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Report on Premier Was Secondhand

Bangkok

A French doctor who said Thursday that former Cambodian Premier Long Boret and Republican party leader Sirik Matak were shot dead at the Phnom Penh Sporting Club told Agence France-Presse here yesterday that he could not provide proof because the report reached him secondhand.

Bernard Piquart, who was chief surgeon at the French-run Calmette Hospital in the Cambodian capital, seemed embarrassed about the wide publicity given to his reports, which included testimony that he had seen 300 bodies with their throats cut in the central market of Phnom Penh.

Piquart, who crossed the Cambodian border Thursday with the last group of refugees from the French Embassy in Phnom Penh, said yesterday he had talked too much and had "never seen all of that."

Regarding his report about the alleged execution of Long Boret and Prince Sirik Matak, a cousin of Prince Norodom Si'hanouk, Piquart said that a Khmer Rouge lieutenant told him on Friday, April 18, the day after the Khmer Rouge takeover of the city; that the former premier and General Saksuth Sakhon, former defense minister, had been shot dead.

"Since I knew that General Saksuth Sakhon had managed to escape to Bangkok, I was immediately extremely mistrustful about that statement," Piquart said yesterday.

Concerning the report of 300 people having been executed at the central market, Piquart said yesterday that interns with whom he worked had seen "some dead." He added that he himself had seen no bodies.

Observers here emphasized that it is necessary to treat all reports from people who have just left Phnom Penh with suspicion, be-

cause most of the people were isolated in the French Embassy since shortly after the fall of Phnom Penh, unable to learn about anything going on outside.

Agence France-Presse