable response) bafflement about DK, as well as abhorrence, pervades many of their accounts.

The Four-Year Plan

While pushing ahead with their Utopian programs (which to be fair, had not had time to collapse) the DK leaders in early 1976 drafted an ambitious four-year plan.¹⁴ The 110-page document, which was never made public, aimed to achieve socialism in DK within four years, primarily by transforming the country once again into an exporter of rice, as it had been in the Sihanouk years. A DK slogan, "If we have rice, we have everything" was the basis of the Plan. In the short and medium term, the goals set by the Plan were completely unrealistic. Under the Plan, rice harvests throughout the country were to reach and be maintained at a level of at three metric tons per hectare. The pre-revolutionary national average, harvested under peacetime conditions and with monetary incentives, had been less than one metric per hectare. Yields three times higher than this were impossible in a country emerging from civil war, with tens of thousands of farmers dead, along with similar numbers of livestock, with roads impassable, irrigation works in disrepair, villages abandoned or destroyed and markets and currency no longer in existence. The profit motive and the incentive of working one's own land had been replaced by an empowerment that supposedly flowed from the liberation of the Cambodia's poor from centuries of exploitation. The empowerment alone, it was thought, would enable the Khmer to meet seemingly impossible goals.

The Plan was written, apparently, because the revolution needed one, so that DK could resemble (and surpass) other, unmentioned revolutions. The document was hastily written and it is hard to say if its proposals revealed a blind faith in its success or a fear that if the Plan failed the revolution would collapse. Perhaps fear and optimism were both at work, and the leaders of DK juggled these contradictions without resolving them.

Explaining the Plan to members of the Party, Pol Pot (as Saloth Sar now called himself) said that the revolution "was a new experience. We do not perform like others. We leap [directly into] a socialist revolution. We don't need a long period of time for the transformation".¹⁵ The Plan was modelled on China's disastrous Great Leap Forward in the 1960s, which Pol Pot may have mistakenly thought had been a success, and was called "The Very Spectacular Great Leap Forward", without acknowledging the origin of the phrase. Almost every page reveals *angkar's* refusal or inability to acknowledge unpleasant facts. Facing them might have led them to slow down or delay the revolution and postpone the empowerment of the poor that Pol Pot and his colleagues had been nurturing in secret for twenty years or more. To demonstrate Cambodia's revolutionary credentials, the Plan needed to be extreme, it needed to be rushed, and it needed to succeed.

In the first two months of 1976, to set in motion and accelerate its Utopian agenda *angkar* transferred tens of thousands of "new people" from areas near the capital where they had lived since mid-1975 into the northwest, which before 1970 had been the rice-bowl of the country. Here they were set to work clearing forests, building dams and planting rice, without rest or medical care, without proper tools and without sufficient food. Survivors' accounts, written for the most part by "new people" have fully documented this evolving disaster.

In fact, the Four Year Plan never went into operation, because of the political crisis discussed below. The slogan "three [metric] tons per hectare" circulated widely and cadres throughout the country, seeking approval from higher-ups and fearful of retribution, forced the people

under their control into twelve hour working days twelve months a year and used the rice surpluses intended to feed the workers to meet the unrealistic targets. What occurred was a regime-induced famine that was especially severe in the northwest. There was always considerable regional variation in the intensity with which the revolution was carried out but throughout most of DK tens of thousands of people began to suffer from malnutrition and overwork throughout the country in 1976, and worse was yet to come.

The Plan was scheduled to be made public on 30 September 1976, the anniversary of the foundation of the CPK, and in late August Pol Pot explained its contents to cadre in an optimistic speech. At the beginning of September, however, Mao Zedong died, and soon afterwards his wife and the radicals known as the Gang of Four were arrested in Beijing. Mao's hand-picked successor, Hua Guofeng, promised to continue Mao's policies, but the leaders of DK were uncertain about the extent of continuing Chinese support and feared that some members of the CPK (but which ones?) might move to betray the Party by seeking to form or revive alliances with Vietnam. In the ensuing uncertainty, the Four Year Plan was shelved and the history of the CPK was rewritten to play down its Vietnamese associations and to play up the roles of Pol Pot and his colleagues on the Central Committee.¹⁶ In the closing months of the year, purges inside the Party gathered speed, and soon flew out of control. A perpetual revolution demanded the continuing purification of the country, which in turn meant the destruction of enemies. By the end of 1976, the purity of the Party was under threat, enemies were everywhere, and the consequent mobilization of hatred, plus the fears of Party members that they themselves might be falsely accused, led to thousands of deaths. In fact, an open ended and murderous vendetta against alleged enemies

(*khmang*) and traitors (*khbot cheat*) filled up the remaining time that the Khmer Rouge were in power.

Purging the khmang

Angkar's suspicions that it was surrounded by enemies, which flowered toward the end of 1976, first came to the surface in April of that year, when what seem with hindsight to have been random expressions of discontent among soldiers in the capital was interpreted as the beginnings of a full-scale *coup d'état*. Suspicions fell on military units from the eastern part of the country whose leaders were known to have worked alongside the Vietnamese in the Indochina Wars. There is no firm evidence that these people had considered overthrowing the leaders of DK, but hundreds of soldiers and dozens of officers were arrested, interrogated and put to death. To handle the problems posed by these arrests and executions an abandoned high school in southern Phnom Penh was transformed at this time into the regime's secret interrogation center code-named S-21, after moving the facility from a low-security location outside of the city.¹⁷

Until the end of 1978, purges (the Cambodian phrase, *boh somat*, translates as "sweep and clean") burned their way continuously through the CPK, through the army and the Zones and through factory personnel and lower-ranking administrative cadre. Most of the people brought to S-21 were considered enemies of state as opposed to "class enemies", who were dealt with, often severely, in the zones.

In the lifetime of DK, at least 15,000 men, women and children were brought to the prison. The majority of them were young, often illiterate

soldiers and factory workers implicated because their superiors - Party members for the most part - were being purged. All of the prisoners were photographed, interrogated and tortured. All of them were then put to death after confessing in some cases to lifetimes of bizarre counter-revolutionary behaviour. As Anthony Barnett has written, "people were not eliminated because they were mistakenly considered traitors, they were wrongly accused of treason because they were going to be eliminated".¹⁸

Most of the prisoners were held at the prison for a few days, but high-ranking cadre were held for several months, and in repeated confessions were made to implicate "strings" (*khsae*) composed of their associates. These "confessions", many of them meticulously typewritten, cover tens of thousands of pages and provide a clear, depressing picture of the terrified and terrorizing thought world of Pol Pot and his colleagues. They, like Stalin in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, sought to blame the failures of the revolution, not on its inherent flaws or on anything they themselves had done, but on the people whom they had entrusted to carry it out.

At the end of 1976, after some 2,000 prisoners had been brought into S-21 and put to death, optimism and confidence began to drain out of CPK pronouncements. In December, Pol Pot convened a study session for CPK cadre and in a lengthy address he invoked what he called "a sickness in the Party"¹⁹:

We cannot locate it precisely. The sickness must emerge to be examined. Because the heat of the people's revolution and the democratic revolution were insufficient...we search for microbes (*merok*) within the Party without success. They are

buried. As our socialist revolution advances, however, seeping into every corner of the Party, the army and among the people, we can locate the ugly microbes. They will be expelled by the socialist revolution.

In the speech, Pol Pot also referred to "certain people" who were plotting against the CPK. Characteristically, he failed to identify them. This must have increased his listeners' disquiet, but in early 1977 two high-ranking CPK figures, Touch Phoeun and Koy Thuon, who had probably attended the study session, were brought to S-21. Both of them held high positions in Phnom Penh and had inevitably known some of the CPK members purged in 1976 – people like Keo Meas and Nay Saran, both long-term members of the Party who had been with Pol Pot in Office 100, but were now suspected of being pro-Vietnamese.

As their interrogators wore them down and as torturers did their work, Touch Phoeun and Koy Thuon admitted that they had formed ornate "CIA networks" made up of Party colleagues, former students, family members and friends. They denied they had ever been faithful members of the Party. Over the next few months, hundreds of the people they had named, many of whom comprised the intelligentsia of the CPK, were brought into S-21, interrogated, tortured and killed. High-ranking victims purged at this time included Tiv Ol, Siet Chhe and Hu Nim.

Unconsciously following a scenario that resembled what had happened in France in the 1790s and in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the Cambodian revolution had begun devouring its own.

In late 1976, Pol Pot was receiving news from the northwest that agricultural targets were not being met and that thousands of people were starving to death. He visited the area in early 1977 and spoke about "Purifying the Party structure". Purges of soldiers and civilians administering the region soon followed. Under torture, these prisoners confessed to destroying rice fields, intentionally starving others, wrecking farm machinery and so on. Echoing Soviet practice in the 1930s, their failure to deliver the bonanza demanded by *angkar* was thought to be deliberate, and to have been encouraged or even engineered by treacherous CPK cadre, brought to the prison because they had been named as "CIA" – a catch-all term for traitors by prisoners – arrested before them.

