

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]





uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
ET POSTDOCTORALES



FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

Matt Galway

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (History)

GRADE / DEGREE

Department of History

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

From the Claws of the Tiger to the Jaws of the Crocodile:
Pol Pot, Maoism, and Ultra-Nationalist Genocide in Cambodia, 1975-1979

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Micheline Lessard

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Viren Murthy

Meredith Terrette

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

From the Claws of the Tiger to the Jaws of the Crocodile:
Pol Pot, Maoism, and Ultra-Nationalist Genocide in Cambodia, 1975-1979

By Matt Galway

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in History

University of Ottawa

©Matt Galway, Ottawa, Canada, 2010



Library and Archives
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-65974-8
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-65974-8

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

Abstract

From the Claws of the Tiger to the Jaws of the Crocodile: Pol Pot, Maoism, and Ultra-Nationalist Genocide in Cambodia, 1975-1979

Matt Galway

Dr. Micheline Lessard

2010

This thesis argues that Pol Pot was an unsophisticated political theorist and that he attempted to localize Maoism to serve his virulently ultra-nationalist agenda against Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese. This is contrary to the existing assertions that Pol Pot was either a Maoist fundamentalist or adopted an ideology close to Maoism. The thesis postulates that Pol Pot used Maoism as a framework from which to launch his Khmer revivalist anti-Vietnamese program. The Cambodian leader's revolution was intended to "outdo" Mao, based solely on the use of antiquated Khmer agricultural developments, and surpass the grandeur of the great Angkor kings. This evidence can be found when one compares Pol Pot's writings, speeches, and slogans with Mao's own political works. Pol Pot was fascinated with Maoist rhetoric but never took action in building industry or improving social welfare. The Cambodian leader's overarching goal was to achieve a uniquely "pure" Khmer communism while also eradicating the entire Vietnamese race.

The following thesis provides an analysis of Pol Pot's early political life, examines his infatuation with Mao Zedong and the Chinese revolution, and details the Cambodian leader's unique interpretation of the Chinese Chairman's political ideology. This thesis also aspires to shed new insight into the study of Pol Pot's ultra-nationalist inspiration and disbar the convenient assumption by current scholars that he was merely a Maoist fundamentalist. In Pol Pot's attempts to create

a uniquely Khmer communist ideology, he lost sight of the class struggle and espoused a racialist agenda based on Cambodian historical notions of revenge. These forms evolved from a mere grudge to notions of disproportionate and total revenge and dictated the Cambodian leader's treatment of the Vietnamese. Pol Pot was obsessed with Cambodia's long lost greatness and possessed an inherent need to reestablish the utopian Angkor kingdom in the present while punishing those responsible for its demise. In the end, his legacy was one of unbridled bloodshed that led to nearly three million deaths and the near-total destruction of his country.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am delighted to acknowledge the wealth of support that I received during the research and writing processes of this thesis project. First and foremost, I'd like to recognize and thank Dr. Micheline Lessard, my mentor and thesis advisor, for all of her assistance, tutelage, guidance and support. Her encouragement and recommendations made my goals attainable. I am also grateful to Dr. Viren Murthy for stimulating my interest in Chairman Mao Zedong, the concept of Chinese Marxism, and the various theories associated with the enigmatic Chinese leader. I would also like to thank Dr. Meredith Terretta for challenging many of my existing notions of Marxism and Post-colonialism.

I am also grateful for the tireless help and encouragement I received at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DCCAM) in Phnom Penh. While many were responsible, I'd like to personally thank Youk Chhang, the Director of Research at DCCAM, and Kokthay Eng, for their assistance in providing crucial primary source materials and reams of photocopies that made this thesis project possible. I am also appreciative for all the assistance provided at the Olin Library at Cornell University. The Asia collections staff was courteous and supportive in all my research endeavors and provided access to thousands of rare photos, written letters, Khmer Rouge microfilms, and Party biographies. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support throughout my academic career.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
Part One: a Man of Two Lives	14
Part Two: Politique Potentielle- The Beginning	25
Part Three: The Birth of the Crocodile- Sar, Cambodia, and the Vietnamese	36
CHAPTER TWO	
Part One: To Enter the Tiger's Den: Evaluating Pol Pot Ideology and Maoism	48
Part Two: To Unleash the Tiger: Pol Pot and Mao's Revolutionary Strategy	56
Part Three: The Tiger's Claws : Pol Pot and Mao's Socialist Reforms	63
CHAPTER THREE	
Part One: Confronting the Crocodile- Sinification vs. Khmerization	83
Part Two: Den Turned to Swamp- Pol Pot and the Question of Angkar	95
Part Three: Like a Crocodile Submerged in the Swamp- Pol Pot and the Cult of Isolation	110
CHAPTER FOUR	
Part One: To "Purify" the Swamp- Pol Pot, Xenophobia, and Race Hygiene	125
Part Two: Separating Crocodiles from Alligators- Pol Pot and Racial Difference	137
Part Three: Disproportionate Revenge and the	

Mass Killing of Ethnic Vietnamese	152
Conclusion	167
Bibliography	171

Introduction

Pol Pot's ideology was the same as Mao- a simple method of thought; an extreme point of view; an illusion without reality; subjectivist. They worshipped the role of the peasant- the nature of the peasants- the poorer the more radical and progressive.... They are anti-intellectual. They are religious in character- their leaders are like God- for example Mao and Pol Pot. This is feudalism in character. They believed that Maoism plus muscle equals success.¹

- Thanh Tin, Vietnamese War Correspondent, 1983

On the 17th of April, 1975, large groups of armed peasants clad in black uniforms and colorful *krama*², many in their early teens, surrounded the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. Their arrival and subsequent takeover, “like year one of the French Revolution,” was to usher in “an entirely new phase of Cambodian history.”³ The new regime known as the Khmer Rouge⁴ immediately exerted its radical doctrine with iron-fisted totalitarian governance and a mass exodus of all major cities. In the five year reign of the Khmer Rouge in the newly named People's Republic of Democratic Kampuchea, the economy and much of the country's infrastructure vanished, the upper classes were targeted for total obliteration, and nearly three million Cambodians of Khmer, Cham, Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese descent were killed. All of these processes were guided

¹ Thanh Tin, “Notes of Discussion with Thanh Tin, Deputy Editor of Nhan Dan, Former Editor of Quan Doi Nhan Dan, War Correspondent, Colonel in the Vietnamese People's Army, Two Talks”, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 1 June 1983, 28.

² Krama: traditional Cambodian scarf with a multitude of uses. Kramas often contain gingham patterns and are colored blue, red and purple. The Khmer Rouge popularized the red krama and issued them as insignias for their cadres.

³ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000) 254.

Chandler, David, *Brother Number One*, David Chandler ed., Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999.

⁴ Khmer Rouge: Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the then-crown prince of Cambodia, used the nickname to describe the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The term means *Red Khmers*.

by the party's premier official, the self-named Pol Pot,⁵ and his secretive "Organization" called the *Angkar*.⁶ Pol Pot's brutal vision of Cambodia's new future began from "Year Zero"⁷ in an arbitrary attempt to start the country's history anew and "wipe the slate clean."⁸

What was the ideological inspiration that motivated Pol Pot's economically – misguided and virulently xenophobic revolution? Genocide survivor Haing S. Ngor, and historians of Cambodia such as Henri Locard, Serge Thion, Ben Kiernan, and Alex Hinton, have all recognized Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong as a major influential figure in the formation of Pol Pot's political ideology. The problem is that much of the history written about Pol Pot's ideology has been equated or written with Maoism as a starting point to understand Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge rule from 1975 to 1979. However, these histories have failed to identify the role of Pol Pot's ultra-nationalism⁹ in the race-driven genocide. This thesis argues that Pol Pot was an unsophisticated political theorist and that he attempted to "localize"¹⁰ Maoism. He also used a uniquely perverted appropriation

⁵ Pol Pot: Born Saloth Sar, took the nom de guerre Pol Pot meaning *Politique Potentielle*.

⁶ Angkar: Meaning "to organize," was the central feature of Pol Pot's attempt to Khmerize Maoism.

⁷ Year Zero: the concept of starting Cambodian history over from day one.

⁸ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁹ Ultra-nationalism: a form of nationalism that is characterized by an extreme devotion to or advocacy of the interests of a nation, regardless of the effect on any other nations, nationalities, or religious groups.

¹⁰ Localization: the gradual adjustment of a foreign precept or cultural practice to unique local contexts. See O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999) 55-57.

of Maoism to guide his ultra-nationalist intentions. The Cambodian leader's revolution was intended to "outdo" Mao and the great Angkor kings in an effort to achieve "pure" communism and to eradicate the Vietnamese race.

To researchers of the Pol Pot regime, the degree of a Maoist influence, however, varies from fundamentalism to a combination of various ideals. Dr. Haing S. Ngor, a former prisoner of the Khmer Rouge, contends that the Khmer Rouge transplanted China's revolution to Cambodia without any differences. He asserts that Pol Pot's fascination with the Cultural Revolution led to the Khmer Rouge imitating the same policies in Democratic Kampuchea. Ngor describes his position in the following statement:

They wanted to eliminate everything that was not Cambodian. But they were hypocrites. Except for their dark skins, everything about the Khmer Rouge was alien, from China. They borrowed their ideology from Mao Zedong, like the concepts of the Great Leap Forward. Sending their intellectuals to the countryside to learn from the peasants was an idea of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.¹¹

Here, Ngor states that the blame for the horrors in Cambodia should be extended to the Chinese. For four years, he claimed, he saw "Chinese trucks, Chinese-made weapons and uniforms and had heard Chinese-style propaganda music."¹² In his view, almost everything about the Khmer Rouge, from the jargon about "independence-sovereignty" to sending the city people to learn from the peasants in the countryside, was "an imitation of Mao Zedong's revolution."¹³

Historian Surinder Sing Sethi is of a similar opinion. While also arguing that Pol Pot was a Maoist fundamentalist, Sethi states that Beijing "used Pol Pot as its

¹¹ Ngor, 201.

¹² Ngor, 364.

¹³ Ngor 364.

henchman in Cambodia to pursue the policy of Maoism in that country.”¹⁴ In addition, Sethi asserts that Pol Pot hid “under the camouflage of hypocritical phrases about building a ‘democratic, neutral and prosperous’ Cambodia.”¹⁵ He concludes by stating that Pol Pot actively prepared for “the establishment of a ‘new order’ in the country and for its total Maoization.”¹⁶

However, there is more to the Khmer Rouge and the brutal genocide than Ngor and Sethi identify. While one cannot deny Pol Pot’s adoption of Mao’s ideas, there is evidence of a clear misapplication. For example, Mao’s revolution did not encourage industrialization in its propaganda while opting for backwardness in the countryside. Nor was the Chinese revolution fueled by xenophobia and racism at any time during the Helmsman’s reign. Ngor also assumes that Pol Pot entirely understood Mao’s policies and the intentions behind them.¹⁷ Rather, it is logical to suggest the opposite. Ngor recognized Sar’s unsophisticated nature throughout his comfortably sheltered life.¹⁸

¹⁴ Surinder Singh Sethi, *Kampuchean Tragedy: Maoism in Action* (New Delhi, India: Kalamkar Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 1980) 16.

¹⁵ Sethi, 25.

¹⁶ Sethi, 25.

¹⁷ It can be argued that Pol Pot’s failed efforts to industrialize were caused by the gap between ideology and its implementation in reproducing society. However, no effort was made by the regime to bring in the necessary capital to industrialize. With all existing factories abandoned and the entire population mobilized to harvest rice year-round, the likelihood of Pol Pot’s efforts to industrialize were improbable from the start. Nevertheless, his slogans borrowed from Mao’s Great Leap Forward and promised immediate success with his radical program. See Henri Locard, *Pol Pot’s Little Red Book: The Sayings of Angkar*, (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004), 61-98.

¹⁸ Ngor, 401. Ngor states that “Pol Pot the maker of policy was the same as Saloth Sar the mediocre student. He did not realize that Mao’s Cultural Revolution was already a disaster and that Stalin’s attempts had set the Soviet economy back by decades.”

Historian Henri Locard is of a similar mind. He fervently believes that Pol Pot “tried to plant the parasitic seeds of Maoism on Cambodian soil.”¹⁹ He postulates that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge “recycled twice-failed Maoist formulae.”²⁰ While Locard asserts that Pol Pot was a fundamentalist, he also suggests that nationalist fervor forced Cambodia’s revolution to set sights on surpassing Mao’s and achieving pure communism. He states that “even if the Khmer Rouge applied the lessons of Mao, including the most radical ones, to the letter, their fierce nationalist pride incited them to go even beyond the wildest schemes of the Great Helmsman.”²¹ The Cambodian leader’s attempts to achieve what Mao could not through the implementation of regressive and idealistic totalitarian forms of total governance gave rise to his idea of a uniquely pure and clean Khmer revolution.²²

Pol Pot’s idea of a clean Khmer revolution was the memory of Cambodia’s past greatness and near-homogenous society of Angkor.²³ Elizabeth Becker’s central argument is that Pol Pot was inspired by traditional forms of Cambodian government. She draws frequent comparisons between Pol Pot’s regime and King Jayavarman VII’s absolute monarchical rule of the twelfth century. There were “precedents in Cambodian history for some of the bleak, brutal aspects of Khmer Rouge rule,” since she postulates that the Angkor kings “were forerunners of the

¹⁹ Locard, 5.

²⁰ Locard, 21-22.

²¹ Locard, 69.

²² Locard, 69.

²³ Angkor: the ruins of Angkor located in Siem Reap that were built by the great Cambodian rulers. The city of Angkor Thom was erected by Cambodia’s greatest ruler, Jayavarman VII. Pol Pot held Angkor Wat, Cambodia’s national symbol on every one of its national crests and flags since independence, was held as the symbol of Khmer superiority, persistence, and eternal greatness.

Cambodian communist leadership.”²⁴ Pol Pot’s “utopia” was based on Jayavarman VII’s Angkor Wat and served as the traditional symbol of “Khmerness.”²⁵ Pol Pot’s own interpretation of Khmer nationalism was based on this notion of long lost greatness and was further emphasized in his firm belief in the unique strength and spiritual force within Cambodian natural characteristics. He used rhetoric inspired by Mao’s Great Leap Forward propaganda to push forward a rapid industrialization program in his speeches and writings whether genuinely inspired by or in part by Mao Zedong’s own methods.

Historian Serge Thion argues that Pol Pot converted to a set of ideals known as Maoism while in Paris. He states that in their Paris period, Pol Pot and his group had “already felt an attraction for the new China” since their revolution “was more akin to theirs, socially and culturally, and also more contemporary than the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.”²⁶ In this way, China was seen as “a general abstract pattern of socialist revolution, with a complete package of ways and means to realize national union against foreign intervention, control over the peasant masses, strict methods to organize the Party and army, and so on.”²⁷ Pol Pot reinforces this assertion in the following passage:

We have reached an important turning point. We have mastered how to undertake the revolution in our country... Our past experiences, notably... in using political violence and, in part, armed violence, from the end of 1966 to the middle of 1967 have convinced us that organizationally and ideologically our people are

²⁴ Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia’s Revolution and its People*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998) 200.

