

Cambodian Villages Bare as People Work Fields

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Sept. 2—Two villages on the road to Battambang in neighboring Cambodia were deserted as a visitor from Sri Lanka passed through them last week.

The people, he reported, were out plowing or planting, one with the aid of a wing tip from a United States plane. The countryside was green, the visitor said, with rice in various stages of cultivation.

This picture was given by Errol de Silva, a journalist from Sri Lanka, who was allowed to enter Cambodia last Friday for a 20-hour visit. He began it by insuring more than four miles from the Thai border and was taken into custody by a Cambodian soldier. With hands tied with a pink and white scarf, he was driven to Battambang, the provincial capital, where he was kept overnight.

During his visit Mr. de Silva talked with a high-ranking officer who said he was one of three officials administering the province of Battambang, high borders Thailand.

The officer, identified only as Pouvong, said, according to the journalist, that the Government in Phnom Penh had recently sent representatives to the provinces to promise a new republic with Prince Norodom Sihanouk as President, Khieu Samphan as Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense and commander of the armed forces, and Teng Sary as Foreign Minister. The officer said he knew little else about the intentions of Phnom Penh.

The journalist said he had been told that all movement in the country across provincial boundaries was prohibited. The only exception, he said, is for trucks supplied by the United States to the former Cambodian Government. They reportedly

Visitor Finds All Movement Limited in Countryside Except for Trucks

leave Battambang every other day to carry rice and gasoline bought from Thailand.

Mr. de Silva said supplies were purchased daily from Thai smugglers at Khong Le, near the officially closed border with Thailand, and stored Battambang for redistribution throughout the country.

Transactions are reportedly in United States Currency, and the journalist quoted Mr. Pouvong as having said he had enough for "many months, even years."

Displaying a thick wad of notes, all in \$100 denomination, the officer added that former President Lol Noi and his followers had taken out a lot of gold but left behind a great deal of American money.

All local currency, on the

other hand, has reportedly been confiscated. Mr. de Silva said he saw a huge stack of old riel notes in the camp where he interviewed Mr. Pouvong and saw wads of 500 riel notes being made into bundles and burned to cook food. He was told that any found in possession of such money would be shot.

Rice, some pork, vegetables and salt, are reportedly distributed free by the soldiers to those working in the fields according to a quota system. Everyone must work in the fields, Mr. de Silva said.

Asked about starvation and forced labor, Mr. Pouvong was said to have replied: "did you see any? Only people who run away have nothing to eat. We give food to all our brothers, even our former enemies, but they must work in the fields to build up the country. Everyone must work. If not, we use the law, and the law now is the law of the soldier, the law of the gun."