"Internal enemies", like "counter-revolutionaries" in other revolutionary upheavals, were subjectively defined. They were moving targets, changing in response to changes in the priorities and fears of those in power. The enemies were also less than human. Just as Lon Nol had called his enemies "unbelievers", enemies of the CPK were seen as worms or microbes – foreign, sub-human and impure – semantic tendency that it shared not only with other Communist regimes, but also with Nazi Germany and other regimes with a policy of "othering" or dehumanising their opponents.²⁰

As the country's administration tore itself apart, it is still conceivable, with hindsight, that some of its radical agenda could have been achieved, and that the CPK might have remained in power, had it not embarked, in the midst of the purges, on an open-ended military confrontation with Vietnam. The suicidal confrontation, more than any internal matters, led directly to DK's collapse.

DK Confronts Vietnam

By the end of 1976, *angkar* was fearful about Vietnam's intentions. Talks between DK and Vietnam about outstanding border issues in 1975 had broken down, and there was no love lost between Pol Pot and his opposite number, Le Duan. Moreover, DK was consciously following a Chinese revolutionary model, while Vietnam's revolution was more cautious and more bureaucratic. In 1975-1976, skirmishes between the two countries broke out occasionally along the frontier. These clashes are traceable to trigger-happy nervousness on both sides. These soon became much less frequent.

In mid-1977, however, Khmer Rouge troops crossed the border into Vietnam on several occasions and massacred hundreds of civilians. The raids occurred at night and the killers had no idea who their victims were. In a cruel irony, many of those killed were members of Vietnam's ethnic Khmer minority whom DK in its propaganda had promised to "liberate" from Vietnamese control. It is uncertain if all of the incursions had the explicit approval of the leaders of DK, and some of them were probably conducted to prevent the Party Center from thinking the perpetrators, who lived in the eastern part of the country, were pro-Vietnamese. Since none of those involved in the raids was ever punished, the raids were presumably pleasing to *angkar*.

Before diplomatic relations were broken between the two countries in January 1978, neither country publicized the incursions. The CPK seems to have believed that its confrontation had the tacit approval of the Chinese authorities, who saw Vietnam as ally of the USSR and who

supplied DK with increasing amounts of military ordnance, matching if not surpassing Soviet military assistance to Vietnam. The Vietnamese, for their part, probably hoped that more rational, pro-Vietnamese elements inside DK (which they failed to identify precisely) might persuade Pol Pot and his colleagues to call off the attacks and come back to the conference table. With hindsight, it's clear that such pro-Vietnamese elements never existed, or, if they did, they never made an effort to come into the open or to dissuade Pol Pot from continuing the war.

The Chinese had always admired DK's "independent" stance *vis a vis* Vietnam and by implication *vis a vis* the Soviet Union, but they also wanted the CPK to come into the open as a legitimate Marxist-Leninist Party and as a member of the anti-Soviet bloc. At the end of September 1977, on the eve of a state visit to China, Pol Pot delivered a 5-hour speech that responded to these pressures and was accessible, to foreign monitoring services, as he knew it would be, once it had been broadcast over Phnom Penh radio.²¹

The speech gave a detailed history of Cambodia from a Marxist perspective that brushed past the international dimensions of the Communist movement and the supposedly scientific bases of Marxism to claim that the goal of Cambodian *national* history and its highest achievement was the CPK's unassisted victory in April 1975. Pol Pot concentrated on the period 1960-1975, i.e. the years when he had served on the Party's Central Committee, and had steered the CPK to victory. These pages served as an apologia for Pol Pot's command of the Party – although his name was never mentioned.

The speech insisted that DK's policies and practices were a calculated, correct response to external and internal pressures and also responded to what Pol Pot and his colleagues believed to be the laws, sometimes referred to as the wheel, of history. ²²

He closed the speech by declaring that "an infamous handful of reactionary elements" were undermining Cambodian society. They numbered "2 percent" of the population, i.e. perhaps 140,000 men and women, roughly half the number estimated to have been put to death for political reasons under DK. Pol Pot also claimed, absurdly, that for "95 %" of the population, living standards had risen since 1975.

Some of the speech was clearly meant to assure CPK members of the correctness of the revolution and Pol Pot's leadership. Other parts were for overseas consumption (perhaps particularly in China) and still others were veiled threats to unnamed *khmang*.

Although he failed to mention Vietnam, Pol Pot would have known that two days earlier DK troops had penetrated four kilometres into Vietnam's Tay Ninh province, where they massacred hundreds of civilians. The incursion was probably intended to keep Vietnam off balance and to display DK's military prowess to the Chinese, with whom Pol Pot was about to conduct security discussions.

When the speech was broadcast, on September 28, Pol Pot had already been in Beijing for two days. It was the first time he was coming into the open as a head of the Communist Party, in Beijing. In 1966, he had come to Beijing secretly, by himself. Several scholars have also noted his presence in Beijing in April 1970, but he never stepped into the light on

this occasion. In September 1977, as the leader of a recognized Communist Party allied to China, Pol Pot hoped for increased Chinese military support. Unfortunately, from his point of view, he found their response to his diatribes against Vietnam (which he delivered in private) ambiguous and almost half-hearted. Pol Pot returned home without the open-ended assistance – perhaps in the form of Chinese "volunteers" – which he craved.²³

The Chinese leaders, for their part, hoped that Vietnam and Cambodia could negotiate their differences without embarking on a full-scale war. Vietnam, although stung by the cross-border raids, wanted to avoid a full-blown conflict. DK, on the other hand, was spoiling for a fight. It seems likely than Pol Pot hoped to drag the Chinese into the war, but it is also clear that from any perspective the war itself was suicidal.

Negotiations between the two belligerents, encouraged by China, got nowhere, and in mid-December 1977, 50,000 Vietnamese troops, including armour and artillery units, stormed into eastern Cambodia and inflicted thousands of casualties. The incursion was intended to demonstrate the kind of response that the Vietnamese could muster if DK's sabre-rattling policies and cross-border raids continued. For two weeks, the incursion received no publicity from either side, but on December 31, citing Vietnam's aggressive behaviour DK broke off diplomatic relations with its neighbour. Six days later, Vietnam withdrew its forces in good order, taking along thousands of civilian prisoners, many of who were probably happy to leave DK. The leaders of DK mistook the withdrawal for a Cambodian victory and assumed that their publicizing the incursion would attract widespread international support. This failed to occur, probably because the outside world now knew

something – but not much – about the horrors that DK continued to inflict in its people.

In the meantime, Pol Pot assembled the military commanders from the region where the Vietnamese invasion had taken place, congratulated them for their "victory" and had them secretly put to death. The killings were followed by a vicious purge of the eastern part of the country, populated, according to a DK slogan by people with "Cambodian bodies and Vietnamese heads". The "enemies" brought into S-21 by the thousands in 1978 were overwhelmingly from the East and accused of collusion with Vietnam. In April 1978, so many were brought to the prison that the trucks carrying them had to be turned away, certainly to be killed without being photographed or interrogated. The purges also spread among civilians in the East, where thousands of people were summarily put to death or were forcibly evacuated from border regions.²⁴

In January 1978, Pol Pot cited "flaming national hatred and class hatred" as helpful weapons in the conflict. He spoke also of fighting to preserve the Cambodian "race". As time ran out for DK, its leaders stepped away from Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and reached instead for nationalist slogans and to a generalized, fearful and racist xenophobia to rally the population.

Given the disconnect between what Pol Pot must have known about the two countries – in terms of relative strength, resources and military history – and what he hoped to achieve, it is legitimate to ask if the leaders of DK had become collectively beyond the reach of rational analysis. There seems to be no other explanation for this blood-curdling passage, broadcast over Phnom Penh radio in May 1978:

In terms of numbers, each one of us must kill 30 Vietnamese...That is to say, we lose one against thirty. We will therefore need two million troops for 60 million Vietnamese. *For this reason* (emphasis added) two million [DK] troops should be more than enough to fight the Vietnamese, because Vietnam has only 50 million inhabitants. We do not need 8 million people [i.e. the estimated population of DK]. We only need 2 million troops to crush 50 million Vietnamese; and we would still have 6 million people left.²⁵

As Ben Kiernan has suggested, this passage is a clear indication of genocidal intent, made under wartime conditions.²⁶ Whether the provocative passage, backdated, applies to the regime from its beginnings is not so clear. While DK was at war for Cambodian reasons, and Vietnam fought back for reasons of its own, the conflict was also related to the question of whether China and its allies or the Soviet Union and its allies were the legitimate heirs of Marxism-Leninism, and therefore the "owners" of the global Communist movement and of the laws of history. Not for the first time, Vietnam and Cambodia, as they pursued their national interests, were also pawns in the hands of larger powers.