²⁵ Ozay Mehmet, “Development in a War-torn Society: What Next Cambodia?”, *Third World Quarterly* 18, No. 4, (1997) 675.

²⁶ Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” 21.

²⁷ Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” 21.

ready... to launch a true people's war. We are now exerting leadership in the country as a whole.²⁸

Here, it is clearly shown that many of the national liberation movement tactics that helped Cambodia achieve independence were inspired by Maoism. The ways in which Maoism inspired Cambodia's anti-colonial front will be discussed at a greater length in the second chapter.

In spite of Mao's military influences on the Cambodian nationalists, the strong moral overtones of Mao's political thought and "its disregard for material trivialities *only* fit comfortably with the Chinese Confucian mixture of morality, righteousness and intellectualism."²⁹ Since Cambodia did not possess a Confucian intellectual tradition or the same breadth of population and industrial development, Maoism was wholly incompatible with Pol Pot's interpretation of Khmer culture. To reconcile these differences, Pol Pot preached a return to the idyllic Angkorean society through the employment of skewed and completely misunderstood Maoist reforms. As historian Ben Kiernan states, Pol Pot's nationalism, which revered Angkor as the pinnacle of Khmer society, developed to become virulently anti-Vietnamese in nature.

Kiernan argues that Pol Pot's ideology was close to Maoism but misapplied by virtue of traditional anti-Vietnamese chauvinism. He states that Pol Pot "distorted and exaggerated the Chinese model just as he and his fellow communists drew on extremes of chauvinist and racist ideologies which had roots in traditional Khmer

²⁸ Pol Pot, "Lettre du Comite Permanent du CC du CPK au Bureau Politique du CC du CPC", (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Oct. 6 1967), From Short, 170.

²⁹ Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" 22. Emphasis added.

thinking.”³⁰ He postulates that Keng Vannsak, one of Pol Pot’s old colleagues from France, introduced him to the idea of “original culture.”³¹ Pol Pot learned to see Cambodia’s post-Angkorean cultural and territorial decline as “a millennial theme, uninterrupted by several twentieth century enlargements of its borders.”³² This contributed to Pol Pot’s “racialist obsessions” with Vietnam and augmented the apocalyptic Cambodian sense of impending territorial threat facing Cambodia and “its need to retaliate to recoup historical losses.”³³ Cultural Anthropologist Alex Hinton asserts that Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideas “are always localized” when imported from another country.³⁴ He states that ideologies are “palimpsests in which new concepts- at once transforming and transformed- are sketched upon the lines of established cultural understandings.”³⁵

In Cambodia, Pol Pot attempted to reconcile the foreign-ness of Maoism with his interpretation of a pure Khmer culture. Hinton postulates that the darkest elements of Khmer culture, such as the Khmer notions of *kum*, *disproportionate revenge*, and *total revenge*³⁶ were fused together with Maoist notions of class

³⁰ Ben Kiernan, “Why Pol Pot? Roots of the Cambodian Tragedy”, *Indochina Issues*, No. 52, (December 1984) 3.

³¹ Original Culture: Vannsak asserted that Buddhism and Hinduism from India had contaminated what he surmised to be the ancient Khmer culture. See Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007) 543.

³² Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 552. See also Ben Kiernan, “Myth, Nationalism, and Genocide”, *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, No. 2, (2001) 187-206

³³ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 552.

³⁴ Alex Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005) 23.

³⁵ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 23.

³⁶ Kum, disproportionate revenge, total revenge: degrees of revenge in Khmer society. Kum is a grudge that is held after one loses face at the expense of another’s insult. Kum is held for years and motivates one to disproportionately pay back the

struggle, anti-capitalism, and pure agrarian communism.³⁷ More importantly, these historical forms were used in conjunction with Pol Pot's xenophobia, racial prejudices based on his experiences with the Vietnamese, and myopic nostalgia for Cambodia's once great past. This is especially important since Mao's revolution was vehemently against the "Four Olds"³⁸ and was devoted to modernization, industrialization, and a new Chinese proletarian culture.³⁹ Instead, Pol Pot wanted to revitalize the old and feudal elements of Cambodia's past. He longed to return the greatness of Angkor to the twentieth century, and thus, to regain the lost face of the Cambodian people for years of subjugation at the hands of their aggressive neighbors.

It is for that reason that this thesis uses Pol Pot's political papers, *Revolutionary Flag*⁴⁰ articles, and speeches to illustrate his ideological deviation from Maoism. While Pol Pot's works and the written records of the Khmer Rouge

offender. Total revenge is the most extreme notion of Khmer revenge and calls for one to completely pay back the deed through the murder of one's whole family.

³⁷ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?..*, 45-96.

³⁸ The Four Olds: Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. Mao believed that "without destruction there can be no construction; without blockage there can be no flow; without stoppage there can be no movement."

See Mao Zedong, "Directives Regarding the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969", Beijing, [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume_9/mswv9_84.htm], 11 November 1966.

³⁹ Proletarian culture: Also referred to as New Culture, was believed to be the people's art and literature. Mao stressed that there was "no art for art's sake", meaning that the old forms of traditional Chinese cultural expression were not "cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine." See Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art" (May 1942), *Selected Works, Vol. III*, 86.

⁴⁰ Revolutionary Flag: Khmer Rouge Party newspaper originally named "Revolutionary Youth." It was intended to inform Party cadres of new policies and keep them updated on changes, successes, and areas of the revolution that required immediate attention.

“pale in comparison with the voluminous writings of Lenin and Mao Zedong,”⁴¹ they do yield crucial evidence of Pol Pot’s appropriation and perversion of much of Mao Zedong’s ideology. Since the major goal here is to link Pol Pot’s interpretation of Maoism to the ultra-nationalist Cambodian genocide, it is important to examine key differences between Pol Pot’s ideology and Mao’s political precepts. This study compares the Chinese leader’s infamous *Selected Works* and several political speeches made by him and his closest officials⁴² with Pol Pot’s own writings. These include his published speeches, Khmer Rouge Party documents possibly written by Pol Pot, and selected articles from the *Revolutionary Flag* Newspaper series. The *Livre Noir*, a Party paper that condemns the Vietnamese for a history of crimes and indiscretions against Cambodia, is also central to proving Pol Pot’s ultra-nationalism and estrangement from a Maoist course.

In order to argue this thesis, chapter one provides Pol Pot’s brief biographical background. Using Karl Mannheim’s definition of “ideology,” this chapter explores Pol Pot’s early political influences. The emphasis will be placed on young Pol Pot’s comfortable and sheltered upbringing, lack of philosophical sophistication, and motivation to excel as a student. This chapter relies on the Cambodian leader’s autobiographical interviews and various secondary accounts of his upbringing, his participation in Marxist circles, and involvement in the anti-colonial movement.

⁴¹ Locard, 1.

⁴² Zhou En-lai, “Speaking on August 10 to Beijing’s revolutionary masses celebrating the Party Central Committee’s Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, *Beijing Review* 9, No. 37, (Sept. 1966) and Lin Biao, “Long Live the Victory of People’s War: In Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japan”, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965) 42-58.

The goal of the first chapter is to provide insight as to how Pol Pot, a bourgeois, mediocre student, eventually rose to prominence in political circles; a prominence that allowed him to be sent to Beijing as a Vietnamese delegate.⁴³ The chapter will also trace the roots of Pol Pot's utter contempt for the Vietnamese, and examine the time he spent with Viet Minh guerrillas during the mid-to-late 1950s.

The second chapter analyzes Pol Pot's time in China and his introduction to Cultural Revolution-era Beijing. Where the problem lies, as Ngor states, is that "Pol Pot the maker of policy was the same as Pol Pot the mediocre student... He did not realize that Mao's Cultural Revolution was already a disaster and that Stalin's attempts had set the Soviet economy back by decades."⁴⁴ Mao's *Selected Works* and *Little Red Book*⁴⁵ are used to connect the Maoist influences on the Cambodian revolution. Pol Pot's own writings, translated by Chandler, Kiernan and Chanthou Boua in *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, are to show how any interpretation of Mao's ideas were sophomoric and in many cases missed the point entirely. These ideological texts provide a scope into which one can locate and compare the similarities and differences between the two leaders. Moreover, a study of Mao's works and Pol Pot's appropriation reveals that the Cambodian leader was in fact far from Maoist.

The third chapter examines Pol Pot's attempt to distinguish his revolution from China's in an attempt to launch a uniquely Khmer revolution. In this chapter, O.W.

⁴³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Democratic People's Republic of Kampuchea, *The Chinese Ruler's Crimes Against Kampuchea*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information, April 1984), 40.

⁴⁴ Ngor, 401.

⁴⁵ Mao Zedong, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Zedong*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965).

Wolters' definition of "localization" is used to further understand the indigenization of foreign ideas and practices by local Khmer culture. Pol Pot's "Khmerization"⁴⁶ of Maoism, a localization effort inspired by Mao's Sinification of Marxism⁴⁷, lacked the fundamental relationships that characterized Mao's successful adaptation. Pol Pot's inability to reconcile tenets of Maoism with Khmer nationalist culture led him to fall back on more traditional and characteristically brutal forms of Khmer governance. Central to Pol Pot's interpretation of Khmer culture were the Cambodian notions of *kum* and *disproportionate revenge*.⁴⁸ Historian Alex Hinton provides an anthropological analysis that is essential to the understanding of Pol Pot's vengeance-inspired approach to the eradication of the upper classes. Through the study of Pol Pot's localization effort which held Cambodia's twelfth century Angkor dynasty as the highest of ideals, and the study of Khmer historical norms, we can more clearly understand Pol Pot's version of Maoism.

The final chapter analyzes the impact of Pol Pot's localized ideology and its role in the genocide. Historian Robert J. Lifton's study of the Nazi eugenics as a justification for genocide is useful to the formation of this argument. As Becker states, Pol Pot's and the Khmer Rouge's goals were "fascist in the strict definition of the phenomenon: a regime that exalts nation and race, stands for centralized

⁴⁶ Serge Thion, *Watching Cambodia: Ten Paths to Enter the Cambodian Triangle*, (Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus, 1993) 77-95.

⁴⁷ Sinification: Mao Zedong's localization of Marxism-Leninism with Chinese culture and traditions. For a more detailed description, see Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007) 197-247.

⁴⁸ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?..*, 45-96. See also Alex Hinton, "A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide", *American Ethnologist* 25, No. 33, (1998) 352-357, and Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: the Anthropology of Genocide*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002) 109, 239-241.

autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, imposes severe economic and social regimentation, and forcibly suppresses the opposition.”⁴⁹ Pol Pot appointed himself the “national doctor” and sought to eradicate the “microbes” that plagued the “purity” of Democratic Kampuchea. Pol Pot’s attempts to use history as a means of manufacturing difference and the DK *Livre Noir*⁵⁰ are central to the comprehension of Pol Pot’s anti-Vietnamese doctrine. Finally, an analysis of the Khmer historical practice of disproportionate revenge, which was used to explain the class-based killings of the regime, is utilized here to explain Pol Pot’s approach to ethnic cleansing. Much like the Nazis had enacted “the final solution” to systematically humiliate and exterminate the European Jewish population, Pol Pot employed the Khmer notion of “total disproportionate revenge” in an attempt to kill every single Vietnamese.

Through the analysis of Pol Pot’s early political career and the clear distinctions between Mao’s progressive and Pol Pot’s regressive and idealized revolutions, we will see how the Khmer leader’s appropriated version was starkly unique in its simplicity, miscalculations, and brutality. Moreover, an examination of both the Cambodian ruler’s unique interpretation of Maoism and virulent nationalism-turned-ultra-nationalism will provide new gateways into the study of the Cambodian genocide.

⁴⁹ Becker, 121.

⁵⁰ *Livre Noir* or Black Book: Written in September 1978, the document was written by an anonymous Khmer Rouge official (possibly Pol Pot) and traces the alleged “corruption and annexationist nature” of the Vietnamese towards Kampuchea throughout history.

CHAPTER ONE

Part One: A Man of Two Lives

Saloth Sar, the man who would take the *nom de guerre* Pol Pot, was born and raised in unique surroundings. The secretive Sar only spoke once about his past during his reign as Cambodia's ruler. In an interview with a Yugoslav delegate, he spoke of having to work long days as the son of a poor peasant and of being involved immediately in the clandestine liberation movement. Unfortunately, such details of Sar's past have since been seriously questioned. Scholarly analyses of his life have yet to determine what is truth and what is fiction.

This chapter examines and analyzes many of Sar's earliest experiences and ideological influences leading up to his release from duty along the Vietnamese-Kampuchean border by Le Duan¹ in 1965-1966.² In fact, a thorough examination of Sar's comfortable upbringing, his lackluster academic life, political inclinations, and the origins of his virulent xenophobia will allow a clearer understanding of the motivation behind his desire to visit Mao's China. This chapter is organized into three sections. The first part examines Sar's early life from his birth until his arrival in France in 1950. It also closely scrutinizes many of the myths concerning Sar's past. The second section provides an account of Sar's ideological development during his two year stay in France. The third segment observes the origins and development of his hatred of the Vietnamese with particular emphasis on his time spent working with Vietnamese anti-colonialists from 1953 to 1965. As will be

¹ Le Duan: North Vietnam's acting party chief as of 1956. By 1958, he was the country's number two policy maker behind only Ho Chi Minh.

² Particularly significant because it was the first year of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution.

shown, Sar was neither a peasant nor did he suffer from a hard upbringing; he was a mediocre student who never stood out among his peers or truly understood the lessons being taught. He was a strong national communist³ long before he espoused the tenets of Maoism, and he had already developed his hatred of the Vietnamese during the time he spent working with the Viet Minh, Vietnam's anti-colonialist guerrillas, in the 1950s.⁴

The greatest difficulty in any analysis of Saloth Sar's life is determining what accounts of his life constitute fact and which are myth. Very little is known about Sar's early life. His birth date, ethnic background, religion, class, and political influences have been discussed by several authors,⁵ but not one historian agrees on a common truth. This thesis chapter therefore attempts to gauge the level of truth in Sar's own account of his life. As will be shown, Sar's class origin, comfortable childhood and youth, and his less-than-stellar academic record, reveal that his

³ In many colonized and quasi-colonized states, alliances between the nationalist and communists were commonplace. Both groups had the same fundamental goals, such as national liberation and economic independence. See pages 11-13.

⁴ The Cambodian nationalists, and later on, the Khmer Communists under the Issarak Front, were aided by the Vietnamese and Lao groups to increase their respective chances of removing the French. All three national groups were originally led by the Vietnamese who had been the defacto leader of the Indochinese Communist Party since 1930 and had the most developed anti-colonial front. After 1953-54, all three nationalist groups broke off into their own respective organizations while still supporting one another. Of the three former members, Vietnam remained the most active participant in the other two nation's revolutions, originally interested in forming an Indochina Federation. This idea was discarded shortly after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

⁵ Ben Kiernan, for example, believes that Sar was a wealthy peasant who was ethnic Khmer, 9-10. David Chandler asserts that he was a middle peasant who lived an advantageous life. Philip Short is the lone one who mentions his Chinese background but emphasizes his Khmer upbringing and comfortable life. For this paper, I will agree with Kiernan's description of Sar's wealthy upbringing with no hard work and Short's examination of his ethnic background.

radical political ideology developed later than he claimed. After all, Sar's lack of philosophical and political sophistication was rooted in his disassociation with his country's people and a lack of motivation to truly build upon more than the absolute basics of what he had learned.

