

Kampuchea, Three Years Old

For the First Time, a Glimpse of How Life Has Been Transformed by the Communist-led Revolutionaries of What Was Formerly Cambodia



These shots of the new Kampuchea, its workers, peasants and

In late March and early April, a group of Yugoslav journalists toured Kampuchea, formerly Cambodia, and then Vietnam. Their report on Kampuchea is the first by professional journalists since the Communist forces took Phnom Penh three years ago. Some of their films have appeared on CBS news but these excerpts from the Belgrade newspaper Politika are the first written account to appear in the American press.

It should be kept in mind that although Yugoslavia is also ruled by a Communist Party, in many ways Yugoslav thinking is far from that of the Kampuchean Communist; suspicious that a note of irony is intended in some statements may well be justified.

—J.S.

Phnom Penh. Before Lon Nol's 1970 pro-American coup against Prince Sihanouk, Phnom Penh had between 500,000 and 600,000 inhabitants. During the war, people poured into the cities as a result of social pressures and the American bombing. By the time the liberation forces entered in 1973, the population of Phnom Penh had reached about two million, in the opinion of most foreigners.

The population is now officially about 200,000, but as far as we could see there were lights in at most every fifth or sixth house, so it is hardly likely that the city is inhabited by more than 20,000 people, including soldiers.

The National Bank building lies in ruins; our guides told us it was destroyed two days after the liberation of the city in the course of repeated enemy diversionary

attacks. The bank's safes are buried under piles of rubble. Whether they are full or, as is more probable, empty, is a matter of no concern: Kampuchea has abolished money as a means of exchange.

The door of the post office where three years ago the last dispatches of foreign correspondents were transmitted around the world is now covered with an iron screen. Desks are dusty and sparrows fly through the silent ventilators.

Scenes of destruction alternate with repaired or undamaged objects and buildings. In front of an empty villa, its yard overgrown with weeds, stands a battered old abandoned schoolbus, but nearby workers bustle past the wavy palms on the broad avenues and trim the grass. Along with their shovels and canteens, some of the workers carry guns, carelessly thrown over their shoulders.

In a tailor shop amidst the half-destroyed cupboards lay a pile of half-sewn caps. Yet later we saw a group of young women carefully whitewashing the walls of one of the recently re-opened factories. Industry is beginning to function again—but a majority of the workers are new.

We heard several reasons for the evacuation of Phnom Penh and the country's other cities. One was that it was difficult to feed the people in postwar conditions. A second suggested that the removal of the inhabitants made it possible to destroy the foreign intelligence network, chiefly American, which was attempting to obstruct the consolidation of the new regime. A third asserts that there were about three million people in Kampu-

chea's cities at the time of the liberation "who ate a lot and didn't do a siltch of work." Our hosts stated that the city dwellers were involved in delinquency, criminality, speculation, prostitution and decadent behavior.

Now, our hosts told us, between two and a half and three million people who were in the cities at the time of the liberation are alongside the "poor and lower-middle peasants," in the rural co-operatives, in the rice fields, digging canals and building dams and irrigation

We visited the Leay Bo cooperative, not far from the dusty city of Takeo, in southern Kampuchea. It contains, we learned, about 10,000 people divided into work brigades. Superficially, the cooperative resembles a Chinese commune, because the political terminology employed by officials is similar. Nevertheless the differences are substantial.

While Chinese communes employ a system of payment according to work, in these cooperatives work-related payments have been eliminated. Complete equality prevails: every member of the cooperative receives one black linen suit of clothes from the state every year. According to our guides, each person receives one third of a ton of rice annually. This more or less coincides with the statement of Prime Minister Pol Pot that every Kampuchean receives 312 kilograms of rice a year. Every member of the coop receives six kilograms of salt a year. We didn't get the impression that the Kampuchean countryside is suffering any food shortages; rice is undoubtedly ample in this land rich in



capital city, were taken by a Yugoslav film crew which accompanied the journalists on their tour.

water and canals, and fish is similarly abundant; the climate assures that anything planted has to bear fruit, so there are also plenty of vegetables. The cooperative exchanges goods with other cooperatives on the basis of prices set by the state.