By mid-1978, Vietnamese military aircraft were running thirty missions a day over DK, strafing and bombing troop positions. DK had no operative aircraft. In April 1978, a week-long DK raid on the Vietnamese commune of Ba Chuc inflicted over 3,000 casualties. Tragically, once again, many of the victims were ethnic Khmer. The incursion was widely publicized by Vietnam which began accusing the "clique" of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary of genocidal crimes – an accusation that fitted with the "fascist" label that Vietnam wanted to pin onto its errant Communist neighbour. Other Vietnamese statements deplored DK's "bigoted nationalism" and its "medieval rural thinking." By the middle of the year, Vietnamese

broadcasts, in Khmer, were urging the Cambodian people to rise up against DK.

While *angkar* maintained its shrill, uncompromising stance and hoped for a miracle to turn up, Vietnam began to assemble a long-term political solution for the Cambodian "problem". This involved forming some of the people they had removed from Cambodia, as well as refugees who had fled DK, as a liberation army that would operate when the time came behind a shield provided by main-force Vietnamese troops. The Vietnamese also hoped to place some of the CPK cadre who had defected to Vietnam in positions of authority in a liberated, pro-Vietnamese Cambodia. One of those chosen was 25-year-old Hun Sen, a junior military commander who had defected in 1977, several months earlier than most. A year later, after the "liberation" of DK, he became the world's youngest minister of foreign affairs. Other defectors – all from the Eastern Zone – who were to enjoy long and fruitful careers in post-revolutionary Cambodia included Chea Sim, Heng Samrin and Sar Kheng.

DK Opens Up, Slightly

There is no evidence that the leaders of DK were aware of these Vietnamese plans. Instead, their responses to the deteriorating situation were to keep on fighting and also to "open up", cultivate new friends and welcome sympathetic foreign visitors. Internally, DK set in motion some modest reforms aimed at attracting greater popular support.

Collectively, these responses were a case of too little, too late, but the existence of compromises and reforms, unheard-of in earlier years,

suggests that at least some of DK's leaders (probably not including Pol Pot) were aware that it was perilous to fight Vietnam without improving DK's international standing and gaining more support from the unarmed and beleaguered Cambodian population. This could no longer be considered, collectively, as composed of enemies and friends. Instead, Cambodia's men and women now had to be rallied *en masse* to serve a national agenda.

At this time, Pol Pot and his colleagues strove to re-enter the world from which they had cut themselves off in 1975. They wanted to be seen both as revolutionaries and as responsible world citizens. Their efforts had limited success, probably because the regime had by then gained such a noxious reputation. In May 1978, US President Jimmy Carter called DK "the worst violator of human rights in the world today". Documentary evidence against DK, drawn to a large extent from refugees, had piled up in the UN Commission on Human Rights, which was then a relatively ineffectual body. Ieng Sary brusquely dismissed the masses of evidence in a two-page statement that attacked imperialism and said that DK's population, instead of falling, had increased substantially.

Despite and perhaps partly because of this pressure on DK, diplomatic delegations and two chiefs of state, Ne Win of Burma and Nicolas Ceausescu of Romania, visited DK in 1978, and pledged to formalize diplomatic relations. The Thai foreign minister visited DK in February and returned home saying that Phnom Penh seemed "normal" – whatever that meant. If the Vietnamese invasion had not taken place, several of these countries, and especially Thailand, would certainly have established formal relations with DK. These new friends of the regime, ironically joined by many of its most virulent critics, were later to support DK's continuing membership in the United Nations after DK's demise – the only government in exile to be so honoured.

A Yugoslavian television crew visited DK for ten days in March 1978. They filmed worksites, factories and collective farms and conducted an interview with Pol Pot, who gave them an up-beat assessment of events and the lightly doctored rudiments of his life story. Pol Pot also told the film crew that in the DK revolution "we wish to do away with all vestiges of the past."²⁷ One of the crew later reported that Pol Pot was the only person they had seen smiling in the entire ten days. One of Pol Pot's former students, then driving a taxi in Paris, recognized his former teacher when he saw the Yugoslav film, and wrote an insightful memoir about the man for *Le Monde Diplomatique*.²⁸

Three months later, Pol Pot declared that DK policy was to "increase the number of our friends while reducing the number of our enemies". In a partial response to this innovative policy, delegations from several sympathetic Marxist-Leninist parties paid ceremonial visits to DK. When they returned home, they wrote glowing reports about what they had been shown. These sympathetic visitors encouraged DK's leaders to believe, erroneously, that the Cambodian revolution enjoyed widespread support outside the power structures of the so-called imperialist camp. Pol Pot wrote that such groups "stand on the side of revolution...they are excited and happy with our revolution".

The best received of the delegations, it seems, was the 4-person team from Sweden, including the noted author Jan Myrdal that visited DK for two weeks in August 1978.²⁹ The Swedish-Kampuchean Friendship Association, which had over five hundred members, grew out of a larger organization that had supported the anti-American struggle in Vietnam. The delegation visited several provinces and on one occasion dined on

"fish, oysters and chicken" with Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, when the Swedes talked French to DK's Francophone leaders, who replied in Khmer. One of the delegations, Hedda Ekerwald, has recalled that Ieng Sary was charming, while Pol Pot struck her as "an organization man". The delegation's response to the visit, when they returned home, ranged from Myrdal's undiluted enthusiasm, which never wavered, to more nuanced reactions by the other members that in later years led them to some re-evaluations.³⁰ Gunnar Bergström, who also participated in the group, has declared in public that the group was very uncritical and was wrong in their positive judgement.

While all the delegations were unstinting in their praise, members occasionally had frank discussions with the leaders of DK that nobody expected to be published. One such discussion took place in July 1978 between Nuon Chea, "Brother Number 2" in DK and representatives of the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark. Responding to a question about the fighting with Vietnam, Nuon Chea claimed that the CIA and the Vietnamese were co-operating to overthrow DK. "Because the US was unable to come," he said, "It had to rely upon Vietnam. The Vietnamese do not discriminate in choosing agents". After asserting that what worried the CPK most were its "internal enemies" Nuon Chea said that the CPK's "leadership apparatus must be defended at any price. If we lose members but retain the leadership, we can continue to win victories. If you lose [a leading communist] you lose a lot". True to his word, Nuon Chea remained "Brother Number Two" for another twenty years.³¹

Two American journalists, Elizabeth Becker and Richard Dudman, and the Scottish academic Malcolm Caldwell visited DK for two weeks in December 1978 – the first conceivably hostile journalists to be allowed

into DK. Becker and Dudman had worked in Cambodia in the early 1970s and were able to contrast what they saw in 1978 with what they had seen before. DK officials assumed that they were both full time agents of the CIA. Caldwell, a Scottish nationalist, had never been in Cambodia but was a vociferous supporter of DK. When the three of them interviewed Pol Pot, the Cambodian leader spoke for an hour, Becker remembered, "without a script, without a scrap of paper...building up a case against Vietnam. " ³²He told his visitors that the Soviet Union planned to take over Southeast Asia. Later on, he spoke privately with Caldwell, who returned to his colleagues "delighted" from his talk. Later that night, however, Caldwell was assassinated in mysterious circumstances – perhaps by a dissident cadre seeking to discredit Pol Pot, but more likely, as Philip Short has suggested, by a Vietnamese commando unit. Becker and Dudman departed for home on Christmas Eve, one day before the start of the Vietnamese invasion.³³

Another aspect of DK's opening up in 1978 was to bring Prince Sihanouk briefly onto the stage via a dinner hosted for him by Pol Pot's subordinate Khieu Samphan. Photos of the dinner were sent around the world as proof that the Prince was alive and in good health after a year and a half of nerve-racking but painless house arrest. The Chinese seem to have hoped for some sort of role for Sihanouk in DK, and Pol Pot permitted the dinner to take place only after pressure from Beijing, but it is clear that he had no intention of allowing Sihanouk to fully emerge from house arrest until it was too late to make a difference.

DK also initiated a series of cosmetic reforms in 1978 that aimed to lessen hardship in the country, modernize DK, and attract more popular support for the regime. These included giving "new people" full political

rights (not otherwise defined) making an effort to improve people's diets, and enforcing plans to give everyone occasional days off. In some parts of the country, families were once again allowed to cook for themselves, and the ban on colored clothing was lifted. Primary schools opened for the first time in many parts of the country, and there were plans to reintroduce money, perhaps as early as 1979. ³⁴

Survivors' accounts of the last year of DK vary. In some regions, people noted a perceptible easing of conditions. In other areas, no substantial changes occurred and conditions deteriorated, probably as a result of previous and ongoing purges. Nonetheless, the number of prisoners entering S-21 in the closing months of 1978 decreased sharply, after the purges in the eastern part of the country had burnt themselves out. It is conceivable, in the unlikely event that the Vietnamese invasion had never taken place, that 1979 would have seen further cosmetic reforms and further openings to the outside world. How long DK could have kept a lid on its population, of course is impossible to determine.