Before looking at his early life, the term "ideology" must be defined. To this end, I have chosen two avenues: Karl Marx's definition and the sociological approach by Karl Mannheim. Karl Marx classifies ideology as a phenomena formed by class. Moreover, for Marx it is the exploitative and alienating features of capitalist economic relations that motivate the formation of an "ideology." In his view, economic categories are "the only theoretical expressions, the abstractions, of the social relations of production."⁶ Moreover, ideology is crafted through the oppressive nature of the dominant economic class.⁷ Since the dominant class controls the means of production, an ideology is crafted to form the interests of that social grouping. Moreover, the dominant class dictates the interests of the larger and poorer classes. The Marxist view of ideology as an instrument of social reproduction has been an important standard for the sociology of knowledge, most notably that of Karl Mannheim.

For most people, the term "ideology" is so closely associated with Marxism that it is nearly inseparable.⁸ For Karl Mannheim, ideology constitutes a set of ideas for understanding the reality of settings. His major argument surrounding ideology is that human thought "arises and operates not in a social vacuum but in a definite

⁶ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1920) 119.

⁷ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: Collected Works of Karl Mannheim, Vol. I*, (New York, Routledge, 1997) 51.

⁸ Mannheim, *Collected Works...*, 49.

social milieu”, and that each man’s thought is “a collection of unconscious elements acquired from a social setting.”⁹ He further defines a conception of “total ideology” as a person’s whole mode of envisaging things as determined by his historical and social setting whereas the “particular conception”¹⁰ refers only to specific assertions which may or may not be regarded as ideological.¹¹ Both conceptions, most importantly the total ideology, were formed through one’s life experiences.

The emphasis Mannheim places on ideological formation based on setting is a key point. When looking at Sar’s early life, we understand that he knew little of the realities of a peasant life. This would hold true until he experienced working with poor tradesmen later on. He had not yet developed an animosity towards Vietnamese to the point of absolute hatred.¹² This would develop later while he was under Vietnamese command. It was then that Sar began to harbor anti-Vietnamese sentiment based on the Cambodian notion that the Vietnamese were “aggressors” and annexationist in “nature” towards Cambodia. And finally, as will be discussed later on, Sar only embraced Maoism when he was in China. Ultimately, ideology as by Mannheim is defined as something that is crafted by setting and historical context.

⁹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, (New York: Harcourt, 1936) 265.

¹⁰ Mannheim, *Collected Works...*, 49-50.

¹¹ Robert H. Coombs, “Karl Mannheim, Epistemology and the Sociology of Knowledge”, *The Sociological Quarterly* 7, No. 2, (Spring, 1966) 229.

¹² While this is true for Sar, most Cambodian children genuinely feared the Vietnamese. As Philip Short states, “Vietnam was the Cambodian bogeyman. When Khmer children squabbled, an older child would intervene and remind them that Cambodians had enemies enough without fighting among themselves.” See Short, 25-26.

Having looked at Marx's and Mannheim's theories on "ideology", determining the origin of Sar's totalitarian dogma seems unlikely. This is so because his early life gave no indication of the extremely violent and chauvinist philosophy he followed while in power. According to an interview he gave to historian Nate Thayer, he was born in the village of Prek Sbauv to ethnic Khmer parents on May 25th, 1925.¹³ Sar mentioned in the interview that his parents wrote his birthday on the wall in his home, the month *bos*, and the year *chluv (ox)*.¹⁴ This date had remained secret for years, known only by his closest surviving family members until Pol Pot gave the date of March 25th.¹⁵

Although Sar would speak exclusively of poor peasant origins and having to work fifteen-hour days, the truth about his class origin was entirely secret. He first spoke out about his class origin stating that "he was the son of a peasant who in his childhood had to live a hard life and participate in agricultural work on his father's land."¹⁶ His former official, Non Suon,¹⁷ as well as modern scholars such as Chandler, Kiernan and Short, have all written different versions of Sar's life. In spite of the evidence, none of them declare outright that Sar was raised in a wealthy environment and had virtually no connections to the peasantry. Still, it is safe to

¹³ Nate Thayer, "My Education: How Saloth Sar Became Pol Pot", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 October 1997, 21.

¹⁴ Thayer, "My Education: How Saloth Sar...", 21.

¹⁵ Philip Short, *Pol Pot: The History of a Nightmare*, (London: John Murray, 2004) 473. He recounted his life-story to the Chinese journalist Cai Ximei in May 1984.

¹⁶ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot a la Delegation des Journalistes Yougoslaves en Visite au Kampuchea Democratique, 17 Mars 1978* (Phnom Penh: Departement de la Presse et de l'Information du Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres du Kampuchea Democratique, 1978) 21.

¹⁷ Non Suon, "Biography of Pol Pot", In David Chandler, *Brother Number One*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999) 197.

argue that Sar's family, who reportedly had the largest property in the district with "nine hectares of rice land, several draft cattle, and a comfortable tile-roofed house",¹⁸ likely never endured the level of hard living as that experienced by most Cambodian peasants. Moreover, as historian Ben Kiernan suggests, unlike his future hero Mao Zedong, Sar never suffered a hard days' work in his early life.¹⁹ Kiernan's assertion that Sar was comfortably wealthy is the most appropriate for my analysis.

Sar's father, Loth, was a successful farmer and landowner. Loth owned "ten times the average amount of rice paddy, nearly fifty acres, comparable to the living of a junior mandarin" and produced enough rice to feed a family twice their size.²⁰ Sar's mother, Sok Nem, "was widely respected in the district for her piety and good works."²¹

Once he had developed hard-line policies regarding class origins, Sar deliberately neglected to mention even the slightest inkling of a comfortable existence for fear that his party's own policies would be undone. Furthermore, such a past would have undermined his revolutionary roots and credibility. Under the Khmer Rouge's class policies, Sar's family would have been categorized as "class enemies."²² As Chandler notes, he exclusively stressed a poor peasant upbringing, irrespective of the reality.²³ Where and how he crafted his love of and identification

¹⁸ Chandler, *Brother Number One*... 8.

¹⁹ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1975* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008) 10.

²⁰ Short, 15.

²¹ Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 8.

²² Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*..., 10.

²³ Chandler, *Brother Number One*..., 9.

with the peasantry came from his ideological influences, notably, his work in the trades and his time abroad. These emerged later in his life, once he was removed from his traditional home.

His family was more than simply wealthy because they had siblings living in the royal palace in Phnom Penh. Sar's cousin Meak had joined the royal ballet in the early 1920s towards the end of King Sisowath's reign.²⁴ As a result, Sar and his brother Chhay were allowed to move inside the palace walls.²⁵ Sar's brother Loth Suong had traveled to Phnom Penh seeking employment when Meak made it possible, by virtue of her high standing in the King's court, for him to obtain work as a palace officer.²⁶ Sar's sister Saloth Roeung joined the royal ballet and followed the same path as her cousin Meak. She, too, became a royal consort of King Monivong²⁷ and was remembered as being one of his favorites.²⁸

Due to the strong rice crops of the 1930s and Saloth Roeung's salary, Sar's family could pay for luxuries beyond those already afforded. Only the wealthiest of Khmer families had the ability to send their sons to live in the bustling capital. The family's desire was for their sons to attend one of the new and expensive Western schools in order that they receive the best education. According to Short, the family was wealthy enough to send the boys by steam bus rather than by cheaper

²⁴ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 8.

²⁵ Even before his time in the palace, Sar had very little exposure to Cambodia's poor. When he moved there in the 1930s, he was always surrounded by lavish decorations, beautiful women, had access to servants and was never forced to do any labor.

²⁶ Short, 17.

²⁷ By the time he had assumed the throne, he became a puppet of the French. He had lost most of his influence outside the palace walls, but remained a very important cultural and religious icon in Khmer society.

²⁸ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 8.

transportation.²⁹ The cost for attending a primary school was far beyond what the vast majority of Cambodians could afford. As Short states, “among half a million school-going age Cambodians, only a few thousand had access to even the rudiments of a modern education.”³⁰ Whether by happenstance or by choice, Sar instead attended the Wat Botum Vaddei, a large Buddhist monastery in Phnom Penh located near the royal palace.

Even Sar’s religious and cultural education revealed his privileged existence and his lack of consciousness concerning the peasantry. Wat Botum Vaddei, which according to Short belonged to the Thommayut order, was an “elitist school favored by the royal court in a walled village.”³¹ Sar recounted that he studied at the pagoda for six years and that it was the place where he learned to read and write.³² Despite the fact that the exact age when Sar attended the temple has been disputed,³³ and that he had engaged in “falsifying his biography to make it seem that he had stayed there longer than was actually the case”,³⁴ Sar did recall what he had learned during his training as a novice monk. According to Chandler, he learned the basic rules of Buddhism and became literate in Khmer.³⁵

²⁹ Short, 20.

³⁰ Short, 24.

³¹ Short, 21.

³² Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...*, 21.

³³ Short takes Sar’s 1978 interview at face value and believes the age he went to the temple was six. Chandler, however, asserts that he was nine years of age. This is likely caused because both authors disagree on Sar’s actual birth year (1925 versus 1928). Sethi believes Sar spent six years at the temple while Short asserts Sar was there for under two years of study. Kiernan believes he was there for just over a year.

³⁴ Short, 21.

³⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 9.

According to Short, by age ten, Sar left the temple to live with his brother Suong and his wife, Chea Samy. Both Sar and Chhay were enrolled at the prestigious l'Ecole Miche, a French-language Catholic school. The school's reputation made it ideal in spite of its religious overtones because it provided the country's best education at that particular level.³⁶ They both had to overcome the cultural and religious differences associated with the school to blend in with the other students. This was so because Sar and Chhay were raised Theravada Buddhist while their school preached Christ's teachings and the Holy Trinity. These concepts were alien and somewhat fantastic to the boys who did not quite understand much outside the Buddhist mindset. It was especially difficult for Sar because of his monastic training. This made l'Ecole Miche a bit of a culture shock for him. Ultimately, the opportunity he was presented, no matter the setting or message being preached, was not capitalized upon.

Even though Sar was given the best education money could buy, his academic results were lackluster. During his time in primary school, Sar was a fairly average student who more than likely never stood out of the group. In fact, Sar indicated his own unremarkable academic standing when he recalled that after his primary education he was unable to attend a college because he had failed the entrance exam.³⁷ According to Chandler, people who knew Sar as a secondary student "have

³⁶ Short, 24.

³⁷ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 21.

commented on his ingratiating manner, his fondness for sports, and his apparent lack of ambition.”³⁸

For his secondary education, Sar was sent to Kompong Cham³⁹ in the early 1940s partly due to the danger of living in the capital during and after the Japanese occupation, but also because of his inability to get into Sisowath High School.⁴⁰ According to Kiernan, Sar “missed World War II’s tumultuous end in Phnom Penh, where nationalist youths forced the new boy king Norodom Sihanouk to briefly declare independence from France and Buddhist monks led Cambodian nationalists in common cause with Vietnamese communists.”⁴¹ However, Non Suon’s account claims he participated in an underground anti-French and anti-Japanese youth movement.⁴² This account seems to be entirely false. Kiernan’s account is more accurate because the French Colonial records on Kompong Cham state Sar was in that province as a student, and thus, not involved in any clandestine movement.⁴³ Cut off from this major event in Cambodian history, it is highly unlikely that his nationalist fervor and espousal of radical leftist ideology stemmed from this period.⁴⁴

³⁸ David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 51.

³⁹ Kompong Cham: A province in Eastern Cambodia that was formerly part of the Champa kingdom.

⁴⁰ Sisowath was reserved for the best students and was in Phnom Penh.

⁴¹ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...* 10.

⁴² Democratic Kampuchea, *Biography of Comrade Pol Pot*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information, September 1978) 2.

⁴³ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...* 10.

⁴⁴ Chandler, Kiernan and Short agree that Sar was not involved with or particularly interested in the event.

Sar gravitated back to the capital in 1946 to learn a basic vocation instead of furthering his education. He had not graduated from high school, and thus, had earned no formal degree. According to Kiernan and Chandler, he worked as a carpenter in the capital, which is entirely possible. Sar finished the first semester only to leave Kompong Cham high school in favor of a vocation college.⁴⁵ He stated that he studied, in particular, electricity.⁴⁶

During his time at *l'Ecole Technique*, Sar came into contact with many under-privileged young Khmers, many of whom “came from the country’s traditional elite”⁴⁷ and had become alienated by the French.⁴⁸ According to Chandler, “he dirtied his hands, stepping down from his French education and his palace connections.”⁴⁹ In this time, Sar witnessed for the very first time the tragic decline of his country’s people. Sar’s time at *l'Ecole Technique* introduced the apathetic son of a rich farmer to the lower strata of society.

While at the technical school, Sar worked arduously with under-privileged Khmers who, unlike himself, had suffered greatly because of colonization. It was not long before Sar had been exposed to stories of hardship, long work-hours, exploitation and suffering. These first hand accounts greatly motivated Sar to improve his work ethic. His hard work and dedication earned him an opportunity to write the lycee entrance examinations which, if he did reasonably well, would grant him the opportunity to study in France. At age twenty four, he was eventually given

⁴⁵ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 21.

⁴⁶ Pol /Pot *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 21.

⁴⁷ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 21.

⁴⁸ This alienation usually coincided with a refusal to comply with demands.

⁴⁹ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 21.

a bursary to study at a radio-electricity vocation school in Paris. In the end, despite his claims of a childhood of hardship, it was not until his first exposure to Cambodian poverty that he began to care about evoking a considerable change.

Part Two: Politique Potentielle- The Beginning

“I came into contact with some progressive students... I often stayed with them, and little by little they influenced me.”⁵⁰ - Pol Pot, 1984

It was in France that the mild-mannered Sar, a young man who more than likely would have remained in obscurity, came into his first contact with theories of liberation, class struggle, mobilization, and communism. It was in France that Sar would discover his political *raison d’etre*. His time in Paris is crucial since it was where he discovered and participated in Marxist reading groups. As Short states, it was in Paris, not in Moscow or Beijing, that in the early 1950s Sar and his companions laid down the ideological foundations upon which Khmer Rouge ideology would be built.⁵¹ This was so because the student association, reading groups, and meetings with the French left, established a sense of class awareness in the young Khmer. From his participation in a building project in Yugoslavia in 1950 to his membership in the Stalinist French Left, it was his time in France that led the young Saloth Sar to national communism, a concept that here requires brief explanation.

⁵⁰ Pol Pot, “Interview with Cai Ximei”, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: May 1984).

