

WXPost MAY 4 1975 Cambodia Convoy

From News Dispatches

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand, May 3—
A 25-truck convoy with 585 weary foreigners who were in Cambodia when it fell to the Khmer Rouge crossed into Thailand today.

They reported that another 250 foreign nationals were still waiting to be evacuated from Phnom Penh.

Eight newsmen in the group said they had agreed to withhold until later details and photographs of their experiences, lest publication now endanger those left behind.

Most of the evacuees were French, but there were 22 other nationalities among them, including some American civilians and seven staff members of the Soviet Embassy in Phnom Penh.

There were 15 members of the Red Cross and six United Nations officials, as well as diplomats of several other countries including the East Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Bulgaria.

One known casualty was one of 20 Indians who, according to an Indian diplomat here, broke his leg "jumping into the French embassy."

Those left behind were reported to be in the French Embassy compound in Phnom Penh, where foreigners took refuge after the capital fell on April 17. The French consul, 16 journalists of various nationalities, about 100 Pakistanis and nationals of some other countries were among them.

Those who arrived today said that those who remained were in generally good condition and probably would soon start on the same arduous four-day truck journey over more than 200 miles of war-damaged roads.

"We have agreed to impose on ourselves a news embargo and we will not write anything about what happened in Phnom Penh or about our trip until the last person in the French compound has left and reached Thailand," Sydney Schanberg of the New York Times said

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in a statement on behalf of the eight American, French, German, British and Swedish newsmen who crossed the border. "Any newsman who violates the agreement puts the lives of those people in danger and must accept the consequences."

The other evacuees were given a strong lecture by French officials not to say anything to reporters about what happened in Phnom Penh or about their journey until others had been brought out.

A joint statement by the eight journalists said only that the convoy had taken nearly four days to make

the 250-mile journey, traveling between 4 p.m. and 11 p.m. each day and pausing to pick up 90 persons of various nationalities in Battambang, Cambodia's second largest city.

Originally there were 1,300 persons in the embassy but several hundred Cambodians, South Vietnamese and Chinese had been removed, the statement said.

Jon Swain of the London Sunday Times added, "We cannot emphasize enough that the people who are running Cambodia today are serious people, purposeful people, disciplined people, and all the journalists and French officials in the embassy agree it is better if we say nothing at all."

There were indications that the evacuees had undergone tense and emotional experiences with at least some physical hardship: French officials had reported earlier that many were suffering from dysentery and that the embassy had run short of food and water.

The French government had originally requested permission to fly out the foreigners, but the Khmer Rouge refused, charging that the embassy had been used to harbor "war criminals."

German television cameraman Christian Froehder, pushing a bicycle laden with baggage, was the first to cross into Thailand.

A number of reunited couples embraced and wept with relief when they met on the small bridge at the border.

The four American newsmen still in Cambodia were identified by officials as Dennis Cameron, Lee Rudekevich, Al Rockoff and Richard Boyle.

France said Saturday it will send a Boeing 747 jet to Thailand to airlift the refugees to France.

[In a brief report published in early editions of the Sunday Times in London, Swain said: "The Cambodia that the victorious Khmer Rouge have just inherited after five years of conflict... is a wilderness of destruction."

[He said the main reason the journey from Phnom Penh to the Thai border took so long "is because Cambodia today is a land of destroyed bridges and abandoned roads. Some roads are so bad that at times we traveled at under five miles an hour. Heavy thunderstorms and blistering sun added to the general discomfort of the 600 foreigners who were crammed like sardines into a fleet of army lorries."

[Swain said the Khmer Rouge gave the travelers food and cigarettes and "periodically stopped the convoy to allow us to forage for coconuts which we split open and ate hungrily."]