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**Cambodian Refugees Tell
Of Revolutionary Upheaval**

**People Who Fled Recently Report Wide
Terror, Emptied Towns and Forced
Labor of Millions Clearing Jungles**

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BANGKOK, Thailand, July 14 —Dozens of recent Cambodian refugees, some of whom escaped from the country as late as last Tuesday, are telling of a nation in a state of total revolutionary upheaval that is rapidly returning to its undeveloped past of a century ago.

Relief at the end of the war was the initial reaction of most Cambodians to the Communist victory, according to the refugees. But that relief yielded to terror when the forced exodus of all the population from most inhabited places was announced. This was done in some places, like Phnom Penh, the capital, immediately after the victory, in others within a few days.

Only villages long held by the Communists appear to have been exempt. The only accounts of villages still populated by their original inhabitants came from refugees who fled through regions of Kompong Thom and Siem Reap Provinces occupied by the Communists since 1970.

Cambodia's towns now are said to be empty except for small groups of Communist soldiers planting banana trees around palaces, public buildings and monuments and in any arable urban space. Paved roads are nearly deserted, as are most of the villages along them.

Most of the country's population about seven million, is apparently engaged in clearing the jungles, forests and shrub-studded plains for the planting of rice, while many fields long under cultivation lie fallow because they are situated near once-inhabited places or important roads.

Money is no longer used, according to the refugees. Nor are medicines, because what little stocks existed remained in the towns. Children are said to supervise the work of their elders and report their failings to the Communist authorities for punishment.

Cambodians are told that the

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past is finished and all habits of the past must be cast off; that all people are equal and everyone is master of his destiny; that Cambodia has defeated all foreign enemies, notably the Americans, but the internal enemy remains to be vanquished.

Those who resist are warned they will be crushed by "the revolutionary wheel," a phrase often repeated. Cambodians must address each other as Samak Mit for men and Mit Neary for women. Those are new terms roughly equivalent to "Comrade." Subtleties of the Khmer language, which has different vocabularies and forms

of address indicating social relationships, are forbidden.

All Cambodia works under the direction of a remote and nameless entity commonly referred to as Angka, or "organization." Angka is said to be the Communist party of Cambodia. This is the political organization that directs the revolutionary army.

Angka remains as anonymous as the word, according to the refugees' accounts. None of the many people interviewed had ever seen any official higher than a local chief or knew the name and whereabouts of any higher leader. It is not known whether Cambodia has a functioning capital or any bodies of government.

There is, however, a central directing body, since accounts from various parts of Cambodia show that a uniform policy is being applied. But coordination and direction take place at a level far removed from the people. They are the tasks of figures neither seen nor named, in a place that is not known.

No Radios in Use

No one who was interviewed had seen or heard any direct instruction from a central power. No ordinary Cambodians had come from any place where electricity was available, and portable radios had run out of batteries and were no longer in use. No printed material appears to be in general circulation.

The people see only the black-uniformed, very young Communist soldiers who supervise their work, whose names they rarely know and who are taciturn, or the nameless men who come to tell them what the new Cambodia expects from her citizens.

The information in this article was gathered in five days of interviews in three refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. Because Cambodia since she came completely under Communist rule has totally isolated herself, refuses access to all outsiders and communicates with the world only through occasional radio broadcasts, none of the information could be verified through inspection.

In an effort to establish as much substantiation as possible, the camps at which the interviews were conducted were chosen because of the maximum distances that separate them. There is no communication between the camps, which the Thai authorities isolate as much as possible from normal life and which are rarely visited. Still, there were no apparent discrepancies between the accounts.

The people of the camps—there are six in Thailand sheltering about 6,000 Cambodians

—appear to represent a fair sampling of the country. A great majority, like a great majority of all Cambodians, are of the unlettered and unfavored mass, more rural than urban. The number of men whose bodies are heavily covered with Sanskrit tattoos to protect them by their magic is remarkable, indicating the preponderance of the uneducated and superstitious.

They took flight on their own decision, always at high risk of detection or of perishing on the long treks through the jungle. They avoided paths, for reasons that they attribute to fear of Angka. There is fear of hunger, fear of dying by overwork, exposure and the absence of medicine, and fear of being killed by Angka.

All the refugees speak of killings by Communist soldiers, often arbitrary. Many assert that they have witnessed such killings, and most say that they saw bodies of people who had died by violence. None of these assertions can be directly verified.

The only evidence is the authenticity of the fear of those who fled, which they say is shared by all the people since last April 17, the day that Phnom Penh fell.