⁵¹ Short, 47.

There exist two major examples that best define the essence of national communism. The first of these surrounds Sun Yat-Sen's Three People's Principles, or San-min Doctrine. These were Min-ts'u, Min-ch'uan, and Min-sheng, meaning People's Nationalism, People's Sovereignty, and People's Livelihood.⁵² Sun believed that due to China's uncontested liberty in the past, the people had not understood the term "liberty" itself. This meant that Western events like the French Revolution were not studied to a great degree outside of Chinese intellectual circles.⁵³ This created a need to instill the importance of liberty in the minds of the Chinese so that they could more adequately fight for the liberation of their quasi-colonized nation. Sun described the loss of total sovereignty and the role of the people in earning it back in the following passage:

But we, because we have had too much liberty without any unity and resisting power, because we have become a sheet of loose sand and so have been invaded by foreign imperialism and oppressed by the economic control and trade wars of the Powers, without being able to resist, must break down individual liberty and become pressed together into an unyielding body like the firm rock which is formed by the addition of cement to sand.⁵⁴

Here, Sun stresses the importance of unity versus the individual differences between peoples caused by ideological, socio-political and economic distinctions. He is also differentiating between individual liberty and collective efforts to gain liberty. While he was not a communist, he was a nationalist with socialist leanings. Sun Yat-Sen's vision of nationalism and socialism inspired many colonized Asian peoples to ally the doctrines of nationalism and communism.

⁵² Sun Yat-Sen, *Sun Min Chu: The Three Principles of the People*, (Shanghai, China: China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927), 189–92.

⁵³ Sun Yat-Sen, 201-202.

⁵⁴ Sun Yat-Sen, 278.

Perhaps the best example comes from Vietnam and its war with both France and the United States. Nearly two thousand years of struggle to defend the country's sovereignty against larger and stronger foes created a strong sense of Vietnamese nationalism.⁵⁵ On one hand, the failure to remove the French from Indochina left many of the country's patriots wondering what method was the most appropriate and effective for ousting the foreign power. On the other, the communists did not have enough of a sizeable vanguard to put their methods into action. Ho Chi Minh was the Vietnamese leader who understood this the most clearly. Using Sun Yat-Sen and Lenin as inspirations for the anti-colonial movement, the Vietnamese communist movement projected itself as "the legitimate force representing Vietnamese national aspirations."⁵⁶ This played an integral role on Sar's ideological development. Ho Chi Minh's nationalist movement was an Asian example and it showed him that national communism was also very possible in Cambodia.⁵⁷

The breakout of conflict between Vietnam and France in 1946 had motivated Sar to leave the continent. At the age of 25, Sar boarded *the Jamaïque* in Saigon for Paris.⁵⁸ The trip took somewhere between a month and six weeks but the exact year of Sar's arrival is unknown. It is estimated that Sar arrived at the port in Marseilles

⁵⁵ William J. Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981) 5.

⁵⁶ Duiker, 5.

⁵⁷ Historian William Duiker recalled that Ho Chi Minh had once remarked that, "for him, the road to communism went through nationalism." Though communism would prevail after the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Viet Minh had successfully reconciled what had previously been considered opposing viewpoints.

⁵⁸ Chandler, *The Tragedy...*, 51.

by 1949 or 1950.⁵⁹ The school Sar attended for his training was called the *Ecole Francaise de Radio-Electricite*. According to Chandler, many of Sar's colleagues earned at least a single diploma, came from poorer origins than Sar, and "made more of an impression on people than Sar did."⁶⁰ The lone exception was Prince Sisowath Somonopong, a nephew of king Monivong's, who had arrived a year before Sar to study radio-electricity.⁶¹ Apparently, the two became friends and helped each other out with their respective studies. Somonopong was kind enough to find Sar a place to live. Sar moved in with the sons of the governor of Kratie,⁶² something he would hold secret from his later peers by simply saying he lived with "a cousin."⁶³

Little is known about his first academic year in Paris. Sar remembered that "in his first year, he studied very hard and was a very good student."⁶⁴ While Sar spoke of himself as a good student to the Yugoslav delegate in 1978, Chandler depicts Sar as a poor scholar, often diverted from his studies by sports, cards, and other extra-curricular activities while taking no examinations.⁶⁵ As a result, his bursary was taken from him and he was forced to find a new place to live and some form of income.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 10.

⁶⁰ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 21.

⁶¹ Short, 49.

⁶² Kratie: a province in Northeastern Cambodia. It borders Stung Treng Province to the north, Mondulkiri Province to the East, Kampong Cham Province, and Kampong Thom Province to the West.

⁶³ Short, 49.

⁶⁴ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 21. Sar said in French "La premiere annee, j'ai etudie avec application et j'etais assez bon etudiant."

⁶⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 26.

⁶⁶ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 26.

In contrast, Short believes that he applied himself and narrowly failed the final examinations.⁶⁷ Apparently, according to Short's accounts, he was allowed to write the exams again and passed, meaning he could return for a second year.⁶⁸ Whether he wrote the exams or not, his academic capabilities were not substantial enough, due to a lack of commitment and perhaps interest by this point, to keep his scholarship. Ultimately, he was a weak student who was easily distracted from his work. He was too enamored with living *la vie boheme* to value the importance of a good education. Fortunately for Sar, one of these distractions was membership with an association of his countrymen.

Sar was encouraged by Somonopong to join the *Association des Etudiants Khmers* (AEK). It was during his time with the AEK that Sar was introduced to politics and to many of his future close friends. Before this happened, however, Sar was offered an opportunity by the AEK to visit Yugoslavia with some French students in a "labor battalion."⁶⁹ The trip was free of charge, unlike the fairly expensive secondary option of a trip to Geneva. Short quoted Sar as describing that he had no money for a vacation so he and his fellow poorer students went to Zagreb, Yugoslavia to build a national motorway.⁷⁰ Sar apparently chose to visit Yugoslavia along with his poorer comrades because it was the only trip he could afford. The trip was "for pleasure"⁷¹ and not for any political cause.

⁶⁷ Short, 50.

⁶⁸ Short, 50.

⁶⁹ Labor battalion: Term for a group of student laborers in Yugoslavia. See Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 26.

⁷⁰ Short, 50.

⁷¹ Thayer, "My Education: How Saloth Sar...", 21.

Upon his arrival, Sar discovered that he was to work on the massive Zagreb highway work site. The author of *Khmer Nisut* described the work site resembling “a massive building site” where the effort “was even more estimable because the force and the faith of the people, united around their leaders allowed them to win successive victories, aware that this was a question of national independence.”⁷² To the Khmer students who joined Sar, this construction project was a symbol of independence from a foreign superpower. The communists, with whom Sar would soon align himself, were unhappy with Sar’s trip since Yugoslavia had broken-off from Stalinist Soviet domination. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia’s efforts were soon supported by Sar. He had never seen social mobilization or public works on such an enormous scale, “nor had he worked so hard as a member of a team.”⁷³ Chandler asserts that “Yugoslavia’s mobilization of the people’s revolutionary will” was a profound influence on Sar’s future policies as head of the Khmer Rouge.⁷⁴ In essence, his time in Yugoslavia helped Sar discover national communism.

Upon his return to France in 1951, Sar reconnected with the AEK with the hope of becoming an active participant in the group’s discussions on Cambodia. According to historian Wilfred Burchett, many of these students “started out as idealistic patriots, pledged to dedicating their talents and rare facilities of access to modern revolutionary theories, through their studies in Paris, to remolding Cambodian society to serve the interests of the under-privileged, especially the

⁷² Ieu Yang, *Khmer Nisut* [Khmer Student] 11 January 1951, 36. See Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 29, Short, 51.

⁷³ Chandler, *Brother Number One*..., 28.

⁷⁴ Chandler, *Brother Number One*..., 28.

peasantry.”⁷⁵ How Sar contributed to their discussions of the peasantry is unknown but other well-educated Khmers from similar origins had crafted ideas of their own.

One of the best examples was his future Minister of the Interior Hou Youn. As the AEK’s leader, he established connections with the French left, associated with the French National Students’ Union and, “through Jacques Verges,⁷⁶ with the Indochinese Students’ Union and another group he headed, the Liaison Committee of Colonial Students’ Associations.”⁷⁷ This led the group to adopt an “openly political stance, approving the struggle for national independence in all its forms”, including armed resistance as an accepted method for liberation.⁷⁸ While the group had agreed upon what avenue they should pursue for independence, they still lacked a clearly-defined ideology. One of its members, Thiounn Mumm, encouraged many of the AEK’s progressive members to join another association that was run clandestinely. This was the *Cercle Marxiste*, where Sar would read the works that first introduced him to the rudiments of communism.

The Cercle Marxiste was founded by Keng Vannsak,⁷⁹ a successful student mentor who had been introduced to Sar by his new friend Ieng Sary in 1951. It was built up of individual cells to keep its existence secret. It is uncertain at what date Sar joined, but it was as a member of this group that he read Lenin and Mao

⁷⁵ Wilfred Burchett, *The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle* (Chicago, Illinois: Vanguard Books, 1981) 50.

⁷⁶ Jacques Verges (1925-): French lawyer, communist, and staunchly anti-colonialist figure known for defending many controversial clients. He presently is defending Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan in the Genocide Tribunal.

⁷⁷ Short, 62.

⁷⁸ Short, 62.

⁷⁹ Sar party biography states that he founded the Cercle and not Vannsak.

Zedong's works for the first time.⁸⁰ Prompted by Vannsak's departure,⁸¹ Sar continued to meet with the progressive students who "were kind enough to allow him to live with them."⁸² It was at this time he developed strong friendships with Ieng Sary, as well as Khieu Samphan, Son Sen, his future wife Khieu Ponnary⁸³, and her sister Khieu Thirit who later became Sary's wife.⁸⁴

Since Sar had no direct exposure to Cambodia's peasantry, and had only briefly been made aware of the effects colonialism on his countrymen, he had to rely on the work of his peers to learn of his country's plight. In the process of winning masters' and doctors' degrees, some of the leftist Cambodian students, especially Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn, produced the first in-depth studies⁸⁵ of the Cambodian economic-social system under the French and the prospects for change.⁸⁶ While he read Marx, Lenin, and Mao,⁸⁷ the essays written by his fellow Khmer progressives helped construct Sar's awareness. The leftist cells met once a week to discuss the week's events and study texts. According to Short, the *Cercle*

⁸⁰ Short, 62-64.

⁸¹ Before he had left for Yugoslavia, he moved in with Keng Vannsak. Vannsak served as a mentor to many young Khmer students in France having been the first Khmer to receive a scholarship to Paris in 1946.

⁸² Short, 51.

⁸³ Sar married Khieu Ponnary in 1955. She was the first of two Khmer women to pass the baccalaureate exams. Short mentions that Sar was apparently a good dancer in both the Eastern and Western styles and was a great fan of music and dance. These bourgeois luxuries were without question appealing to Ponnary, who had been raised in a very privileged Khmer family. She would later be divorced in 1979, diagnosed with schizophrenia, and died in 2003.

⁸⁴ Sethi, 15.

⁸⁵ Samphan's was titled *The Cambodian Peasantry and Cambodia's Economy and Problems of Industrialization*.

⁸⁶ Burchett, 50.

⁸⁷ While Kiernan and Chandler agree that Marx and Lenin's works were first read by Sar in the Cercle, Short is the only one who states Mao Zedong's works were read.

“started with Lenin’s *ABC of Communism*, followed by the *Communist Manifesto* and Mao Zedong’s *On New Democracy*.”⁸⁸ These works were important sources of inspiration for Hou Youn and Khieu Samphan who applied them to the Cambodian context.

Both Youn and Samphan brought with them uniquely-crafted ideologies. Youn’s criticism of the cities gained widespread support in the group. Among them was the notion that cities were inherent sites of corruption. Youn went on to brand the cities as “pumps which drain away the vitality of the rural areas.”⁸⁹ He continued by stating that the rural areas are “poor, skinny and miserable because of the commercial system which oppresses them.”⁹⁰ Youn further describes this notion in the following passage:

We can compare the establishment of commercial organizations in the colonial period to a large spider’s web covering all of Kampuchea. If we consider the peasants and consumers as flies or mosquitoes which get trapped in the web, we can see that the peasants and consumers are prey to the merchants, the spider which spins the web. The commercial system, the selling and exchanging of agricultural production in our country, suppresses production and squeezes the rural areas dry and tasteless, permanently maintaining them in their poverty.⁹¹

Here, Youn declares that this commercial system needed to be removed in order to prevent further decline. Ultimately, the solution was to reform the system that plagued the farmers into one that was far more egalitarian.⁹²

⁸⁸ Short, 64.

⁸⁹ Youn, *The Cambodian Peasantry*, 51.

⁹⁰ Youn, *The Cambodian Peasantry*, 52.

⁹¹ Hou Youn, *The Cambodian Peasantry* (Paris: The Sorbonne, 1955) From Burchett, *The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle*, 51.

⁹² Youn characterized the relationship as “the tree grows in the rural areas, but the fruit goes to the towns.” Pol Pot would think the same thing, claiming that his evacuation of the cities was to abolish this same commercial system.

Khieu Samphan, Youn's colleague and fellow PhD recipient from the Sorbonne, elaborated on theories that mirrored Frantz Fanon's advocacy of violent revolution. As historian Kenneth Quinn states, the unrelenting rage exercised against all who had been associated with Lon Nol or Sihanouk, the desire for complete and total revolution and the romanticization of wholesale violence were all prominent in Fanon's writing.⁹³ Fanon was staunchly anti-proletarian, anti-intellectual and vehemently anti-bourgeois, and regarded de-colonization a very violent process.⁹⁴ This opinion is conveyed in the following passages:

...decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder... In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldiers who are the official, instituted go-betweens... Non Violence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around a green baize table. Before any regrettable act has been performed or irreparable gesture made, before any blood has been shed. But if the masses, without waiting for the chairs to be arranged around the baize table, listen to their own voice and begin committing outrages and setting fire to buildings, the elites and the nationalist bourgeois parties will be seen rushing to the colonialists to exclaim. This is very serious! We do not know how it will end; we must find a solution - some sort of compromise. Compromise is very important in the phenomenon of decolonization, for it is very far from being a simple one...⁹⁵

Through his careful examination of Fanon's words, Samphan crystallized his own method that would allow Cambodia to achieve true independence.⁹⁶ He, too,

⁹³ Kenneth Quinn, "Explaining Terror", From *Cambodia 1975-1978: Rendez-vous with Death*, Karl Jackson ed., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 246.

⁹⁴ Quinn, 246.

⁹⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 61.

⁹⁶ R.A. Burglar, *The Eyes of the Pineapple: Revolutionary Intellectuals and Terror in Democratic Kampuchea*, (Saarbrücken, Germany: Verlag Breitenbach Publishers, 1990) 12.

saw Cambodia as a backward state that remained in its sad condition due to a neo-colonial legacy⁹⁷ and the exploitation of the people.

