

High Khmer Toll Is Cited in Saigon

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This story was filed on June 25, but was not received until yesterday. UPI said delays of the cables, routed through Hanoi, are frequent but it could not detect whether censorship was involved.

SAIGON — Hundreds, and possibly thousands, of city dwellers have died on the roads since the Khmer Rouge ordered them out of Phnom Penh and other major Cambodian cities after seizing power last April 17, according to numerous refugee reports reaching this South Vietnamese capital.

These refugees also indicated that many Cambodians have been fleeing their country since the Khmer Rouge takeover for the relative safety and prosperity of South Vietnam.

City dwellers have suffered heavily since the victorious Khmer Rouge forces ordered them into the countryside, with deaths in the hundreds and possibly in the thousands occurring along the roads out of Phnom Penh alone, according to numerous refugee reports gathered today (June 25.)

The reports substantiate the claim, made on June 23, by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger that there had been "a rather heavy toll" among the Cambodians since the Khmer Rouge victory. *

Refugees have indicated in interviews with UPI reporters in Saigon that most of the ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese residents of Cambodia are heading for Saigon, while Khmers are staying in the Mekong Delta towns of Vietnam, where there are already 1 million ethnic Cambodians.

For most refugees, the en-

tire trip from Cambodia to Vietnam is by foot and takes up to six weeks.

Many of the refugees already have relatives in South Vietnam, who have taken them in at least temporarily. All those interviewed said they had reported to the new South Vietnamese government, which so far has accepted their presence without comment.

Those without relatives are often housed in pagodas.

Virtually all the refugees are hungry when they reach Saigon, but there are no reported cases of starvation.

On the road, it is another case. Refugees have said Cambodian authorities gave them only survival rations of rice and that hundreds of mostly old people and children have died along the route. There was no way to tell how many have died in the trek from the Cambodian cities, but reports indicate that the toll has been heavy.

The Khmer Rouge cleared the cities less than a day after taking power in Phnom Penh, telling residents they feared American bombing raids on the capital because of their victory.

Radio Phnom Penh has indicated that at least some of the residents have returned to Phnom Penh, but other sources indicated that only Khmer Rouge and their close followers are in the capital.

Other than the Chinese and Vietnamese residents, most of whom held Cambodian citizenship, there is only one known foreigner in Cambodia—the French wife of a Cambodian man.

All other foreigners—including newsmen—were expelled from the country in late April.

*See NYT 13 Jun 75, David A. Andelman;

SFC 4 Jul 75, Richard Boyle