During our talk with activists of the cooperative, the women sat on one side and the men on the other. The atmosphere was, to put it mildly, very solemn, perhaps because we were the first foreigners to come there; we had considerable difficulty persuading the women to smile when we took pictures.

The conversation was held in the dining room, a newly constructed teakwood building with air circulating through the windows—which we hadn't expected to find. We were told that 650 people eat there and similar buildings existed elsewhere in the cooperative.

When we visited a village primary school, a geography class was in session for boys and a Khmer language class for girls. The teacher we were introduced to had never taught before; she had taken her present job as her party task. Obediently responding to her instruction, the children sang the song "The Rich Green Harvest in Kampuchea" for us.

"We are educating our technicians and through them we are raising our technical level," Prime Minister Pol Pot had told us in a two-hour interview. "They participate in production, they obtain concrete knowledge, positive and negative, which allows them to make progress. At the same time, this type of education can follow a definite curriculum; after

they complete it, the technicians can finish their studies, even abroad in friendly countries."

He also said that the literacy rate is 100 percent, a network of clinics has been established in the villages and cooperatives and malaria has been 90 percent eradicated. Crafts, he explained, will foster "an orientation toward industrialization" in the cooperatives.

One of the most impressive aspects of Kampuchea is the construction of huge projects such as dams and complex irrigation systems. One dam site we visited had a work force of 20,000. Many of those working at the dozen or so dams we visited were in the 900-1,200 member "mobile brigades." We were told that these brigades were comprised of young volunteers eager to help build their country. Most of the men and women in them are between 19- and 29-years old. They live in open-air shelters and often after finishing one project they move to another. Among those we met were young former bonzes (Buddhist monks) and students from the now-suspended high schools and universities who, carried away by enthusiasm for their work, were forgetting their French but acquiring other skills.

At many of these construction sites, as in the rice fields, we saw small children working away. In fact, in the course of our travels through villages we often met boys and girls with spades and shovels instead of schoolbags in the morning.

At the Trapping Tam dar site, not far from Siem Reap, a city which gained fame

during the war of liberation, we were told that former city-dwellers make up about 30 percent of the workforce. The construction crews work from 6 A.M. to 10:30 A.M. and from 1:30 to 5:30 in the afternoon. They have three free days a month, when there are lectures and discussions of work problems. At the project they may even become engaged and marry, with the consent of the leadership. The brigaders communicate with friends and relatives by means of local couriers who carry letters; Kampuchea currently has no internal postal system.

Some supervisors of the work groups were armed, although that was not a striking phenomenon. Many people in Kampuchea engaged in physical labor carry guns; this is probably a carryover from the revolutionary days and it is also possible that the army has its own production units which help the civilian workers.

The emphasis on increasing rice production appears to have two basic rationales. One is economic, although that sounds illogical in a country which has abolished money. Nevertheless, rice is still the chief product which Kampuchea can sell abroad to earn money for machinery and technical equipment. The other rationale is strategic: Pol Pot has expressed the hope that the Kampuchean population will quickly grow to 15 or 20 million people (it is presently about seven or eight million). More people, naturally, require more food.

The new Kampuchean regime has five distinctive revolutionary characteristics,



CBS News Photo

One is the continuing and substantial revolutionary secrecy. Although the Communist Party, which led the revolution, publicly revealed its existence last fall, only a small number of its leaders is known. When speaking, Kampuchean Communists habitually use quiet tones, almost a half-whisper. In our travels from province to province, on our long journey through roadways in unbearable heat, we were efficiently transferred from hand to hand with the help of some secret and barely noticeable communications.

A second significant characteristic of the new regime is the absence of any civil government aside from the National Assembly. There are no district or provincial assemblies nor executive organs. Administrative affairs and political mobilization are the responsibility of the party committees. The size of the party committees does not appear to be proportional to the number of workers in a given establishment or to the number of inhabitants in the locality. One small factory in Phnom Penh has a party committee of seven people for 300 workers. The party committee in the Kampong Som harbor, with about 6,000 workers, has only five members and it is directly responsible to the Ministry of Communications.

With the exception of unions on the factory and enterprise level, there are no cultural, technical, military, sport, humanitarian, professional or other organizations in Kampuchea. Our hosts explained that because there are only two

classes in the country, peasants and workers, it isn't necessary to establish special social-political organizations, except for the Communist Party, which directly administers all affairs. Workers are organized in unions, peasants in cooperatives; that is sufficient for the system to function.