Samphan also believed that the continuing backward state of Cambodian structures after independence in 1954 was due to “the conditions of Cambodia’s ‘integration into the international economic systems’ which inhibited any escape from the country’s ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal’ socio-economic structures.”⁹⁸ Samphan had insisted that this was due to the conditions of Cambodia’s “integration into the international economic systems.”⁹⁹ It was because of men like Samphan that Sar joined the French Communist Party.

Sar became a member of the French Communist Party in 1952 and apparently “vowed a lifelong commitment to its cause.”¹⁰⁰ It can be argued that Sar learned the effectiveness of living a secret life during this time. His membership with the communists had to be held secret due to the Colonial government’s crackdown on involvement in leftist groups. According to Chandler, Sar “attended irregularly, kept in the background, and made little impression on his colleagues.”¹⁰¹ Short asserts that his lack of academic qualifications was actually advantageous since the FCP at this time “was viscerally anti-intellectual.”¹⁰² The group did not place a great deal of value on education and was more than happy to embrace a new

⁹⁷ In spite of being granted independence from France in 1954 (by virtue of the Geneva Accords), Cambodia was seen by many Khmer intellectuals as still colonized by virtue of the exploitative nature of foreign companies’ interests in Cambodia.

⁹⁸ Burchett, 51.

⁹⁹ Khieu Samphan, *Cambodia’s Economy and Problems of Industrialization* (Paris: The Sorbonne, 1959) 100-101.

¹⁰⁰ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 28.

¹⁰¹ Chandler, *Brother Number One...* 33.

¹⁰² Short, 66.

member whose mind had not been corrupted by a bourgeois instruction. All the Party asked was disciplined membership and a rigid following of the disciplinarian line set forth by the great “Comrade Stalin.” The Party’s demand for discipline forced Sar to follow orders and praise Stalin for his brilliance.

After reading Marx, Lenin, and Mao in the *Cercle*, Sar’s membership in the FCP led him to understand the importance of reading Stalin above all things. At the time, the French Communist Party was in its heyday and “was extremely Stalinist.”¹⁰³ Sar studied Stalin’s *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* and his 1938 papers, written during the Great Terror. These works inspired Sar’s love of “communism in one country”, Stalin’s primary principle. He soon began to quote Stalin often while his own rhetoric began to reflect a clear Stalinist influence. Sar was once quoted by historian Francois Debré as saying “without a solidly built and solidly directed party, no theory can be applied and the enemies of socialism will profit from these occasions to replace the leadership.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, it was important to establish a rigidly disciplined organization driven by a clearly-defined political vision to guide the revolution.¹⁰⁵ In the end, Sar’s exposure to national communism in Yugoslavia, national liberation methods in the *Cercle*, and hard line governance policies in the FCP, led to his devotion to a cause and ideal.

¹⁰³ Burglar, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Francois Debre, *Cambodge: la Revolution de la Foret*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1976) 82. From Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 34.

¹⁰⁵ The essences behind the cult of personality.

Part Three: The Birth of the Crocodile- Sar, Cambodia, and the Vietnamese

In Paris during the Fontainebleau Conference in July 1946, we were called to the Vietnamese delegation. “You will pay your respects to Uncle Ho”, they said. But we answered, “He is not our Uncle Ho.” Then they said, “We are brothers. You should pay your respects.” But we did not do it... We said to the representatives of the Yugoslavian Youth Federation: “It is not right that a country as fertile as Kampuchea should have such a small population.”¹⁰⁶ –Thiun Chum, Sar’s old colleague from France, 1981.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how Saloth Sar the mediocre student grew up in a comfortable atmosphere and journeyed to Europe to become fascinated with communist theories and nationalist ideologies. Sar’s experiences in Cambodia and under Vietnamese domination provided him with the means to put his nationalist aspirations into action. However, working with the Vietnamese “brothers” came at a price.

It has been alleged by historian Stephen Heder that the Viet Minh were responsible for the “betrayal” of the Khmer revolutionaries.¹⁰⁷ According to this view, “the Vietnamese sacrificed the Kampuchean communist movement at the Geneva Conference in 1954, when the Vietnamese delegation abandoned demands for representation of the Khmer communists and for the establishment of regroupment zones for their forces within Kampuchea.”¹⁰⁸ In essence, the Khmer

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Jan Myrdal, “Why is There Famine in Kampuchea?”, *Southeast Asia Chronicle* 77, No. 1, (February 1981), 17.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Heder, “The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict”, In *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979) 170. From Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 140.

¹⁰⁸ Heder, “The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict”, 170.

communists no longer trusted the Vietnamese to look out for interests other than those that benefited Vietnam and their quest for an “Indochina Federation.”¹⁰⁹

The Vietnamese recognized the concept of strength in numbers and the advantages of having a tripartite anti-colonial movement. During the struggle against French imperialism, the Viet Minh had relied heavily on mutual support between themselves and Cambodian revolutionaries. Hoang Anh, a senior Vietnamese communist official, urged his fellow nationalists to “devote considerable attention to Cambodia” since the group’s successes in South Vietnam depended upon how effectively the Viet Minh operated in Cambodia.¹¹⁰ After the departure of French forces from Phnom Penh, the Viet Minh continued to show interest in helping Cambodia, especially concerning the Khmer Rouge’s fight against the anti-communist Cambodian Prince Sihanouk and the US-backed General Lon Nol regime in 1970.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Indochina Federation: First proposed during the ICP meetings after the Second World War, the idea was that upon liberation from France, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia would unite under one government. Cambodians often believed this idea forfeited their autonomy since the likelihood of a strong Cambodian representation was very slim. While the idea was discarded by 1953, the Khmer Rouge accused their brothers to the East of plotting to conquer Cambodia and force it to join a Vietnamese-led federation.

¹¹⁰ Stephen J. Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 48.

¹¹¹ Prince Sihanouk was overthrown in a bloodless coup supported by American intelligence. While the Prince was on vacation in China, the US-backed forces of General Lon Nol seized power and launched harsh anti-communist policies. These were prompted by the American policy in Southeast Asia, most notably in Vietnam.

It was from this period that Sar grew to despise the Vietnamese. Like many Khmers, Sar was always cautious when associating with “the Yuon enemy.”¹¹² However, this wariness was not new, and in fact, stemmed from nearly a millennium of territorial rivalry in Southeast Asia. In the twelfth century, Cambodia was the strongest and the most advanced kingdom in Southeast Asia. The Khmer Empire of Angkor was as vast as it had ever been, stretching from Thailand to South Vietnam. But, as with all of the great empires in history, it began to decline in power and size as the Thai Empire and the Dai Viet¹¹³ kingdom expanded. This fluctuation was commonplace in Southeast Asia. As a result of the five hundred years of decline and loss of territory in one form or another, Khmers developed a strong fear of disappearing forever as the country was “swallowed up.”¹¹⁴

In spite of this feeling of animosity towards Vietnam, Saloth Sar proclaimed he was willing to dedicate his life to the revolution in Cambodia¹¹⁵ and returned home in 1953. Sar’s exposure to communist thinking intensified his Cambodian nationalist sentiment.¹¹⁶ His association with the Viet Minh introduced him to the marriage of nationalism with communism in an Asian context. Sar now regarded communism as the perfect means to an ends; moreover, communism was seen as the most effective way to liberate Cambodia.

¹¹² Yuon: Khmer Rouge term for the Vietnamese. Yuon was often paired with the words “enemy”, “rival”, and “lackey.” See *Red Flag* Special Number, October-November, 1977, all.

¹¹³ Dai Viet: Kingdom of Vietnam from 939-1802, responsible for breaking with Song China and successfully preventing Mongolian conquest. It was succeeded by the Nguyen dynasty in the early nineteenth century.

¹¹⁴ Often used an anti-Vietnamese slogan by the Khmer Rouge when referring to Kampuchea’s history and Vietnam’s “annexationist nature.”

¹¹⁵ Heder Interview..., in Chandler, *Brother Number One*..., 39.

¹¹⁶ Chandler, *The Tragedy*..., 52.

Events in Cambodia provided him with fertile ground from which to grow his revolution. Son Ngoc Thanh,¹¹⁷ the leader of the pro-democracy Khmer Serei movement in Cambodia,¹¹⁸ had been prevented from taking power by the French in favor of Prince Sihanouk.¹¹⁹ Thanh's supporters were enraged and launched an armed resistance against the occupying forces of the French in 1946. The resistance was known as the Khmer Issarak and had a broad membership consisting of rightists and leftists,¹²⁰ but only a few of its leaders had any association or training with the pro-communist Viet Minh.¹²¹ To this point, the Issarak front was still guided by Cambodians.

By January 1953, Sar stayed for a time with his brother Loth Suong in Phnom Penh. Less than a month later, he left to join another resistance.¹²² He had not yet espoused Maoism, or any tenet of Mao's thought, as his own personal political ideology. Suong recounted that Sar "praised Russia" and exclaimed "his interest in

¹¹⁷ After the First Indochina War, Thanh created the Khmer Serei militia to fight Sihanouk (who had come to regard Thanh as one of his greatest enemies) but were largely unsuccessful. He would be exiled by Lon Nol in the second Cambodian civil war, only to die in Vietnamese custody in 1977.

¹¹⁸ Khmer Serei: Meaning "Free Khmer", it was an anti-communist and anti-monarchist army that operated during French colonial times until the fall of Phnom Penh in 1975. The most notable event in the Serei's history was the 1963 arrest and execution of Serei activist Preap In. The event revealed Sihanouk's harsh repression of the Khmer Serei, and execution remained in the memories of Cambodians for many years. See Short, *Pol Pot...*, 156-157.

¹¹⁹ At the time, Sihanouk was widely criticized for being a French puppet ruler. He remained very culturally significant among the rural populations.

¹²⁰ Achar Mean and Achar Sok, who went on to become better-known as Son Ngoc Minh and Tou Samouth respectively, were the founders of communism in Cambodia in the 1940s. After an incident in 1945 in which a monastery was struck by stray US Air Force bombs, Minh fled and eventually made his way to the Viet Minh. From there, they recruited like-minded Khmers to support the Vietnamese revolution.

¹²¹ Morris, 31.

¹²² Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 41.

returning to work in Yugoslavia.”¹²³ He also met with Khmer leftists from all walks of life in order to craft his “understanding” of the poorer classes.¹²⁴ By this point in time, it was clear that Sar was both a strong nationalist as well as a pro-Stalinist based on his time with the FCP. However, as with all leftist Khmers at the time, national liberation was held above all other ambitions.

Whether Sar joined the Issarak or not is debated by both Chandler and Serge Thion. It was the end of the war, and, as historian Serge Thion states, “he does not seem to have played a very significant role.”¹²⁵ Thion’s theory contradicts Sar’s own account, in which he stated that he had “immediately joined the clandestine movement” and “supported the revolution against the French colonists.”¹²⁶ Thion’s account also conflicts with Chandler’s argument that Sar became a full-time militant and revolutionary. Since Sar’s time with the Issarak was short due to the group’s dissolution, it can be argued that he became fully devoted to communism only after the failure of the Issarak movement.

As a communist, Sar recognized the difficult existence of the Cambodian lower classes as a direct consequence of capitalism and colonialism. His first known publication was an eight page political essay titled “Monarchy or Democracy?”,¹²⁷

¹²³ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 41.

¹²⁴ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 22.

¹²⁵ Serge Thion, “The Cambodian Idea of Revolution” In *Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*, David Chandler and Ben Kiernan eds., (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983) 20.

¹²⁶ Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot...* 21-22.

¹²⁷ According to Chandler, the essay was overheated in rhetoric and uncertain in its grasp of history. It also made no distinction between the Chinese, French and Russian democratic movements, stating that all three shared the common anti-monarchy stance. It also does not offer any solutions to the present struggle in Cambodia, nor does it provide a method for democracy.

and was part of a special issue in the *Khmer Nisut* magazine.¹²⁸ It was written under the pseudonym *Khmer daom*, meaning literally “the Original Khmer.” The issue called for an end to both Sihanouk’s monarchical rule and to French imperialism. To him, monarchy was “an unjust doctrine, a malodorous running sore that just people must eliminate.”¹²⁹

He frequently visited the capital and one day came into contact with Pham Va Ba, a Vietnamese local representative of the Indochina Communist Party (ICP).¹³⁰ He asked to be admitted as a member of the federated communist party rather than the newly-established Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party, mainly due to his connections with the FCP and his ambition to be involved in an international group.¹³¹ The KPRP was founded by Minh and Samouth, two ethnic Vietnamese Khmers who, by virtue of their being Vietnamese, made many Khmers uneasy. Also, the KPRP was under the supervision of the Vietnamese.¹³² Sar would eventually join the Cambodian party once they had agreed on following the ICP’s political line. He branched off to found the Worker’s Party of Cambodia in 1953.¹³³

Sar, with the support of his colleagues Sary, Samphan, Youn and Sen, became the covert leader of the clandestine movement and the Prachaeon Front.¹³⁴ His party

¹²⁸ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 37.s

¹²⁹ Pol Pot quoted in *Bangkok Post*, 22 February, 1993. In Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 37.

¹³⁰ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 41.

¹³¹ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 41-42.

¹³² Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 13.

¹³³ Sar would change the name of the party after his return from China in 1966. It was called the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) with its foundation date being reset to 1960 instead of 1953.

¹³⁴ Prachaeon Front: His personal wing of the KPRP that consisted of his future policy-men Samphan, Sary, and Nuon Chea.

grew exponentially in size due to the secret American bombings of Cambodia in 1969¹³⁵ in Nixon's failed attempt to strike at Viet Minh posts along the Vietnamese-Kampuchean border.¹³⁶ The people affected turned to the CPK since Sar made lofty promises and ensured justice would be done against the "imperialists" once the CPK took power. Sihanouk's staunch anti-communist stance did not help the cause either. Soon, Cambodians "embraced an alliance based on mutual interest with their Vietnamese neighbors, disregarding historical animosities."¹³⁷

Even though their "brothers" to the East were fighting for the same goals, strong barriers to Vietnamese influence over the Cambodian people still persisted.¹³⁸ There were dozens of potential causes for this mistrust. Khmers often spoke of memories of pre-colonial Dai Viet division and conquest of former Cambodian territories. These memories were, according to historian Stephen Morris, "deeply rooted in the Cambodian national consciousness."¹³⁹

The Vietnamese were quickly recognized as the possible annihilators of Khmer history, land and culture. To start, there were about eight million people living in Cambodia by the 1970s, compared to a Vietnamese population that was nearly eight times that number.¹⁴⁰ Also, there were historical events from the past that added to the growing paranoia. The paranoia originated from the decline of

¹³⁵ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 18.

¹³⁶ Kate Frieson believes that Sar's group grew exponentially as result of events that occurred outside of their control. The American bombings forced people to turn to radicalism, harsh repression by Sihanouk's forces turned many Khmers to regard the Prince's policies as too violent. She also asserts that the communists appealed people's desire to survive and be fed.

¹³⁷ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 12.

¹³⁸ Morris, 32.

¹³⁹ Morris, 32.

¹⁴⁰ Myrdal, 17.