DK Closes Down

As the fighting intensified, Son Sen, Nuon Chea and Pol Pot made successive, secret visits to Beijing in the second half of 1978. Increasingly desperate, they came away with promises of continuing assistance but were also told that the Khmer would be fighting on their own, without any Chinese "volunteers" – something Pol Pot had perhaps always hoped for, and requested as late as November 1978.

On Christmas Day, over 100,000 Vietnamese troops, supported from the air, sliced into Cambodia at several points in what Benedict Anderson has

called "the first large-scale conventional war waged by one revolutionary regime against another".³⁵ DK forces fought courageously and sustained heavy losses but they were outmanoeuvred, outgunned and forced to retreat. By New Years Day 1979, the sound of artillery was audible in Phnom Penh, rattling the windows of the house where Sihanouk and his wife were living under house arrest.

Three days later, Sihanouk had a cordial, surrealistic meeting with Pol Pot, the first time the two had met since 1973. Sihanouk praised Pol Pot and Pol Pot returned the courtesy, using the words reserved for addressing royalty. The Prince was flattered by Pol Pot's politeness and impressed by his charisma. He agreed to fly to New York to tell the UN General Assembly about the horrors of the Vietnamese invasion. Sihanouk was flown out of the country two days later.³⁶

This amicable, manipulative gesture, like everything else that DK was doing, came too late. The end came on 7 January 1979, when Vietnamese troops entered Phnom Penh, on the first anniversary of their orderly withdrawal from DK. Pol Pot and his colleagues had already fled. The capital was deserted and offered no resistance. In a sharp contrast with 17 April 1975, no expectant crowds lined the streets. An appalling era was over. A new era was about to begin.

The Trajectory of the Khmer Rouge

The trajectory of the Khmer Rouge between 1951 and January 1979, in spite and perhaps because of the horrendous sufferings that accompanied the Party's time in power, has, with hindsight, the makings of a tragic narrative, but because of the dimensions of the horror that ensued, it is

difficult to write about the era in a distanced, literary way. Like a tragedy, nonetheless, the history of the CPK is full of turning points where one is tempted to say, "If only this had not happened then that might not have happened " or points at which we would like the actors to step back from what they are doing and exercise a measure of self-knowledge and restraint. Like tragic heroes, however, the leaders of DK plunged hubristically toward the collapse of everything around them. Unlike tragic heroes, most of them survived.

The tragedy of the Khmer Rouge took place in a wide international arena and on the small Cambodian stage. While the crimes against humanity committed in the name of DK are the responsibility of the people who committed them and of the leadership which allowed them to happen, the Khmer Rouge would never have come to power without the nurturing contact of the Vietnamese in the first and second Indo-China wars and without the destruction wrought on Cambodia by the Khmer and foreign powers between 1970 and 1975. The intrusions of Vietnam, China and the United States in Cambodian affairs in the early 1970s undermined and helped to destroy what might otherwise have been a relatively competent, reasonably democratic regime, which was even at its worst arguably less repressive and more pluralistic than any of the regimes that came later.

At a deeper level, the Khmer Rouge revolution would never have gained the traction it did among poorer segments of the population had it not been for the inequities and fatalism that had always characterized Cambodian society. The gaps between the haves and have-nots were wide and deep and alternative social relationships were not accessible or imagined.

John Marston has argued that DK was a modernizing, future-oriented regime.³⁷ The CPK tried to dissolve the hierarchal arrangements that characterized Cambodian society and gave the country for its elite and foreign sojourners much of its coherence and its "timeless" charm. The Khmer Rouge wanted to remove fatalistic points of view and notions of *karma* from the thought world of all Cambodians and to replace them with the linked notions of dialectical materialism and spiritual and material progress. There was no room in their scheme for individualism, leisure, religion or dissent. To accomplish their agenda, the CPK's leaders believed that they had to take Cambodian society apart, and to dissolve all the differences between people – breaking the eggs, in Lenin's harsh phraseology, in order to make an omelette.

Without pausing to consider the consequences, they attacked the personal loyalties and family-centered values that gave meaning and structure to the lives of most Khmer. They did so more forcibly than their counterparts had done in the Soviet Union, Vietnam or China, where family structures were permitted to survive. The most concerted attack on family values occurred in early 1977, when collective eating was instituted throughout DK. Many survivors remembered this policy as the most iniquitous one in DK, because it prevented people from cooking and eating together as family groups.

The CPK also attacked the idea that teachers, monks and the elderly deserved more respect than others did. Attacking the rich and powerful probably attracted some support as well, but generalized attacks on Buddhism, private property, money and public education were probably resented and so was the untried idea, foreign to most Khmers, that continuous class warfare, perpetual violence and the open-ended

mobilization of hatred would lead to further liberation, ever greater equity and more empowerment. To most observers, the CPK program looked like an unending war. Finally, the idea that what was happening, according to the leaders of DK, was unprecedented must have unsettled many people over thirty, but opinions outside the Party were never sought.

By stressing the foreign or domestic factors in the story, however, it is easy to overlook how heavily they are entangled. This is especially true of relationship between the Cambodian movement and Vietnam.

Throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, the most uncertain, least confident years of the Cambodian movement, the Khmer Rouge received and accepted guidance and mentoring from Vietnam and from people trained by the Vietnamese, like Nuon Chea and Tou Samouth. Because of the distance between Cambodia and North Vietnam, however, the Vietnamese could never micromanage the Cambodians and they were unaware, it seems, of what was being said at the top levels of the movement, especially after Pol Pot's visit to China in 1966.

Moreover, because Vietnam never took Cambodia as seriously as the Cambodians did, intractable elements of disdain and resentment were built into the relationship from the start.

The trajectory of the Khmer Rouge movement, therefore, needs to be considered from several angles – national, international and ideological, operating in the evolving context of a successful anti-colonial struggle, fifteen years in the wilderness, five years of a brutalizing civil war and less than four years of holding power. At each stage of the history except the last, Vietnam played a decisive and often mitigating role. After 1966,

over-confidence, accompanied by a fear of failure, a paranoid view of society and unchecked belligerence toward Vietnam led the leaders of the Khmer Rouge and millions of willing, hostile or indifferent people down what seems with hindsight to have been both a murderous and a suicidal path.

Before discussing the range of responses which the Khmer Rouge attracted in the outside world, and before analysing its policies and behaviour to see how neatly the regime fits or fails to fit into existing political categories, I'll conclude with a brief assessment of the death-toll inflicted by or traceable to the regime.

The number of deaths between April 1975 and January 1979 that can be traced to the CPK's policies or to actions by its supporters is impossible to assess, as no reliable mortality statistics were assembled in the lifetime of the regime. Using a variety of sources and a range of demographic techniques, scholars in the 1990s and ore recently have set the number of regime-related deaths at between 1.5 and 2 million people, or between a fifth and a quarter of the country's population. To this number the casualties in the civil war, never accurately assessed, need to be added. The deaths in all of these conflicts probably exceeded 600,000, although reliable statistics are unavailable. The effects of widespread trauma and disorientation caused by years of war and by the long-term effects of DK policies will never be accurately assessed.³⁸

The gruesome statistic that we need to face is that in the twenty eight years in which Cambodians were killing fellow Khmer, or when Khmer died fighting Vietnamese forces, or were being bombed by the United States, the total number of deaths may have exceeded 4 million people – a

demographic catastrophe from which the country has only recently begun to recover.

Responses to the Khmer Rouge

Although the trajectory of the Khmer Rouge movement was not affected by the evolving ways in which the movement was judged by outsiders. These views are worth discussing, because one effect of the movement and its behaviour was to bring Cambodia, at the end of the Cold War, a degree of world attention perhaps out of proportion to the country's relative importance.

Before 1970, Cambodia and its radical movement received almost no attention in the Western press. Under Sihanouk, journalists who wrote favourably about the kingdom were allowed to return, while those who wrote critically went onto a "black list" and were refused visas. Anglophone journalists visiting the "island of peace" on holiday from the war in Vietnam in the 1960s, unsurprisingly, wrote little that might have prevented them from coming back. Journalists writing in French generally played by Sihanouk's rules and portrayed Cambodia as a charming backwater, led by an effervescent, Francophile prince, whose anti-Americanism endowed him with extra cachet.

When Sihanouk was overthrown and the Vietnam War spilled into Cambodia in 1970 the visa restrictions were lifted. Many of the Anglophone reporters who came to Cambodia opposed America's involvement in Vietnam. Most of these men and women were young, perceptive, ambitious and idealistic. Although they cannot be categorized as "left wing", they soon came to believe that the Khmer Rouge, about which they knew almost nothing, would be preferable to Khmer

Republic. As William Shawcross has written, they wrote "moving, often angry descriptions of US policy and its effects on the country. They detested what was happening in Cambodia and wanted the 'Sihanouk' side to win. " ³⁹ Many of them hoped for a North Vietnamese victory in South Vietnam and assumed that nothing very different would happen in Cambodia if the Khmer Rouge came to power.