'They Never Came Back'

For instance, an illiterate former soldier, whose name cannot be published, and his wife were working on July 3 in a field outside a village near Samrong, a provincial capital in the northwest corner, near the Thai border. His mother ran to them and said that Communist soldiers had come to ask for him.

"This happened to other soldiers, and they never came back," he said in a camp south of Surin. "Just before, they had called my friend. I think they killed him, and now they want to kill me. My mother was frightened."

"My legs were so weak with fear I couldn't stand," his wife said, still frightened.

The former soldier never went back to his house. With his wife, he headed for the jungle and arrived across the border two days later. Their legs and arms were badly scratched from their having struggled through the brush.

They did not say good-by to their five children, aged from nine months to 13 years.

Chan Sam On, a pedicab driver from Phnom Penh, said he had run into the jungle with his wife out of fear. He said that since he was forced to walk out of the capital with all its population immediately after its fall, he had not seen



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According to refugees arriving in camps in Thailand, designated by crosses, most towns in Cambodia have been emptied except for some long held by Communists in the provinces of Siem Reap and Kompong Thom.

the Communist forces committed atrocities, but he said he had heard many tales that he believed.

He said that he and his wife had had to work continuously, that there had never been enough food and that he had seen people die of illness with no medicine. Now he is at the camp in Aranyaprathet, near Cambodia's western border.

At the Khlong Yai camp, on the thin strip of Thai coast on the Gulf of Siam wedged against Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains, a former soldier, Duong Samoeung, was still in a state of stunned dullness after his arrival last Tuesday. His only hope was that he could find another job on a fishing boat. He is heavily tattooed and illiterate.

He left, he said through an interpreter, because "it was unbearable" and he was "afraid I might be killed."

"So little is allowed that you don't know what they might shoot you for," he said. Halfway through his seven-day flight, his two companions were spotted by military patrol, he said. He was the only one to survive.

All accounts of the exodus contain common characteristics. From Phnom Penh as well as from smaller towns and villages, people reported that the exodus from centers of population had been total. Am Lavuth, 22, who was a high school student, said he had

marched in a mass that left the capital on the highway leading north in which patients were being pushed in their hospital beds while others held intravenous feeding bottles over their heads.

He said that he had seen the first arbitrary killings when two Communist women soldiers asked the men in a group of families in front of him whether they were soldiers. He said he had seen five stepping to the side of the road, being told to put their hands behind their backs and being shot one by one by the women with carbines.

Similar incidents continued along the road, according to Mr. Am Lavuth, and such tales recurred in descriptions of the forced exodus from many other parts of Cambodia. There were similarities in reports of sick people, old and young, lying by the side of the road and urging their families to go on. The common assumption is that many of them died at the roadsides.

People were allowed to take only what they could carry. For many this meant their young children or elderly relatives and nothing more. For most it meant mainly food. The people of Phnom Penh, which at the end of the war contained perhaps a quarter of Cambodia's population because refugees had swollen its normal population of 600,000 were first dispersed in directions closets to

where they had been residing. At gathering points a few days out, however, they were told to head in the directions of their villages of origin.

The populations of Battambang and Pailin, two western provincial capitals about 50 miles apart and linked by a dirt road, were driven along that road from opposite ends until tens of thousands gathered at a roadblock near the village of Khum Sneng, nearer to Battambang.

Soeng Boun Loeun, 25, of Pailin, who had made his living by digging gems, said the people were told to move into the dense forest on both sides of the road. Three hills were designated as centers of areas in which groups that he estimated at perhaps 20,000 each were told to settle.

Details of Settlement

His account contains the principal features of the forced settlement of population groups in the countryside that occurred in reports from other regions. He spoke through an interpreter at the Khlong Yai camp, in the presence of six other young men with whom he had escaped and who corroborated details.

Mr. Soeng Boun Loeun's group reached an area in the forest about 20 miles from the road. The people were told to build shelters in a large ring around the hill. They were divided into groups of 10 young men or 10 young women, or family groups containing 10 adults plus their dependents.

Each group was assigned about five acres of shrub land or jungle, to clear and prepare for rice planting. The emphasis throughout was on the self-sufficiency that is a principal theme of the new Cambodia. The people were instructed to find their materials and fashion their tools. Many had to work with their bare hands.

Each person received a milk tin of rice daily and a small quantity of salt. All were told to supplement this with whatever edible roots they could find.

Day Began at 5 A.M.

The day began with the ringing of a gong at 5 A.M. People had two hours to prepare their food, eat and go to their field two miles away. At 11 o'clock they returned to the hut for a break. They had to be back in the field at 1 P.M. and worked until 5 o'clock.