Angkor in conjunction with the growth of the Dai Viet kingdom. As Cambodia grew smaller, Vietnam grew larger and more powerful in numbers. While they ignored the historical evidence that showed that each kingdom in Southeast Asia had its period of power in the area, the Khmer Rouge described Vietnam's "annexationist nature." It was firmly believed that the Vietnamese had never stopped in their attempts to devour Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge portrayal of the Vietnamese overlooked some aspects of Angkor's over-expansionist ventures of the past.

The first chapter of the *Livre Noir*¹⁴¹ discussed the early Vietnamese conquests of Champa and the Great South.¹⁴² The Khmer Rouge made statements like "the Cham race was totally exterminated by the Vietnamese" and blamed them for "massacres" of their conquered foes.¹⁴³ The *Livre Noir* continues by alleging that in 1715, the Vietnamese "through their adventures controlled" the Cochinchina provinces of Ha Tien and Rach Gia.¹⁴⁴ As Thion asserts, these two areas were "indisputably Khmer territories."¹⁴⁵ The *Livre Noir* states that the Vietnamese used a process that "consisted of nibbling away at the territories, encroaching upon the borders and purely and simply establishing geographical maps by themselves" and

¹⁴¹ *Livre Noir* or *Black Paper*: 1977 KR document that discussed Vietnam's crimes against the Kampuchean revolution and its people.

¹⁴² Democratic Kampuchea, *Livre Noir: Faits et Preuves des Actes D'Agression et D'Annexion du Vietnam Contre le Kampuchea*, (Paris: Les Editions de L'Encre, 1979) 1-45,

¹⁴³ *Livre Noir: Chapitre 1*, 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Livre Noir: Chapitre 1*, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Serge Thion, *Watching Cambodia: Ten Paths to Enter the Cambodian Triangle*, (Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus, 1993) 46.

that “the French just signed.”¹⁴⁶ The regime’s quest to brand Vietnam as an evil annexationist power in order to rally Cambodians to support the Party’s own expansionist agenda will be discussed in a later chapter. Ultimately, the whole nation and people seemed to have some sort of fear that the Vietnamese were coming and there was nothing that could be done to stop them from “swallowing Kampuchea whole.”¹⁴⁷

Before Sar’s seizure of power, Vietnamese populations emerged as a dominant presence in Southern Cambodia. As recently as the Second Indochina War of 1946-1954, large Vietnamese masses flooded across the border and joined their Chinese comrades in the cities as merchants and traders, thus making cities like Phnom Penh largely non-Khmer.¹⁴⁸ Forced from their own cities, many Khmers like Samphan and Youn developed anti-urban and anti-Vietnamese ideologies. In their view, the Khmers were deliberately forced by the Vietnamese to live a poor and rural life. In sum, the Vietnamese and not the French were viewed as the real exploiters of Cambodia.¹⁴⁹

This is not to say the French did not play a part in establishing this hatred of the Vietnamese. It would be a difficult task to attempt to absolve the French colonial administration of their many disregards for Cambodians when drawing the borders of their newly-conquered territory. In 1914, the current territory of Tay Ninh in South Vietnam was almost entirely inhabited by Khmers.¹⁵⁰ The French

¹⁴⁶ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 9.*

¹⁴⁷ Popular saying by the Khmer Rouge in both the *Livre Noir* and *Red Flag* papers.

¹⁴⁸ Morris, 32.

¹⁴⁹ Morris, 32.

¹⁵⁰ Morris, 32-33.

drew the borders with a strong intent to favor their prized colony in Cochinchina. In this same spirit, the French favored drawing the borders generously to make sure that they governed the most fertile territories while making the rest protectorates. In sum, many Cambodians were bitter about the favored treatment bestowed upon their Vietnamese neighbors.¹⁵¹

Shifting to the Second Indochina War, Cambodia's involvement became crucial to the Vietnamese. Ports in Southern Cambodia were used to receive Chinese weapons and ammunition. Cambodian territory was also used in the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail, the secret supply route that covertly transported arms and soldiers to the war in South Vietnam.¹⁵² It seemed as if it was only a matter of time before the Cambodian communists, including the newly-revolutionary Saloth Sar, joined their brothers in combat against the Americans. This led Sar in 1963 to North Vietnam to receive military and political training.¹⁵³ There is speculation that the North Vietnamese requested a handful of Khmer leftists to discuss the "escalation of the war with the Americans and the expanded role the Cambodian Communists would be called upon to play."¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, Sar spent two years working with the Viet Minh as essentially "a hostage to the Vietnamese."¹⁵⁵

As early as 1963, a Communist militant spotted Saloth Sar in the eastern Cambodian province of Kompong Cham, in an encampment in that region known

¹⁵¹ While France mapped Cochinchina favorably, it also made sure that Vietnamese workers were the ones tilling the lands and exploiting the resources. This forced many Khmer inhabitants of the area to relocate into the North or cross back into Cambodia.

¹⁵² Morris, 40.

¹⁵³ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 67.

¹⁵⁴ Chandler, *Brother Number One...* 69.

¹⁵⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 67.

by the code name “Office (*munthi*) 100.”¹⁵⁶ If Sar wanted to leave the encampment, he had to ask for permission from the Vietnamese. Sar had been sent there to rally Khmers to support the Viet Minh while also waiting for further instructions. However, all recruits were not allowed to bear arms. In fact, none of the Cambodian communists were permitted to be armed. This was done to ensure cooperation with any and all of the Viet Minh’s plans. According to the *Live Noir*, Le Duan was extremely critical of the Khmer communists because they had tried to adopt their own political line and not the one being employed and religiously followed by the Viet Minh.¹⁵⁷ As Chandler puts it, “from Office 100 Cambodia’s revolution seemed a long way off.”¹⁵⁸

Khmer Communists were tired of being treated as inferiors, as students being taught by Vietnamese teachers. The Khmers wanted their own line, their own party, and their own nationalistic goals. The “brotherly” relationship began to disintegrate and the seeds of Sar’s hatred of the Vietnamese were sown. In the end, Vietnam’s revolution took precedence over Cambodia’s aspirations for autonomy. That is precisely why in 1966 when Sar was offered an opportunity to visit the People’s Republic of China as a Vietnamese representative he took flight without hesitation.

¹⁵⁶ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 67.

¹⁵⁷ *Livre Noir: Chapitre 3*, 5-7.

¹⁵⁸ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 68.

CHAPTER TWO

Part One- To enter the Tiger's Den: Evaluating Pol Pot Ideology and Maoism

We have studied the experience of world revolution, particularly the works of Comrade Mao Zedong and the experience of the Chinese revolution of the period (1957) that has an important impact for us. After assessing the specific experience of Kampuchea and studying a number of instances of world revolution, and particularly under the guidance of the works of Comrade Mao Zedong, we have found a way appropriate for the realities of Kampuchea. Thus, our Party committee set the Party's line, and this line was debated and approved by the first congress, held at Phnom Penh on September 30, 1960.¹ – Pol Pot, 1977

In 1965, Saloth Sar received permission to visit Beijing from the Viet Minh after nearly three years of service along the Vietnamese- Kampuchean border. As we saw in the first chapter, Sar's ideology was a mix of Stalinism and Khmer nationalism and was quite reminiscent of national communism. However, it was his trip to China that shed new light on these viewpoints. Throughout his life, Sar scarcely mentioned his 1965 visit to Beijing. As a result, very little has been written about who he met and what he did there. While a few accounts of the event have been written, not enough attention has been paid to the importance of Mao Zedong's revolution and how it inspired Sar's ideological development.²

This chapter demonstrates that Sar's time in China and exposure to Beijing during the Cultural Revolution deeply influenced his future political ideology. Upon

¹ Pol Pot, "Excerpt from Pol Pot's Speech to a Press Conference in Beijing, September 29, 1977, During his Visit to China," *People's Daily*, October 3, 1977. See Foreign Broadcast Information Service, October 3, 1977, A20. See also Pol Pot, "Speech made by Comrade Pol Pot at the Banquet given in Honor of the Delegation of the Communist Party of China and the Government of the People's Republic of China", (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 5 November 1978) 1-19.

² Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, 223, 232, 259-260, 277, 281. Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 6, 32, 66, 73. Short, *Pol Pot: The History of a Nightmare*, 13, 41, 148, 150. Concerning Khmer Rouge slogans, See Locard, *Pol Pot's Little Red Book: the Saying of Angkar*, 61-98.

his return to Cambodia, Sar crafted his own revolutionary government to reflect Mao's political vision. The chapter will be organized into three parts to more clearly demonstrate Sar's Maoist influence. The first section will consist of an analysis of Sar's trip to China in 1965-1966. The second part assesses the impact of Mao's major anti-colonial policies, such as New Democracy, "people's war" and "self-reliance", on Sar's Cambodian resistance. The third segment examines the influence of Mao's highly-controversial Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution on the formation of Sar's political ideals. To truly understand how and why Sar became a disciple of China's Great Helmsman, one must first look at the trip that led him to espouse Mao Zedong thought.

Following the death of Stalin on the 5th of March 1953, Sar needed a new ideological mentor. The era of Stalinism in Russia had ended and Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, had launched a widespread de-Stalinization process. Under Khrushchev, Stalin had fallen from favor. The death tolls of the former leader's highly controversial policies were made public in an effort to increase the Russian peoples' support of the new General Secretary. As Khrushchev won the favor of his Soviet people, he alienated his greatest ally. Mao Zedong regarded Joseph Stalin as one of the great Marxist-Leninist leaders and idolized him. As a result, China shifted away from the new Soviet line of thinking. Soon afterward, a heated personal battle between the two superpowers over influence in the Third World emerged. This was subsequently referred to as the Sino-Soviet Split. While the split complicated foreign affairs matters for the Vietnamese who relied on both Soviet and Chinese support, it made the choice very clear for the Cambodian

communists.³ By following the Soviet line as led by the Vietnamese, their revolution was stagnant.⁴ It was then that Sar looked to China for a new revolutionary line based on the thought of Mao Zedong.⁵

Sar's first trip to China has been written about, but few authors have provided primary sources that prove that it happened. What we do know of the trip, according to historians Christopher Goscha and Thomas Engelbert, has come to us largely through Vietnamese sources.⁶ In addition, the 1984 document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Kampuchea briefly discusses Sar's first visit to China. The paper was written during the

³ Sihanouk, Lon Nol, and the Cambodian communists all supported Beijing at some point in time due to a reciprocal relationship. Sihanouk was favored over French rule, Lon Nol over American occupation, and the CPK over Lon Nol's regime.

⁴ Morris, 38, and Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 72. Sar left Cambodia with a strong animosity toward the Vietnamese. Despite the fact that there was "no evidence" that suggests the Vietnamese and Khmer communists were in any open conflict, he was still very angry with the Vietnamese Communists' treatment of the Cambodian revolution. Under the tutelage of the Vietnamese, Cambodia's national interests were always secondary and often tied to the Vietnamese concept of an Indochina Federation. Nevertheless, he continued to behave in a deferential manner toward his brothers. The more likely cause of Sar's sudden interest in Beijing was the ongoing bloody struggle between the Vietnamese and the Americans. As Chandler notes, "the Chinese revolution had already succeeded and was entering a new phase, while Vietnam was bogged down in its open-ended war with the United States."

⁵ Pol Pot claimed that the need for a new line by 1960 was "urgent, without which the revolutionary movement would have been in grave danger." See Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea: Speech by Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kampuchean Communist Party*, (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1977).

⁶ Thomas Engelbert and Chris Goscha, *Falling out of Touch: A Study of the Vietnamese Communist Policy Towards an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975*, (Clayton, Australia: Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash Asia Institute, 1995), 77

Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia from 1979-1989,⁷ and is a one hundred-and-thirty page diatribe of the role played by the Chinese in inspiring and supporting the Khmer Rouge. However, it clearly gives the year of his arrival as 1965, states that he met Mao briefly and left a lasting impression on the aging Chinese leader.⁸ It also states that when Sar returned to Cambodia in 1966, he “completely changed the political program” to one that was greatly influenced by the Chinese model.⁹

Sar also never mentioned Mao in his Kampuchean Communist Party platform in the late 1960s, which he presented to Hanoi in 1965. However, according to Goscha and Engelbert, an October 1967 letter from Sar to the Chinese Communist Party makes such a reference:

Comrades, we are extremely pleased to report that in terms of ideological outlook, as well as our revolutionary line, that we are preparing the implementation of a people’s war which has been moved towards an unstoppable point. Simultaneously, in terms of organization, there are also favorable circumstances, as well as for the execution of working affairs. Thus, we dare to affirm that: although there are obstacles ahead, we will still continue to put into effect the revolutionary work according to the line of the people’s war which Chairman Mao Zedong has pointed out in terms of its independence, sovereignty, and self-reliance.¹⁰

⁷ After Pol Pot’s failed 1978 invasion of Southern Vietnam, the Vietnamese counter-offensive toppled the Khmer Rouge regime. Heng Samrin was placed as the new leader in Cambodia by the Vietnamese who remained in Phnom Penh until 1989. The ten years were characterized as “Vietnamese hegemony in action” by Khmers and many sympathizers of the exiled Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamization policies that were implemented by Samrin certainly reflected the worst of Khmer fears- the dissolution of Khmer sovereignty and culture- through the new laws that declared Vietnamese the new official language.

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Democratic People’s Republic of Kampuchea, *The Chinese Ruler’s Crimes Against Kampuchea*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information, April 1984) 40.

⁹ Ministry..., “The Chinese Rulers’ Crimes Against Kampuchea”, 40.

¹⁰ Quoted in ‘Tim Hieu,’ 44, and ‘Quan Diem,’ 14, in Engelbert and Goscha, 80-81.

Here, Sar outlines many of the principles he heard in Defense Minister Lin Lin's¹¹ speech, which will be discussed at a greater length in the second section. Clearly, Sar was in China in either 1965 or 1966 and was greatly impressed by what he saw. The length of his stay, however, is also a subject of heated debate and must be clarified.

Sar supposedly spent "four months or more in China."¹² Thion believes that the "apparent length of Pol Pot's stay in China, about six months, suggests that he underwent some formal training while he was there in 1965."¹³ Historian Kate Frieson believes he spent a few years in China before his return in the late 1960s.¹⁴ Kiernan describes Sar as having returned as early as 1966 and before the launching of the Cultural Revolution. It can be argued here that Sar had spent no more than a half-year in Beijing and did witness the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. This is so because the rhetoric he would later use in his ascent to power clearly reflected

¹¹ Lin Biao: Chinese Communist military leader who was an important participant in the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, especially in Northeastern China, and was the General who led the People's Liberation Army on the Long March to Beijing in 1949. He abstained from becoming a major player in politics until he rose to prominence during the Cultural Revolution, climbing as high as second-in-charge and Mao Zedong's designated and constitutional successor and comrade-in-arms.

¹² Ben Kiernan, "Interview with Kieu Minh", (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 22 October 1980). See also Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 222-223.

¹³ Serge Thion, "Chronology of Khmer Communism" From *Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*, David Chandler and Ben Kiernan eds., (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983) 296.