They were also saddened by the wholesale destruction of the country. Sidney Schanberg in the *New York Times*, among others, gave readers an accurate, horrifying picture of conditions in Phnom Penh and on the battle-front but also very little reliable information about the shadowy Khmer Rouge.

Three perceptive accounts of the Khmer Rouge, however, appeared in 1972. In February, a French journalist, Serge Thion, lived among Khmer Rouge guerrillas for ten days in a rebel zone less than an hour's drive from Phnom Penh. He was told that Vietnam was unimportant in the resistance, that Sihanouk remained popular and that the Prince's government in exile was a reality rather than a facade. The CPK spokesmen, talking in French, knew that these erroneous views would strike a sympathetic chord in France, where Thion's account was published in the respected, left of centre newspaper *Le Monde*. ⁴⁰ Thion was told nothing about the CPK but he knew Cambodia well, asked good questions and wrote persuasively that a new language of revolutionary politics had entered many peoples' minds. After years of neglect and desultory oppression, he wrote, many rural Khmer, especially young people, were ready to abandon the old society and start afresh. To his credit, Thion was one of the first left wing writers to admit later on that enormous human rights abuses were taking place in DK.

The second and third accounts were written by two Cambodian schoolteachers, Ith Sarin and Kuong Lumphon, who spent nine months as "candidate members" of the CPK in the same area that Thion had visited earlier in the year.⁴¹ The accounts, written after the men had returned to Phnom Penh (it is possible, but unlikely, that they were both agents of the Khmer Republic) are nuanced, informative and pessimistic. The teachers wrote that the CPK was well organized and well respected. They praised the frugal and dedicated behaviour of its cadre – characteristics that Thion had also noted. They were favourably impressed by the Party's rigor, high mindedness and egalitarianism – all features that were in short supply in the Khmer Republic. They returned to Phnom Penh disheartened by the iron hand of the CPK but on balance, they were sympathetic about what they had experienced. One of the teachers, speaking in 1988, and by then a refugee living in California, regretted the positive tone of his account, but added, "At the time, I believed some of the things [the Khmer Rouge] told me. I loved the cleanness of their ideas".⁴²

A report of a Khmer Rouge massacre near Udong by the journalist Donald Kirk in 1974 and a long despatch written in 1973 by a young US Foreign Service Officer in Vietnam, Kenneth Quinn, hinted at the vengeful, open-ended violence that was to follow the victory of the Khmer Rouge.⁴³ However, most reporters stuck to reporting the decline and fall of the Khmer Republic and the accompanying collapse of US power and prestige in Southeast Asia.

Several Western journalists, including Schanberg, reported on the fall of Phnom Penh and on the beginnings of the evacuation, but they were not

able to observe the exodus for long or at close range. When they were evacuated themselves, two weeks later, the road they were taken on, in the direction of Thailand, was deserted.

In the months that followed, DK closed down its relations with most of the world. The only news emerging from the country aside from the broadcasts of Radio Phnom Penh came from the refugees who trickled across the Thai-Cambodian border. At first, their often-gruesome stories were generally disbelieved.⁴⁴ By the end of 1975, however, enough refugees had arrived to be interviewed systematically by journalists at a time when Thailand was seeking friendly relations with the Khmer Rouge, and thus was reluctant to support or fabricate atrocity stories from Cambodia. To be sure, as Ben Kiernan pointed out, few of the refugees at this stage were "working class" (whatever the phrase means in a Cambodian context) and came predominantly from the northwest.⁴⁵ Foreign supporters of the Khmer Rouge discredited what they said. Most of the stories they told, however, soon meshed together and have held up in the passage of time.

The interviews were used extensively in *Cambodia Year Zero*, a book published in French in early 1977. The author, Francois Ponchaud, was a Roman Catholic missionary who was fluent in Khmer.⁴⁶ From exile in Thailand, Ponchaud had monitored DK radio broadcasts and interviewed hundreds of refugees. His passionate, level-headed account documented the relatively mild horrors of 1975 and 1976. His book undermined the writings of less informed, left-wing authors who were unwilling to accept that people who had defeated the United States could be irrational or inhumane. Ponchaud's book was savagely attacked by sceptics and by supporters of DK, in Sweden and elsewhere.

From that point on, anti-Communist writers took an extreme anti DK position, while leftists, *sometimes* refusing to rush to judgement, argued that refugee reports were intrinsically unreliable and that DK needed to be judged in terms of its independence-minded, beneficial momentum. This was the position taken by the Swedish Ambassador to Thailand, Jean-Christophe Öberg, who visited DK toward the end of 1977.⁴⁷ A left-wing Australian academic, Gavan Mc Cormack, writing in 1979, noted how "difficult and unpalatable" it was for him and his friends in 1979 to realize that the worst accounts of DK, which they had rejected as US propaganda, had with hindsight been close to the truth.⁴⁸

In the early stages of DK, several Western academics knowledgeable about Cambodia weighed in to give DK the benefit of the doubt. Others, like myself, sat on the fence too long before accepting news that we found hard to believe – not in terms of human capabilities, but in terms of the ways we had romanticized the Khmer (and perhaps the idea of revolution). In my own case, I found it hard to believe that the Khmer whom I remembered could be so systematically inhumane. Reading Ponchaud's book, and others like it, led me to change my mind – in 1977.

By then, mountains of data had piled up about Khmer Rouge crimes against humanity but foreign governments were unwilling to take action. The United States, suffering from "Vietnam fatigue" was reluctant to re-enter Southeast Asia. Thailand and the ASEAN nations, unwilling to intervene or to antagonize China, downplayed what they knew about atrocities in DK. Humanitarian aid, which undoubtedly would have been rejected by DK, would also have had to pass through Thailand, and the Thai, moving closer to China at this time, would probably never have

supported such assistance. Finally, any action undertaken by the UN Security Council faced a certain Soviet veto, and the UN judicial system, of the sort that was brought to bear on Cambodia thirty years later, was not yet in existence. While collective inaction was the order of the day in 1977 – 78, the seeds were sown at this time, I think, for the collective guilty conscience felt by several foreign powers and the collective generosity that followed after the regime collapsed and more decisively in the 1990s after the Cold War came to an end. DK increased dramatically, drawing on a greater number of refugee reports

During 1978, press coverage of and on news about Cambodian atrocities that had started coming out of Vietnam. On the eve of the Vietnamese invasion, as Jamie Metzl has pointed out, a new trend in the press coverage of Cambodia was "the increased use of Holocaust imagery to describe the situation"⁴⁹ – a development which resonated with Vietnamese propaganda at the time and with the grieving of survivors, and has echoed through much of the scholarly writing about DK ever since.

I don't believe that the term genocide is an appropriate one to describe what happened in Cambodia under DK. Genocide as Serge Thion has written, is a political commodity, and a word with a much stronger flavour than the term "crimes against humanity". That term seems to me to a more accurate description of the horrors inflicted by DK, and those inflicted earlier by Mao's regime in China, or by the Indonesian government against suspected Communists in 1965 – 1966, when perhaps half a million political enemies were extra-judicially put to death.⁵⁰ In DK, though some minority populations especially the Moslem Cham were singled out for mistreatment, it is difficult to prove the genocidal

intent of the regime (except toward Vietnamese), especially when so many Cham survived and when the vast majority of DK's victims were ethnic Khmer. Jean Lacouture's neologism "auto-genocide" had little explanatory power.⁵¹ Instead, I would argue that DK was an authentic, inexperienced and over-heated Communist regime that went off the rails in its open-ended pursuit of real and imagined enemies and in the process committed massive crimes against humanity. Comparisons with the reign of terror in eighteenth century France and the Moscow Show Trials of the 1930s are more persuasive, *to me at least*, than those which compare DK's ideology and praxis to those of the Nazis, the Japanese or other fascist regimes.