In the field they were supervised occasionally by Communist guards but constantly by boys and girls aged 13 to 16. Younger children are assigned

light field work, while teenagers are told to be the agents and messengers of Angka, the refugees said.

After the field work, members of the group had to search for supplemental food in the forest and draw water about two miles away. Two or three times a week the gong rang again around 7 P.M. for politi-

cal instruction sessions.

Details in Mr. Soeng Boun Loeun's account were repeated, often in identical phrases, by refugees from other regions, indicating that the instructors operated under central guidance.

The political instructions contained these basic themes:

Cambodians must leave their habitations to insure that all are equal. Towns and roads must be cleared out because of an American plan of retaliation directed against them.

Agricultural production is basic and all other production will follow. Therefore, all Cambodians must grow rice and other foods now. What they produce they can exchange with others. Later the government will buy their production and money will be put into use again.

Cambodia will produce everything that Cambodia needs. When illness occurs, the roots of the forest contain all necessary medicines. For clothing, it is necessary to grow cotton and mulberry trees that will feed silkworms. Individuals can wear clothes they still own, but if they look too foreign or fancy, the wearers should find a dark dye.

Cambodians will build their own cars and their own weapons, but industry will be rebuilt later. There will be no more middlemen and no more merchants, only Angka, and life will be cooperative in organization.

Cambodia belongs to no camp or bloc. Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the nominal head of state who continues to live abroad,

is only a person, and Angka works for no person but for the entire people.

The only flags to be seen at Cambodian border points were red, without any symbols. The flag of Prince Sihanouk's Cambodia was nowhere in evidence.

Most refugees interviewed were familiar with the name of Khieu Samphan, Deputy Premier and reported leader of the liberation movement, but they said his name was mentioned by political instructors only in passing and without emphasis on his role.

North Vietnam, which strongly supported the Cambodian Communists and fought their initial battles, and China, which sheltered Prince Sihanouk's exile government, go unmentioned, the refugees reported.

In the destruction of the old, the abandoning of Cambodia's towns seems to have left the most searing imprint. Persons who passed through most of the major towns last month said they had found all empty except for small groups of Communist soldiers.

The only normal activity in a town was reported from Kompong Chhnang, where the port on the Tonle Sap was active at the end of May. Lean Chheng Hak, 19, a former student, said he had seen rice and other foods being loaded and unloaded.

But from Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kompong Thom, Siem Reap, Sisophon, Pursat, Pailin and Kompong Speu came eyewitness reports of deserted streets, crumbling or burned-out houses empty markets and ghostly silence except when

small groups of soldiers walk by. The roads linking the cities are empty.

Lean Meas Sarot, 24 years old, said he had been in Phnom Penh from June 18 to 20. Originally from Kompong Chhnang, he found himself at the beginning of last month at Prek Phnou, about 10 miles north of the capital. The few people working in Phnom Penh—he estimated the number at 400—lived there, he reported.

Mr. Lean Meas Sarot said he had been taken into Phnom Penh with a group of 12 mechanics to repair 10 automobiles at a garage near the central market. Each day after work, he said, his group and others working in the city had to join Communist soldiers, men and women, in planting banana trees.

He said he had helped to plant the trees in front of the royal palace, around the independence monument and in the

gardens of villas. Similar reports of such planting were heard from Battambang.

Mr. Lean Meas Sarat said that other workers were in factories canning milk and making batteries and soap. While he was at Prek Phnou, he said, the milk factory ran out of raw materials and was closed and its workers were sent away.

TV Sets and Radios Burned

He said that the city looked clean but that many houses had been burned. At Stung Kamboth near Prek Phnou, he said, a bonfire was burning for the two or three weeks he spent there. It was fed by Communist soldiers bringing from the houses of the city, by truck and oxcart, loads of goods. They burned television sets, radios, clothing, books, files and furniture, he said.

Now and again, he said, one or two planes could be seen coming in for a landing in the morning and leaving the same afternoon, and he guessed that important persons were meeting. He said he had seen a group of Chinese civilians, all wearing Mao buttons on their white shirts, inspecting the market area, accompanied by an interpreter.

Extreme as the accounts of the Cambodian revolution appear, they seem plausible to people with long experience in the country. Cambodia's most noted site, a Frenchman who long lived there remarked, is Ankor.

This royal capital was abandoned to the jungle early in the 15th century and was not rediscovered until French archeologists restored to the world in the last century. As recently as five years ago, when travel was still feasible in Cambodia, there were men and women who had lived long lives within a few miles of Angkor Wat, the principal temple, without ever having seen it.