¹⁴ Kate Frieson, "The Political Nature of Democratic Kampuchea", *Pacific Affairs* 1 No. 3, (Autumn, 1988), 419-420.

an exposure to the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵ Therefore, Thion's assertion seems the most appropriate for this study.

When he did arrive in 1965 he apparently met and worked with Deng Xiaoping.¹⁶ He was received by Mao Zedong's officials and "met the Chairman himself"¹⁷ for a brief moment before his return to Cambodia. Deng Xiaoping and President Liu Shaoqi were given the responsibility of greeting Sar and his comrades upon their arrival.¹⁸ As far as the Chinese were concerned, Sar was not treated as an independent revolutionary but "as a Vietnamese ally paying his respects."¹⁹ Ultimately, the Chinese officials reaffirmed their support for Sihanouk as Cambodia's leader, something that certainly disappointed Sar.

As luck would have it, Sar was in China at the exact same time as Prince Sihanouk. The Cambodian regent was on vacation in Beijing and was very close to the Chinese government. Sihanouk praised China as Cambodia's closest and most-reliable friend.²⁰ In turn, the Chinese government backed Sihanouk as Cambodia's rightful leader in spite of the Cambodia communists' best efforts. While he was in Beijing, Sar was instructed to "refrain from outright armed rebellion against Sihanouk."²¹ In doing so, the Chinese had earned Sihanouk's trust.

¹⁵ Locard, 61-92. Chandler also noted that there was never a Khmer translation of Mao's Red Book, which meant that his famous quotes were never circulated in Cambodia.

¹⁶ Kiernan, "Interview with Kieu Minh", 222-223.

¹⁷ Ministry..., *The Chinese Rulers' Crimes Against Kampuchea*, 40.

¹⁸ Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 222.

¹⁹ Chandler, *Brother Number One*... 72.

²⁰ Nayan Chanda, "Pol Pot Plays up to Beijing", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 October 1977, 30. Sihanouk described China as "the synonym for Cambodia's survival with independence, peace and territorial integrity."

²¹ Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 223.

Strangely, Sihanouk's confidence in a Chinese willingness to deter communist activity in his country was rooted in the mistaken belief that the Cambodian communists were a Vietnamese puppet organization.²² In truth, the Cambodian communists decided by as early as 1966 that they could no longer have relations with Vietnam since there was a fundamental contradiction between the Kampuchean and the Vietnamese revolutions.²³ Sihanouk was also very skeptical of the Chinese policy interests in "alienating the Kampuchean Party from the Vietnamese one."²⁴ Sar received encouragement from the Chinese "for his adoption of a hostile posture towards Sihanouk."²⁵ This strategy was called the combined armed and political struggle. Ultimately, the Chinese desire to have a "friendly"²⁶ regime in Southeast Asia led to the country's change in attitude toward Sihanouk.

Also, Sar's trip to China "coincided with an increasingly radical period in Chinese communism."²⁷ At this time, the Chinese communists were fixated on promoting Third World revolution with a particular emphasis on self reliance. Due to earlier Maoist policies of agricultural development, notably the Great Leap Forward, the Party also promoted the importance of the countryside surrounding the cities. Sar told Vietnamese Central Committee members that when he expressed his views on the Cambodian Party platform, Chinese leaders "praised it" and had

²² Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 222.

²³ *Livre Noir: Chapitre 3*, 5, 42.

²⁴ Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 223.

²⁵ Kiernan, *How Pol Pot...*, 223.

²⁶ Although China and Vietnam were on stable terms, the Soviet Union's growing influence on Vietnam and Laos left the CCP concerned. It was in China's best interest to have a new "friend" in Southeast Asia should Vietnam decide to cut ties with the Chinese in favor of an alliance with the Soviets.

²⁷ Engelbert and Goscha, 77.

recommended that he rely on the peasantry, a vital part of Mao's people's war, and to "oppose American imperialism and Washington's plans to widen the war in Indochina."²⁸ While it is very doubtful that the Chinese offered extensive support to the Cambodian communists, they did recognize the advantages of a China-friendly ally to counter-balance the increasing Soviet influence in both Vietnam and Laos.²⁹

At this time, the Chinese communists were least likely to say "no" to the Cambodian movement so long as they sided with the Maoist camp against the Soviet Union.³⁰ Sar realized that if he sided with the Chinese, he could then get access to arms and the help of an influential international friend. Sar described the importance of an alliance with China in the following passage:

We went to China for the first time and met the Chinese Communist Party during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Our Chinese friends wholeheartedly supported our political line, for they were then battling revisionism at a time when classes were struggling with each other at the international level. For that reason, our Chinese friends were united with us in the analysis of class in society, in the determination of classes, and in the context of the new democratic revolution. It was only when we went abroad that we realized that our movement was quite correct and that our political line was also fundamentally correct.³¹

Here, Sar has clearly shown that his new revolutionary line was inspired by his 1965 visit and brief meeting with his new idol, Chairman Mao Zedong. Upon his return, Sar was certain that through a strong partnership with China through a shared social, political and ideological goal, Cambodia's revolution would succeed.

²⁸ Hoang Van Hoan cited by Engelbert and Goscha, 78.

²⁹ Pobzeb Vang, *Five Principles of Chinese Foreign Policies*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House Publishing, 2008) 237.

³⁰ Engelbert and Goscha, 79.

³¹ Pol Pot, "Pol Pot Presente les Experiences du Cambodge a Khamtan, Secretaire-General du Parti Communiste Thailandais", (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: August, 1977) 23.

Part Two- To Unleash the Tiger: Pol Pot and Mao's Revolutionary Strategy

“The relation between Marxism-Leninism and the Chinese Revolution is the same as between the arrow and target. Some comrades merely fondle the arrow, murmuring “excellent arrow, excellent arrow”, and do nothing about it. The arrow of Marxism-Leninism must be used to hit the target of the Chinese Revolution...If it was otherwise, would we want to study Marxism-Leninism?”³² - Mao Zedong's 1942 Speech “Rectify the Party's Style of Work”

To Sar, Mao's revolution was truly “a beacon of light.”³³ While in China, it is alleged by Chandler that Sar heard Lin Biao's speech “Long Live the Victory of People's War!” Lin Biao was known for his devotion to the Chinese Party line and was as devout a Maoist as anyone in China. He often spoke publicly extolling Mao's clear-sighted revolution and urging the people to continue to push tirelessly for an improved China. The speech had a great impact on Sar since it was part of Mao's campaign to regain his people's favor, which he had lost following the disastrous Great Leap Forward.³⁴ The speech “threw down the gauntlet to ‘revisionists’ like Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev”, who argued for “peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world.”³⁵ More importantly, the speech introduced the young Khmer to Mao's most successful theories.

It also defended many of Mao's ideas, most of the ones mentioned were already in action, such as the concept of rural mobilization, mass exodus from the

³² Mao Zedong, “Rectify the Party's Style of Work”, (Beijing: 1 February 1942).

³³ Howard J. De Nike, John B. Quigley, and Kenneth Jay Robinson, *Genocide in Cambodia: The Trials of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 533.

³⁴ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 73.

³⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One...*, 73.

urban centers, and the suffocation of the cities³⁶ just as Mao's communists had succeeded at doing in the first years of their reign. Lin's speech was of prime importance since it reaffirmed the success of New Democracy. The infamous Lin Biao speech recounted and praised Mao Zedong's final victory over the "Japanese Imperialists" who had attempted to "subjugate China and swallow up the whole of Asia."³⁷ Lin extolled Mao Zedong and how he had led his communist forces through three successive civil wars against the quasi-colonial Kuomintang forces of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Now in its seventeenth year in operation, Mao's revolution was the perfect example of a successful Asian revolution.³⁸ This was so because of the Chairman's emphasis on revolutionary tactics that were applicable in colonized countries.

Virtually every revolutionary movement emphasizes nationalism. What made Mao's model of anti-imperialism more appropriate for the Cambodian revolutionaries was its focus on Third World revolution. Mao argued that revolutions in colonies, or semi-colonial semi-feudal states, had to take place in two stages: first, a "democratic revolution", carried out by an alliance of different classes, and afterwards a "socialist revolution."³⁹ Even though he was adamant that the bourgeoisie were "unreliable allies who would turn tail at the first sign of

³⁶ Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 66.

³⁷ Lin Biao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War: In Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan", (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965) 42.

³⁸ For a detailed look at Mao's ascent to power in China, see Spence, 102-134.

³⁹ Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy", *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 341.

trouble”⁴⁰, the New Democracy phase of revolution was “necessary and cannot be dispensed with.”⁴¹

Sar made the connection between New Democracy and his experiences with the Vietnamese anti-colonial resistance. The Cambodian revolutionaries were driven by national communism by virtue of a familiar anti-imperialist line with their “brothers” to the East. Both the Vietnamese and Cambodian fronts recruited from a broad base of political and socio-economic groups. In many cases, this ranged from the wealthiest doctors and lawyers to the poorest farmers. This, of course, changed drastically upon the Khmer Rouge’s 1975 seizure of power, but for the duration of the anti-colonial movement, membership was open to all peoples interested in liberation. Pol Pot called upon the “beloved brothers, sisters, workers, youths, students, teachers and functionaries to rebel”, since it was “time for them to rise up and liberate Phnom Penh.”⁴²

Also, Mao Zedong’s emphasis on the power of the people as revolutionary forces further enhanced Mao’s theory of New Democracy.⁴³ China's new politics,

⁴⁰ Short, 70.

⁴¹ Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 341. Lin mentioned the Japanese invasion in 1931, during which Mao recognized the importance of Chinese sovereignty and therefore set aside his differences with the fascist Kuomintang. Even though he had fought against Chiang for nearly two decades, he formed an alliance with the Kuomintang to resist the Japanese aggression. Lin Biao said that the Party “made a series of adjustments in its policies” in order to unite all the Chinese forces against the Japanese, “including the Kuomintang and all the anti-Japanese strata” to fight together against a common foe. See also Mao Zedong, “Problems of Strategy in Guerilla War Against Japan”, *Selected Works Volume II*, (Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1965) 81-82.

⁴² Voice of the National United Front of Cambodia, (16 April 1975), Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Asia Pacific, 16 April 1975, H6. See Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 31.

⁴³ Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 341-342.

economy and culture were “the politics, economy and culture of New Democracy”,⁴⁴ and called for the people to develop a revolutionary spirit that the Chairman himself regarded as the driving force behind New Democracy. It was the duty of people throughout the world to “put an end to the aggression and oppression perpetrated by imperialism.”⁴⁵ This called for an appropriate military strategy.⁴⁶

Mao’s infamous military strategy of “people’s war”⁴⁷ was his most important contribution to Third World revolutionaries. Mao’s strategy relied on the support of the population and engaging the enemy in guerrilla warfare in less than favorable conditions for both sides. By drawing the enemy into the interior, the guerilla forces would use attrition and other means of protracted warfare to bleed the enemy forces dry.⁴⁸ As a result, people’s war was a war in which a weak semi-colonial and semi-feudal country could triumph over a strong imperialist country.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 342.

⁴⁵ Mao Zedong, “Interview with the Hsinhua News Agency Correspondent”, (Beijing: September 29, 1958).

⁴⁶ To Mao, all reactionaries were “paper tigers” and the people of a country were the really powerful agents. See Mao Zedong, “Talk with the American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong”, *Selected Works, Vol. IV*, 100. Mao also believed that in the “final analysis”, the imperialist reactionaries’ “persecution of the revolutionary people only served to accelerate the people’s revolutions on a broader and more intense scale.” See Mao Zedong, “Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution”, (Beijing: November 6, 1957). Mao predicted that in due time, over ninety percent of the world’s population, most of whom were under colonial dominion, would rise up and struggle against imperialism. See Mao Zedong, “Interview with Hsihua...”

⁴⁷ People’s war had three protracted war stages: strategic defensive, strategic stalemate and the strategic offensive. During the Khmer Rouge war with Vietnam, all three stages were completely ignored.

⁴⁸ Mao Zedong, “On Protracted War”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 115-117.

⁴⁹ Mao Zedong, “On Protracted War”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 156. People’s War was not a strategy of aggression but instead was a strategy of aggressive defense. As Mao stated, “the enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the

Sar was taken by the idea that this strategy was Mao's most thorough effort to change the way wars between colonizers and the colonized were fought. He learned that Cambodia's revolution could benefit from following the same strategy in their fight against "imperialist forces." By 1977, the Khmer Rouge reminisced of its successful application of people's war with reference to the 1968-1969 struggles against Sihanouk.⁵⁰ Sar wrote the following:

We have reached an important turning point. We have mastered how to undertake the revolution in our country... Our past experiences, notably... in using political violence and, in part, armed violence, from the end of 1966 to the middle of 1967 have convinced us that organizationally and ideologically our people are ready... to launch a true people's war. We are now exerting leadership in the country as a whole.⁵¹

Through the study of Mao's protracted war struggle in China, Cambodia's revolutionaries could achieve the same ends.⁵² He was quoted as saying "we have studied the experiences of world revolution, notably the actions of comrade Mao Zedong and the experiences of the Chinese revolution which for us is very important."⁵³

The last major portion of Lin's speech emphasized the importance of self-reliance in the struggle for independence against imperialism. Lin spoke of China's iron will to endure the harsh realities of war, most notably, how they survived by

enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue." See also Mao Zedong, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie fire", *Selected Works, Volume 1*, 124.

⁵⁰ Pol Pot, "Learning from Our Four Year Plan", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (October-November, 1977) 6.

⁵¹ Pol Pot, "Lettre du Comite Permanent du CC du CPK au Bureau Politique du CC du CPC", (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 16 Octobre 1967).

⁵² Pol Pot, "Excerpt from Pol Pot's Speech to a Press Conference in Beijing, September 29, 1977, During his Visits to China", *Peoples Daily*, (October 3, 1977). See De Nike, Quigley and Robinson, 459.

⁵³ Pol Pot, "Excerpt...", 459.

their means only. He quoted Mao, who during the struggle said the following on the importance of China's own national resources and its role as the fuel of the people's revolution:

We stand for self reliance. We hope for foreign aid *but cannot be dependent on it; we depend on our own efforts*, on the creative power of the whole army and the entire people.⁵⁴

On what basis should our policy rest? It should rest *on our own strength*, and that means regeneration through one's own efforts. We are not alone; all the countries and people in the world opposed to imperialism are our friends. Nevertheless, *we stress regeneration through our own efforts*. Relying on the forces we ourselves organize, we can defeat all Chinese and foreign reactionaries.⁵⁵

Here, the wealth of a society was created by the workers, peasants and working intellectuals. It was imperative to have all three of these important strata working collectively to provide for the revolution in its continuance while making use only of China's national resources.⁵⁶ In the end, relying on one's own strength prevented Third World dependency and proved that a nation had the mandate to rule its own lands.

Sar stressed the importance of self reliance in his own revolutionary agenda and stated that one of the Ten-Fold characteristics of the Party was "a staunch revolutionary stance in terms of independence-mastery, self-reliance and mastery

⁵⁴ Mao Zedong, "We Must Learn to do Economic Work", *Selected Works, Vol III*, 241.