The Vietnamese invasion and severe conditions inside Cambodia in 1979 and 1980 produced a wave of over half a million refugees. *During these years*, academics, government officials', NGO workers and journalists assembled a massive dossier of overwhelmingly negative information about DK. The dossier expanded exponentially with the discovery and release of DK archives, the investigations carried out by human rights NGOs and the publication of numerous survivors' accounts. While the archives and many survivors of DK suggested that conditions had varied inside DK from time to time and from place to place, most of the published survivors' accounts in particular gave the impression, pleasing to many readers, that for three years a handful of evil perpetrators had wreaked havoc on millions of innocent victims. This was the position adopted by the Vietnamese-sponsored regime in Phnom Penh in 1979, the Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), only to be abandoned in the late 1990s, after the Khmer Rouge movement had collapsed and Prime Minister Hun Sen urged his compatriots to "dig a hole and bury the past".⁵²

The responses of outsiders to the Khmer Rouge need to be fitted into the context of the Cold War and into a black and white world of received ideas about revolutions, class warfare, the United States and human rights. People who believed that all social revolutions since the American Revolution in 1776 were praiseworthy, that US policy was always misguided, that classes were important, or that human rights were a soft-hearted Western invention – and those who took opposite positions, held onto their opinions about the Khmer Rouge until the appalling facts about the regime reached what Malcolm Gladwell has called a tipping point,⁵³ and forced those who had supported DK into silence, apologies or retraction. Unfortunately, however, what had been a battlefield among supporters, opponents and sceptics soon became a Manichean simplification, whereby "Pol Pot" had committed "genocide" almost single-handedly. Judging the regime so simplistically rather than trying to explain it leaves several questions unanswered. Why did the movement attract so much initial support, for example, and why had so much hatred and so much violence been so easy to mobilize? Why did the killings, once they began, continue at such a furious pace? A final question – how we can categorize the regime – takes up remainder of this paper.

How should we categorize DK?

I have written elsewhere that DK was a "Cambodian, Communist, imported, twentieth century phenomenon. As an amalgam, it was unique".⁵⁴ This assessment forms the basis of what follows. It would be wrong to stress one of these elements at the expense of the others, and it is important to see them as thoroughly entangled with each. By examining them as an amalgam, I think that we can reach some analytical understanding of the Khmer Rouge. This is not to say that other

arguments might be more persuasive, but I am certain that failing to consider these four characteristics of the movement from an historical perspective, would lead to an unbalanced assessment. In any case, I feel strongly that brushing the regime aside as "evil", "Stalinist", "genocidal", "Maoist" "chauvinist" or "fascist" (given the polemical history of all of these terms), has little explanatory power, even though each of the terms, placed in the Cambodian context, explains a little, but not much, about the ideology and praxis of DK.

To deal with the "Cambodian" element first, many scholars of the country and many Cambodians themselves have tended to stress the uniqueness and incomparability of Cambodian politics, culture and institutions. Much of this self-regarding tendency among the Khmer can be traced to the colonial era and to Cambodia's long isolation from the wider world. What might be called the uniqueness project, as Penny Edwards has written, was a joint enterprise between the French and the Khmer elite, marked by sentimentality and perhaps by cynicism on both sides.⁵⁵ The French played down the similarities between the Khmer and what they saw as expansionist and modernizing Thai culture, while the Khmer elite, wary of Thailand, distanced themselves even more vigorously from their fellow "Indo-Chinese" in Vietnam. French writers often cast the Khmer as perennial, innocent victims, disinclined to violence and incapable of working out their political destiny. Cambodia needed protection, apparently, because although it had once been grandiose and warlike, it had become innocent and weak. It needed to be protected against its neighbours, against modernity and against itself.

In the early 1960s, many Khmer were quick to point out to me that they were different from and superior to the enigmatic, warlike, and more commercially minded Vietnamese.

The scholarly acceptance of a Cambodia-centric view, instead of a more open-minded, comparativist one, also reflects the sociology and constraints of academic life and the edgy protectiveness that many scholars develop about their areas of specialization. In the Cambodian case, protectiveness sometimes extended to an acceptance of the Cambodians' reading of themselves as the pious, peaceable victims of hostile forces and led others, after 1979, to accept the most polemical Vietnamese views of DK as articles of faith. Faced with the phenomenon of DK, many friends of Cambodia, including myself, were at first unwilling to believe that those we believed to be the inward-looking, unsystematic, peaceable Khmer could be drawn to something as "foreign" as Marxism-Leninism or could become, *en masse*, so violent and so inhumane.

In fact, an hour spent studying the bas-reliefs of the twelfth century Cambodian temple known as Angkor Wat – or a close reading of the 19th century Khmer poem, *Tum Taev* – reveals a long-standing fascination, familiarity and acceptance of open – ended violence, often directed from above, that may well extend into the Khmer collective psyche, although the connections would be difficult to prove.⁵⁶

The anthropologist Alexander Hinton, in his is magisterial study *Why Did They Kill?* makes the case that there was a good deal that was peculiarly "Cambodian" about the DK regime and about the ideology and behaviour of perpetrators of crimes against humanity whom he interviewed in the

course of his research.⁵⁷ Hinton's position echoes the writings of François Ponchaud, but unlike Ponchaud he draws less on his own experience than on a wide range of comparative anthropological work. Hinton suggests that certain cultural dispositions among the Khmer primed followers of the revolution to resort to open-ended violence and to participate willingly in what amounted to a reign of terror. He cites issues of "face" and honour, a deep-rooted culture of obedience and deference to authority and a penchant for disproportionate revenge that he believes to be deeply rooted in Khmer behaviour.

Hinton is not a cultural determinist. The traits that he discusses exist in other cultures where state – sponsored killings on a massive scale (an awkward phrase that in the Khmer case I prefer to "genocide") have also taken place. At the same time, he shows that the ideas, the killings and the pronouncements of DK sprang from a Cambodian context and drew on Cambodian culture , and even on some aspects of Buddhist teaching, so strongly that for people to assert that DK was essentially an imported anomaly makes little sense. There were elements in Khmer culture that benefited the CPK program, and there were deeply rooted aspects of Khmer society, unconnected to notions of class, that helped the movement to flourish. Other elements, of course, resisted the revolution and after it rolled over the people, who survived these cultural elements reasserted themselves.

Under DK, the unrestricted use of violence against people judged at a given moment to be enemies of the state, while echoing other revolutionary models, stemmed in part from the fund of authority that flowed from the Party Center, as it had done from all strong power-holders in Cambodia's past. Under DK, considerable power also flowed

with the Party Center's blessing from regional power-holders as well. Thus, arguments about whether DK was primarily a "top-down" dictatorship, as Anthony Barnett has written, or a diffuse set of regional initiatives that had implicit approval from the top, or no approval at all, as suggested by Serge Thion and Michael Vickery, is impossible to solve, as ample evidence points in both directions.⁵⁸

As a movement, of course, the Khmer Rouge was never purely Cambodian, incomparable or unique. From its beginnings, people in the inner circles of the movement considered themselves to be authentic Marxist-Leninists, guided by a legitimately established and internationally recognized Communist Party. Pictures of Marx, Lenin and on occasion Stalin decorated CPK meetings, and the international Communist Party flag was prominently displayed. After 17 April 1975, moreover, DK was globally recognized as a Communist state and was warmly welcomed into those parts of the international Communist movement that were taking China's side against the Soviet Union and less warmly welcomed, but welcomed nonetheless, by Vietnam. The CPK took pains to conceal these connections, however, and it was only after Mao's death in 1976 that Pol Pot admitted that DK was in fact a Marxist-Leninist state. Admitting the existence of the CPK to outsiders took another year.

Some writers have played down the Communist character of DK, perhaps partly to deny that the levels of violence in DK had anything to do with Marxist Leninist practice. These assertions fail to stand up either to the masses of recognizably Marxist-Leninist documentation that has emerged from the movement or to the well-documented history of purges and extra-judicial violence, similar to what happened in DK, that has marked

so many Communist regimes. These writers also fail to acknowledge that "real" Communist states like China and North Korea – and Vietnam, before 1978 – saw DK as a genuine Communist state whose (unmentioned) unruliness could perhaps be traced to growing pains. The internationalist aspects of the Communist movement also broke the connection, in effect since the early colonial era, between the survival of Cambodia and foreign protection and assistance. It was commendable for the CPK to try to break loose from these suffocating dependencies, but it was perilous to do so under the conditions that applied in April 1975, which the CPK was eager to ignore, and it was foolhardy, to say the least, to take on the most experienced and best equipped fighting force in Southeast Asia in 1977 – 1979.