The third characteristic of the regime which struck us—probably because we expected a highly-organized system of political indoctrination—is the absence, even in mild form, of political indoctrination. According to our hosts, not one Marxist-Leninist work has been translated into Khmer during the three years since the liberation. There is no time for theory now, they say. We got the impression that ideological-political work is undeveloped at the grassroots level. When asked what political topics they had discussed recently, workers responded that they talked about national defense and fulfilling the production plan.

The political terminology in official use is closest to the Chinese. There is no doubt that Mao Tse-tung's ideas, particularly in his works written during the Chinese revolution, inspired the political and ideological thought of Pol Pot. It is also certain that the strategy and tactics of the Kampuchean liberation army, especially in the final operations surrounding the cities with the support of the rural population, indicate a significant application of the experiences of the Chinese revolution to the concrete conditions of Kampuchea. The fourth noteworthy characteristic of

this society is the principal of egalitarianism, really "collective socialism." The absence of commercial relations or of any kind of compensation according to work leads in two directions. There is highly centralized state control which obligates the state to distribute everything from rice to the one annual suit of clothes to each of its citizens. At the same time there is a fundamentalist radicalism in interpreting the concept of relying on one's own resources.

The Kampuchean have proudly rejected international economic aid because they believe that they can develop their country with their own resources. Within Kampuchea this self-reliance often takes extraordinary forms. One cooperative destroyed houses in order to re-cycle the iron stilts customarily used in Kampuchean buildings; in the neighboring cooperative there was an iron junkyard which no one had used yet. Trucks filled with bricks for housing construction adjacent to a factory were rolling through the city streets while only a mile or so away there are empty apartment buildings whose former tenants have left for a distant cooperative.

The fifth and last distinctive feature of this society—one which explains the necessity for developing utopian visions of the future—is the very evident sense of national pride. It is reminiscent of the behavior of a quiet and introverted person whose opinions were hardly taken into account earlier, but who now speaks out unexpectedly, but invariably passionately.

Cape Verde, Three Years Old

The PAIGC Government is Fighting Drought With Popular Mobilization and Rock Dikes



Frits Eisenloeffel

Digging wells and installing irrigation pumps at Ribeira de Aguas Belas.

BY FRITS EISENLOEFFEL

Like Kampuchea, described in the previous article (page 14), Cape Verde has been ruled by a Marxist government since it achieved independence three and a half years ago. The Cape Verdean approach to development offers an interesting contrast to that of Kampuchea. Much of the thinking behind the programs described below can be traced directly to the theories developed by Amílcar Cabral, who founded the ruling PAIGC party and led it until his assassination by the Portuguese during the war of liberation. Cabral's books have also had a profound influence on many Africans in other countries, as well as on many American radicals.

—J.S.

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Ribeira de Aguas Belas. The name on the map means "River of Beautiful Waters," but amidst the rock and gravel of the riverbed only a few tenacious coconut palms indicate that somewhere, deep in the ground, some water must exist.

The sun-scorched badlands are on the island of Santiago, one of ten peaks in an underwater volcanic mountain range which reach high enough to break the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. This strange archipelago was named the Cape Verde Islands ("Green Cape"—another misnomer) by the Portuguese who ruled it from the 15th century until 1975. The Portuguese established a small plantation economy, which quickly succumbed to drought; for centuries the chief industry was servicing the flourishing slave trade between Africa and the Americas.

The islands won their independence a year after the overthrow of fascism in Portugal. Although geographic conditions had prevented an armed liberation

struggle, the political independence movement was already far advanced under the Marxist leadership of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde (PAIGC) which, until a merger is effected, has the distinction of being the only party in the world to rule two independent nations: Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau.

Independence has not brought rain. In fact, hardly a drop has fallen for nine years, and last year there was only one fifth of the average annual rainfall during the previous eight years. This is the same drought which has afflicted the Sahel region of Africa to the east, and a continuation of the weather which has caused 200,000 deaths during the 20th century in a country which currently has a population of 300,000; another 300,000 Cape Verdeans are forced to live abroad.

On my last visit, August 1974, there were still a few non-irrigated slopes where corn could grow. A brief nighttime shower