Before mid-1976, to be sure, the Marxist Leninist components of the Khmer Rouge (as filtered through other countries' revolutions) and as expressed in CPK documentary materials occupied more intellectual space than they did after the systematic purges of "enemies" began. At that point, theoretical discussions became far less important. The leaderships' priority was to locate and destroy enemies of the state, to remain in power and to save the Cambodian "race". These intentions were blended in CPK rhetoric with a long-term suspiciousness (derived in the 1950s from the Party's Vietnamese mentors) of American intentions toward Cambodia. After the United States withdrew militarily from Southeast Asia, the CPK believed that the Americans were still interested in coming back. Because of the Sino-Soviet split, the KGB was added to this US-Vietnamese "alliance", and all three powers were sometimes thought to have been working together, with a shared, high-priority policy to destroy DK. In December 1977, Pol Pot declared:

We have expelled the international spy networks. The three big ones are the American CIA, the Soviet KGB and the network belonging to the Vietnamese consumers of territory. These espionage networks have been buried inside our party, inside our army and inside our people for more than twenty years.⁵⁹

In fact, to the CPK's leaders, the destruction of Cambodia was so important to the country's enemies that these powers had set aside their antagonisms to achieve this overriding goal. A corollary of the idea was that all evil came from outside Cambodia, like an infectious disease. Although Pol Pot's marathon speech in September 1977 placed the CPK in the mainstream of Chinese-influenced Communist parties, and traced the *longue durée* of Cambodian history in a recognizably Marxist fashion, DK pronouncements in 1977 and 1978 stepped back from a Marxist-Leninist context (and by implication from the CPK's long entanglement with Vietnam) to take on a defensive, racist and nationalistic coloration. In the closing months of DK, blood-curdling nationalist slogans that spoke of the Cambodian "race" replaced the austere and often-impenetrable language of Marxism-Leninism, which had reached people, translated into Khmer via Vietnamese translations that had themselves been translated from Chinese and European languages. In its closing phases, DK was concerned with Cambodia's national and ethnic survival – hardly a Marxist-Leninist idea.

The Communist character of DK, I would argue, was as strong in the minds of its leaders as the Cambodian component. To say that DK was an "imported" phenomenon builds on this notion, not only because Communism came to Cambodia from elsewhere, but also because by "imported" I was referring to the massive and destructive foreign interventions that Cambodia endured in the 1970s. Springing from the US

and Vietnamese priorities of the Second Indo-China War, these interventions, to use an excessively mild word, included invasions by both North and South Vietnamese forces and by the United States as well as the US aerial bombardment of 1969 – 1973. Without these imported elements, and more specifically without continuing assistance from the Vietnamese Communists in the first two years of the civil war, the Khmer Rouge might never have come to power. Without the Second Indo-China War itself – an almost unthinkable counter-factual – the Cambodian Communist movement might have been a footnote in Cambodia's political history, like the so-called "Maoist" fractions Red Brigades, and Senderos Luminosos , to name only two – that bedevilled regimes in Europe and Latin America at this time and in some cases into the 1980s. The Khmer Rouge was the only one of these eventually marginalized, super-radical movements to come to power on a national scale.

The Cambodian revolution, like its counterparts in the USSR and China, benefited enormously from the disruptions and hidden benefits that accompanied a war imposed on the country from abroad – World War I in the Russian case, and World War II in the case of China. Without that imported war, it is clear that the Khmer Rouge would never have come to power.

Two characteristics of the Khmer Rouge movement are neither "Communist", "Cambodian" nor "imported." These are the movement's overriding cult of secrecy and its failure to erect a cult of personality around its leader, Pol Pot. The first characteristic seems largely to have been meant to create a distance between what was happening "independently" in Cambodia and what was happening drew attention to its international debts and affiliations. Secrecy also provided security for

the movement's leaders and had, they believed, been a crucial element in the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. Nuon Chea called secrecy "essential" when he talked to the Danish delegation in 1978.

After the CPK came into the open in 1977, however, the failure to set in place even a minimal cult of personality is intriguing. It may have sprung from the overriding penchant for concealment discussed above, or from Pol Pot's own self-effacing public persona. It is also possible that the CPK leadership had been disenchanted by Sihanouk's relentless narcissism, and saw the revolution as a collective enterprise, unconnected to a single personality. The facelessness of the Khmer Rouge and its leadership could have been a strength but once the regime collapsed, its successors and most survivors were quick to personalize 1975 – 1979 as the "Pol Pot time" and to condemn the "Pol Pot-Ieng Sary genocidal clique".⁶⁰

Finally, I would argue that the Khmer Rouge was a late twentieth century phenomenon, rooted in the closing decades of the Cold War that were marked by the Sino-Soviet split and also by often violent but generally ineffective radical movements elsewhere in the world, which resembled the Khmer Rouge in the extremity of their views, their penchant for violence, and their inward-looking collective thinking. When the Khmer Rouge came to power, Mao Zedong, the idol of many of these movements, had little more than a year to live, and within a few years of his **death the momentum** of his closing years which had caused so much excitement in radical circles all over the world had begun to shift, in China at least, in the direction of economic liberalization and accommodation with the West.

It was the misfortune of the Cambodian revolutionary movement that it had such a short history and that it arrived on the scene so late, at a time when what were once assumed to be the high ideals of the Soviet Union and China were already in decline in those countries and when radical solutions to national problems were increasingly unpalatable outside the Communist bloc. The leaders of the CPK, perhaps mesmerized by their ideas of a pure and independent Cambodian revolution, and clearly overwhelmed by what Timothy Carney has called their "unexpected victory"⁶¹ paid no attention to developments elsewhere in the world that might have led them to be more cautious in their behaviour or more co-operative with other powers. Encouragement by China, in the last stages of extreme radicalism, led the CPK's leaders to the delusional belief that they were in tune with the laws of history and immune from military defeat. They saw themselves as Communists of a pure Cambodian practice, and ignored the peculiarly virulent context of the 1970s and the Cold War in which the movement was able to flourish.

The Khmer Rouge revolution and the DK regime, occurred at a time when fragmented and often violent radical movements were springing up all over the world, inspired in part by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. These generally young men and women were angered by the status quo and had come to believe that a global socialist revolution was not only preferable to current conditions but was actually coming to pass. As Gunnar Bergström, who visited Cambodia in 1978 as a member of a delegation sent by the Kampuchea-Sweden Friendship Society, has recalled, "Here we thought we could have a country with a totally egalitarian society with no landlords. We thought Pol Pot's regime had found the solution to the Third World problem."⁶² Bergström's optimistic views were shared by tens of thousands of people throughout the world,

before the true facts of DK became clear and at a time, ironically, when China and the Soviet Union, behind a rhetorical façade, were starting to back away from such Utopian predictions.

The Khmer Rouge flourished, in other words, in the feverish political atmosphere that nourished extremist movements (and extreme repression) throughout the world in the late 1970s. Born in Indo-China's anti-colonial struggle and nourished by the antagonisms of the Cold War (as well as by their own misplaced self-confidence) the Khmer Rouge believed themselves to be in control of the wheel of history, which in fact, to extend the metaphor, had begun to roll past them in a different, unpredictable direction, leaving them on the margins of the late twentieth century. In the meantime, perhaps as many as two million Cambodians had died in less than four years, pointlessly and often in great pain.

¹ For more details of this period of my life, see David Chandler, "Coming to Cambodia" in Anne Hansen and Judy Ledgerwood (eds.) *At the Edge of the Forest*. Ithaca, 2008, pp. 21-28.

² Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: a Cultural and Literary History*. Oxford, 2008. Osborne lived in the city from 1959 to 1961 as an Australian diplomat.

² For contrasting analyses of this complicated period of Cambodian history, see Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*. 2nd edition, New Haven 2004, pp. 65-110 and Steve Heder, *Cambodian Communism and the Vietnamese Model*. Bangkok, 2004, pp. 13-36.

³ : On Sar's time in France, see David Chandler, *Brother Number One: a Political Biography of Pol Pot* (2nd edition) Boulder, CO, 1999, pp 25-29 and Philip Short, *Pol Pot: the History of a Nightmare*. London, 2004, pp. 47-84.

⁴ : Steve Heder, "Kampuchea's Armed Struggle: the Origins of an Independent Revolution" *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 11/1 (January-March 1979) , 11.

⁵ Heder, *Cambodian Communism*, p. 68.

⁶ On office 100, see Chandler, *Brother Number One*, pp. 67-69, Short, *Pol Pot* , pp. 146-147 and Francois Ponchaud, "Social Change in the Vortex of Revolution" in

Karl Jackson (ed.) *Cambodia 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death*. Princeton, 1989, pp. 151-178 at p. 177.

⁷ On these visits, see Chandler, *Brother Number One*, pp. 69-73 Short, *Pol Pot*, pp. 156-161 and Thomas Engelbert and Christopher Goscha, *Falling Out of Touch: a Study of Vietnamese Communist Policy Toward an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975*. Clayton, 1995, passim.

⁸ : Short, *Pol Pot*, p. 159.

⁹ : David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War and Revolution since 1945*. New Haven, 1991, pp. 208-209 .

¹⁰ : On the US bombing, see William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Nixon, Kissinger and the Destruction of Cambodia* London 1979, pp.280ff. Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia" in *The Walrus*, October 2006, 62 -- an eloquent, unrefrenced article that claims that the United States dropped over 2 million tons of bombs on Cambodia between 1965 and 1973, more tonnage than the US had dropped anywhere in World War II. The authors assert that the campaign led thousands of Khmer to join the revolution. A DK spokesman, speaking in August 1977, stated that the bombing had produced "blood rancor, national anger and class indignation". United States., Foreign Broadcast Information Service Asia and Pacific (hereafter FBIS) *Daily Reports* , 16 August 1977.

¹¹ : On variation in DK, see Michael Vickery, "Democratic Kampuchea: Themes and Variations" in David Chandler and Ben Kiernan (eds) *Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*. New Haven, 1983, pp. 88-102.

¹² On these documents, see Chandler, *Brother Number One*, pp. 107-109..

¹³ : Wynne Cougill et al., *Stilled Lives: Photographs from the Cambodian Genocide*. Phnom Penh, 2004.

¹⁴For the text of the Four-Year Plan, see "The Party's Four Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields" in David Chandler, Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua (ed. and tr.) *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977*. New Haven, 1988, pp. 45-119.

¹⁵ "Preliminary Explanation Before reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary" in Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, *Pol Pot Plans*, 120-162. Pol Pot closed the speech by saying (p. 162): "We can accomplish it as long as we believe in the Party, believe in the people, and as long as we love the nation. We want independence, because we have been the slaves of others for a long time now. But independence requires a great deal of personal effort."

¹⁶On the September 1976 crisis, see Chandler, *Brother Number One*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁷ on S-21, see David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999) and Anthony Barnett, Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua, "Bureaucracy of Death" *New Statesman*, 2 May 1980, 668-76.

¹⁸ Anthony Barnett, "Democratic Kampuchea: A Highly Centralized Dictatorship" in Chandler and Kiernan, *Revolution and its Aftermath* .pp. 212-229 at p. 224.

¹⁹ For the text of the speech, see Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, *Pol Pot Plans*, pp. 182-212. For an analysis, see David Chandler, "A Revolution in Full Spate" in Chandler, *Facing the Cambodian Past: Selected Essays, 1971-1994*, Chiangmai 1995, pp. 255-275. This essay was written in 1982.

²⁰ On this "othering" process, see Alexander Laban Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005 pp. 211-251,

²¹ Pol Pot, "Long Live the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea", translated in FBIS *Daily Reports*, 2 October 1977.

²² On the DK notion of the wheel of history, see Henri Locard (ed), *Pol Pot's Little Red Book: the Sayings of Angkar*, Chiangmai 2004, pp, 211-213. Under DK, the wheel of history seems to have been conceived of as a juggernaut, and as one saying put it, " The wheel of history turns inexorably, and crushes anyone who can't keep up with it".

²³ : On these visits, see Short, *Pol Pot*, pp 375 ff. Short was working in Beijing as a BBC correspondent at this time.

²⁴ : See Ben Kiernan, "Wild Chickens, Farm Chickens and Cormorants: Kampuchea's Eastern Zone Under Pol Pot" in Chandler and Kiernan, *Revolution and its Aftermath*, pp. 136-211 and Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975-1982*, Boston, 1983, pp. 194-196.

²⁵: Quoted in Short, *Pol Pot*, p. 387.

²⁶ : Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: a World History of Genocide and Extermination*. New Haven, 2008, p. 541.

²⁷ See Slavko Stanic, "Kampuchea--Socialism without a Model" *Socialist Thought and Practice*, (1984) 67-84.

²⁸ : Soth Polin, "La diabolique douceur de Pol Pot" *Le Monde Diplomatique* 18 May 1980.

²⁹ : Most delegations stayed for less than a week, and Pol Pot feted very few of them. My description of the visit is drawn largely from notes graciously provided to me by Peter Froberg Idling , from brief conversations with two members of the delegation, Hedda Ekkerwald and Gunnar Bergstrom, whom I met in Stockholm in March 2008. I'm also grateful to Bosse Lindquist for providing an English translation of his insightful radio documentary " The Silence of Phnom Penh", first broadcast in 1999,

which gives a detailed history of Swedish relations --official and unofficial-- with DK.

³⁰ : See Erika Kinetz, "Pol Pot's Former Dinner Guest Admits Lapse in Judgement" *Cambodia Daily Story of the Month*, November 2007, an article that draws on a telephone interview with Gunnar Bergstrom. See also Lindquist, "The Silence of Phnom Penh" typescript. pp. 21-22.

³¹:" Statement of the CPK to the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark" *Journal of Communist Studies* 3/1 (March 1987) 8-30.

³² Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over*. New York, 1986, p. 433.

³³ On Caldwell's death, Short, *Pol Pot*, pp. 394-395. In the 1990s, Pol Pot later told a colleague that he believed Dudman, whom he thought was a CIA agent, had murdered Caldwell.

³⁴ Short, *Pol Pot*, p. 383.

³⁵ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd edition London, 1991, p. 1. Anderson admitted in the first edition (1983) that he was impelled to write this influential book because of his bafflement about the Cambodian-Vietnamese war, a bafflement springing from his inability or unwillingness at the time to see that Cambodian nationalist interests, and Vietnamese strategic priorities had trumped socialist solidarity.

³⁶ Norodom Sihanouk, *Prisonnier des Khmers Rouges*. Paris 1986, pp. 316 ff. In the late 1980s at a social occasion in France, Sihanouk remarked that ": There are two charismatic people in Cambodia: Pol Pot and I. " (Philippe Devillers, personal communication).

³⁷ John Marston, "Democratic Kampuchea and the Idea of Modernity" in Judy Ledgerwood (ed.) *Cambodia Emerges from the Past: Eight Essays*. De Kalb, IL, 2002, pp. 38-59.

³⁸ : See Patrick Heuveline, " Between One and Three Million; Toward the Demographic Reconstruction a Decade of Cambodian History (1970-1979)" *Population Studies* 52 (1998) 49-65 and also Marek Sliwinski, *La genocide Khmer rouge*. Paris, 1995.

³⁹ William Shawcross, "Cambodia: some Perceptions of a Disaster" in Chandler and Kiernan, *Revolution and its Aftermath*, pp. 231-257 at po 236.

⁴⁰ Serge Thion, "Cambodia 1972: within the Khmers Rouges" in Thion, *Watching Cambodia* Bangkok 1993, pp 1-29. The articles appeared originally in *Le Monde* in April 1972.

⁴¹ For a discussion of these two accounts, see Chandler, *Tragedy*, 218-220.

⁴² Ibid., p. 220. Author's interview with Ith Sarin, Long Beach, California , October 1988.

⁴³ Donald Kirk, "Revolution and Political Violence in Cambodia, 1970-1974" in Joseph Zasloff and McAllister Brown (eds.) *Communism in Indo-China: New Perspectives*. Lexington, 1986, pp. 215-230, which draws on his news reports, and Kenneth Quinn, "Political Change in Wartime" *Naval War College Review* 28 (Spring 1976) 3-31. Quinn was the US Ambassador to Cambodia in the mid 1990s.

⁴⁴ : See Gareth Porter and George Hillenbrand, *Cambodia : Starvation and Revolution*. New York, 1976, an apologia for the early months of DK.

⁴⁵ Ben Kiernan, "Vietnam and the Governments and People of Kampuchea" *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 11/4 (October-December 1979) 19-25 at p. 19. Kiernan goes on to blame the violence in DK on "the chauvinist section of the revolutionary movement led by Pol Pot."

⁴⁶ François Ponchaud, *Cambodge Année Zero*. Paris, 1977.

⁴⁷ See Lindquist, "Silence of Phnom Penh" for a summary of Oberg's views.

⁴⁸ Gavan McCormack, "The Kampuchean Revolution 1975-1978: the Problem of Knowing the Truth" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 10 (1980) 75-118 at 116.

⁴⁹ Jamie Metz, *Western Responses to Human Rights Abuses in Cambodia 1975-1980*. Oxford, 1996, p. 107.

⁵⁰ : Serge Thion, "Genocide as a Political Commodity" in Thion, *Watching Cambodia*, 163-185. See also Helen Fein, "Revolutionary and Anti-revolutionary Genocides: a Comparison of State Murders in Democratic Kampuchea and Indonesia" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 35, No. 4 (October 1993) 796-823.

⁵¹ : Jean Lacouture, *Survive le peuple cambodgien*. Paris, 1978.

⁵² : Seth Mydans, "Cambodian Leader Resists Punishing Top Khmer Rouge" *New York Times*, 29 December 1998.

⁵³: Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*. Boston, 2002.

⁵⁴ : David Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, p. 152.

⁵⁵ Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: the Cultivation of a Nation*. Honolulu, 2008.

⁵⁶ Alexander Hinton, "Songs at the Edge of Democratic Kampuchea" in Hansen and Ledgerwood, *At the Edge*, pp. 71-92.

⁵⁷ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?*

⁵⁸ : Anthony Barnett, “Democratic Kampuchea” and Serge Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” in Chandler and Kiernan, *Revolution and its Aftermath*, pp 212-229 and 10-33.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, p. 94.

⁶⁰ : See Chandler, *Brother Number One*, p. 150 and Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, p. 40

⁶¹ Timothy Carney, "The Unexpected Victory" In Jackson, *Cambodia 1975-1978*, pp. 13-36.

⁶² Erika Kinetz, "Pol Pot's Dinner Guest".