⁵⁵ Mao Zedong, "The Situation and Our Policy After the Victory in the War of Resistance Against Japan", *Selected Works, Vol. IV*, 20.

⁵⁶ Mao stressed the importance of having an active policy and effort towards the elimination of Third World dependency since it would make the Chinese revolution unstoppable. See Mao Zedong, "Introductory Note to 'The Party Secretary Takes the Lead and All the Party Members Help Run the Cooperatives'", In *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965) 112-113.

over oneself.”⁵⁷ He also emphasized how one must possess such qualities in the fulfillment of the “various duties of the Party in each and every respect and in all circumstances.”⁵⁸ During the struggle, Sar regarded self-reliance as the only way to guarantee his struggle’s survival. Sar exclaimed that “its voice is one of independence-mastery and self-reliance” while they branded their Vietnamese neighbors as a people who had truly “lost their independence and acted only as Soviet lackeys.”⁵⁹ As Ngor states, it was “one word made out of two that meant being absolutely free of other countries- free of their aid and even of their cultural influence.”⁶⁰ The Khmer Rouge believed that the people had to make it on their own by “reorganizing and harnessing the energy of the people” and by eliminating any and all distractions.⁶¹

Although the Khmer Rouge depended on Chinese aid in the same way Mao was supported by the Soviets against Chiang Kai-Shek, Sar firmly believed that on its own Cambodia possessed the strong national spirit to put the backward nation in a position to become a fully-developed nation.⁶² That is precisely why Sar launched his version of the Great Leap Forward, followed by Cultural Revolution-influenced policies to raise his status to that of near-godlike standing.

⁵⁷ Pol Pot, “The National Duties of All of Us”, *Revolutionary Flag*, No.7, (July 1978) 3-7.

⁵⁸ Pol Pot, “The National...”, 3-7.

⁵⁹ Pol Pot, “Learning from Important Experiences in the Fulfillment of the Party’s First Semester 1978 Political Task”, *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (May-June 1978) 30.

⁶⁰ Ngor, 197. See also Alex Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005) 51.

⁶¹ Ngor, 197, Hinton, 51.

⁶² Hinton, 51-52.

Part Three- The Tiger's Claws : Pol Pot and Mao's Socialist Reforms

Certainly the KR entertained the illusion they were not Maoist and were devising some sort of original version of the old dogma, even though Pol Pot paid tribute, when Mao died, to the power of his "Thought." The true originality of the KR movement is more on the side of oversimplification and the emphasis on the authoritarian aspects of ruling methods in the Chinese way.⁶³ –Serge Thion

While Mao's earlier policies were intended to be embraced by all peoples, his later policies for the Chinese revolution were not originally meant to be exported in the same way.⁶⁴ It can be argued that Sar understood the most basic principles of Mao's industrialization and consolidation reforms since he was able to apply them to Cambodia's revolution without too much difficulty. However, Mao's more controversial policies had been uniquely crafted for China's national context. This section examines how Mao's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution influenced Sar's policy-making in Cambodia. Comparisons are drawn to mirror Mao's policies with Sar's in Cambodia while placing an emphasis on the basic nature of the Cambodian interpretation.

Sar's was quick to recognize how Mao's radical transformation policies could provide him with a direction for the Cambodian revolution. Some of the measures introduced in China included the partial evacuation of cities, "storming attacks" on economic problems, and the abandonment of differential military ranks.⁶⁵ As Chandler notes, these developed later on to become policies that

⁶³ Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" 26.

⁶⁴ Mao changed this stance during the last years of the Cultural Revolution when he had many Chinese advisors visit Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These advisors carried copies of the Red Book and aimed to convert Asian revolutionaries to a model based on the Cultural Revolution. This attempt failed in Vietnam and Laos but was very successful in Cambodia.

⁶⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One*...66.

influenced the KR doctrine.⁶⁶ These major policies enacted by Chairman Mao were highly controversial. Within two years, the Great Leap Forward had been regarded as a total failure. The People's Communes were compared to both Nazi death camps and Stalin's Gulags. The Hundred Flowers Campaign revealed, albeit unintentionally, the regime's anti-intellectual nature,⁶⁷ and the Cultural Revolution also ended in disaster and gave off the impression that Mao wanted to erase China's past and start society anew. Despite the lackluster results and heavy death tolls in China, Sar nonetheless launched many of these Maoist reforms in Cambodia.

It is uncertain if Sar ever learned that the Great Leap Forward fell short of its goals, or that the People's Communes failed to produce the results Mao intended. After all, these programs were the most strongly influential on Khmer Rouge policy-making.⁶⁸ It is very plausible that Sar may have been misinformed or that he genuinely chose to ignore the death tolls. Also, it is intriguing to ponder why he put such an emphasis on following the line of the Cultural Revolution when it, too, was mired in chaos.

The first of these policies was based on Mao's five year plan enacted in 1958 and which had earned the nickname the "Great Leap Forward." According to Kiernan, "the Cambodians were interested in the Great Leap Forward more than

⁶⁶ Chandler, *Brother Number One*...66.

⁶⁷ Sar did not copy the Hundred Flowers verbatim. He did take ideas from it, such as forcing intellectuals to confess their dissatisfaction with the party, purging the higher strata in an Anti-Rightist Movement, and creating rules limiting freedoms of speech and association. However, any problem of mistake was always blamed on the individual, never on the Organization or its policies. Self-criticism/criticism sessions to discuss problems never found fault with the rules of Angkar, only with the poor peasant who couldn't follow them. See Becker, 156.

⁶⁸ Morris, 70.

later Maoist policies.”⁶⁹ This theory is reinforced by the frequent usage of the terms “Great Leap Forward” in virtually all Party writings as a revolutionary catchphrase.⁷⁰

The main reason why Mao’s rapid industrialization program was an attractive model for Democratic Kampuchea was that the program aimed to drastically reform society. In China, the Great Leap combined the imperatives of large-scale cooperative agriculture with a utopian vision of the elimination of the distinctions between professions, sexes, ages, and levels of instruction.⁷¹ Mao described the relationship between heavy industry from the cities and the agriculture from the rural countryside in the following statement:

The emphasis in our country is on heavy industry. The production of the means of production must be given priority that’s settled. But it definitely does not follow that the production of the means of subsistence, especially grain, can be neglected... Therefore, the relationship between heavy industry from the cities and agriculture from the rural sectors must be properly handled... There are two possible approaches to our development of heavy industry: one is to develop agriculture less and the other is to develop it more... The second approach will lead to greater and faster development of heavy industry and, since it ensures the livelihood of the people, it will lay a more solid foundation for the development of heavy industry.⁷²

⁶⁹ Kiernan and Heder, “Why Pol Pot? Roots of the Cambodian Tragedy”, 3.

⁷⁰ It was such a great influence on the man that it was the center of many Khmer Rouge speeches and slogans, and the national anthem ended with the words: “Let us build our fatherland so that it may take a Great Leap Forward! An immense, glorious, prodigious Great Leap Forward!” See Jean Louis Margolin, “Cambodia: The Country of Disconcerting Crimes”, in *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, and Repression*, Stephane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean Louis Panne, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean Louis Margolin, eds., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) 627.

⁷¹ Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong: A Life*, (London, Penguin Books, 1999) 132.

⁷² Mao Zedong, “On the Ten Major Relationships”, (Beijing: 25 April, 1956).

Here, Mao Zedong states his intention to bridge the space between the two spheres through the equal development of industry and agriculture.⁷³ The 1957 *Hsiafang* movement prompted the mass relocation of people to the rural areas of China to assist in the development of agriculture.⁷⁴ It is important here to note that it was not a total evacuation, unlike the Cambodian evacuation that emptied every single urban centre in the country. Perhaps as many as 3-4 million people, most of them on foot, were forced out of the cities and sent on a grueling exodus into areas deep in the countryside where they, too, had to become peasants and till the soil.⁷⁵ The aim was to create, as Ponchaud asserts, “a genuine egalitarian revolution.”⁷⁶

Sar’s party called this new agricultural policy the “Super Great Leap Forward”, which in Frieson’s view was “a clear linguistic borrowing from Mao’s Great Leap Forward campaign.”⁷⁷ For the Pol Pot regime, the Chinese Great Leap Forward served as the model from which the Khmer Rouge’s Four Year Plan would be based. The Party aimed at “a Four Year Plan to build socialism in all fields.”⁷⁸ Its objectives, much like the Chinese Great Leap was “to serve the people’s

⁷³ The Chairman’s ultimate goal was to mobilize as many of his citizens as possible in order to meet the daunting quotas he believed his country required to become an industrialized nation. It also served to make a jump forward in the process of socialization and move as quickly as possible towards pure communism. Both these processes were originally intended to succeed without difficulty or extreme opposition. See Mao Zedong, “On the Ten Major Relationships.”

⁷⁴ Quinn, 225.

⁷⁵ Sydney Schanberg, “Cambodia Reds are Uprooting Millions as they Impose a ‘Peasant Revolution,’” *New York Times*, 9 May 1975, 73.

⁷⁶ Francois Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1978) 140.

⁷⁷ Frieson, 419.

⁷⁸ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980”, David Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua eds., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977*, (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1988) 50.

livelihood and to raise the people's standard of living quickly, both in terms of supplies and in terms of other material goods.”⁷⁹ The overall goal was to triple the nation's agricultural production within a year.⁸⁰ The best way to accomplish these ends was for the people to seek, gather, preserve and increase the capital through the aggressive exploitation of Cambodia's rich agriculture.⁸¹ Since Cambodia's only exportable crop was rice, rice was seen as Cambodia's lifeblood.

The production of rice and how much paddy was to be worked daily was one of the primary requirements for the plan to succeed.⁸² This was Cambodia's cash-crop, and thus, it was Cambodia's own natural supply being used to fuel the economy and bring in capital. How Sar intended to use the capital in a society now devoid of banks, markets and currency remains a mystery. Even so, rice production at a greatly increased level was intended to raise the standard of living of the people and finance all imports.⁸³ Sar claimed that other crops, such as “rubber, corn, beans, fish, and other forest product” could potentially serve Democratic Kampuchea's development in “a complementary role.”⁸⁴ In truth, these resources were never exported in great quantities while rice emerged as the Khmer Rouge symbol for Maoist-style self-reliance. In sum, the regime firmly stressed that to control rice was to control everything,⁸⁵ and further exploitation of other resources never materialized.

⁷⁹ Pol Pot, “The Party's Four-Year Plan...”, 51.

⁸⁰ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 245.

⁸¹ Pol Pot, “The Party's Four-Year Plan...”, 51.

⁸² Pol Pot, “Learning from Our Four Year Plan”, 1.

⁸³ Pol Pot, “The Party's Four-Year Plan...”, 51.

⁸⁴ Pol Pot, “The Party's Four-Year Plan...”, 51.

⁸⁵ De Nike, Quigley and Robinson, 533.

Sar's expectations for his Four Year Plan continued to display an overemphasis on simple solutions. Where Mao only partially evacuated the urban centers to keep the development of light industry in motion, Sar stressed that to succeed there needed be a full mobilization of the peasants and workers out of every city. Sar believed that through the total exploitation of the agriculture, Cambodia would earn enough capital to expand its virtually non-existent⁸⁶ industrial sectors:

In the effort for national reconstruction, our Party bases itself on the concrete conditions in the country. Ours is a *backward agricultural* country, which has been devastated by the destructive war of aggression waged by US imperialism...

We take agriculture as the basic factor and use the fruits of agriculture to systematically build industry in order to advance toward rapidly transforming a Cambodia marked by a backward agriculture into a Cambodia marked by a modernized agriculture. We also intend to rapidly transform the backward agricultural Cambodia into an industrialized Cambodia...⁸⁷

As Sar states, agricultural strength begets industrial strength. He wanted to take rice from the country to make purchases, and therefore, production targets for 1977 were much higher, nearly three tons per hectare in excess.⁸⁸ Unfortunately, while his Four Year Plan developed agriculture to help expand industry, it never quite took off and created the burgeoning industrial sectors he had envisioned.

⁸⁶ Cambodia's most obvious difference from China other than population and culture was its level of development. China had industrial sectors developed from as early as the late 19th century. By the Republican period, China had a substantial working class population. In contrast, Cambodia was over ninety percent peasant and had virtually no significant working class population by the end of the Cambodian civil war.

⁸⁷ Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea: Speech by Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kampuchean Communist Party, 29 September 1977*, (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1977) 65.

⁸⁸ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four-Year Plan...", 12, 51-52.

Instead, it took on a decidedly anti-industry, anti-urban ideology that was the exact opposite of Mao's program in China.⁸⁹

Sar's Plan was also simplistic in its application of Mao's utopian vision. Sar's Super Great Leap, like Mao's unrealistic plan, was expected to create "a national society characterized by equality, justice, genuine democracy and the absence of the rich, poor, exploiting and exploited classes."⁹⁰

Mao's creation of the People's Communes in conjunction with the Great Leap Forward was motivated to more effectively carry out his utopian aspirations. They were designed as both production units and local governments, and charged with "undertaking the affairs of industry, agriculture, trade, education and the military."⁹¹ While the idea failed along with the Great Leap,⁹² it was a strong influence on Sar's Khmer collectives. The *sahakor*⁹³ were created to accomplish the same ends as Mao had originally intended for his communes. The difference was

⁸⁹ Frieson, 421.

⁹⁰ FBIS, January 4, 1977, H2. See Jackson, 79. Sar, like Mao before him, believed that if the people worked harder, if the people "organized in large communes where their needs were attended to, then the country could develop industry and agriculture to a modern level which aimed to condense decades of growth into a few years." See Elizabeth Becker, *When the War was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and its People*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) 199.

⁹¹ After this transfer was successfully done, China was expected to have completed the jump from a socialist society to a communist one. Although the Communes were unsuccessful, they contributed to the decentralization of state power. This allowed some flexibility with production quotas and allowed many of the people to invest in land. See Yao Shujie, *Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Poverty Reduction in Contemporary China*, (New York: Routledge, 2005) 25.

⁹² As a result of three successive years of poor weather and drought, the Chinese agriculture did not yield as much as Mao had planned. The backyard furnaces that produced pig-iron that symbolized the two policies did not industrialize China as intended. Many died from starvation and being overworked in their efforts to move China towards progress and industrialization.

⁹³ Sahakor: Khmer Rouge system of cooperatives loosely based on Mao Zedong's People's Communes.

that, as Frieson suggests, the state “controlled all aspects of labor and production” on the *sahakor*. In that sense, they did the exact opposite as Mao had done for the Communes. Ultimately, the *sahakor* were an effort to centralize rather than decentralize the Party leadership.

The collectives in Democratic Kampuchea also created a cycle of dependency on the people who inhabited them. With everything from food to rest completely collectivized and regulated only by Party hierarchs and comrade children, the people became totally dependent on the regime.⁹⁴ Locard believes that the Khmer Rouge, by bringing a form of collectivization into “almost every facet of social and personal life”, had politicized “every action and every thought of every individual.”⁹⁵

Although the collective mindset was central to his revolutionary goals in the same way that they were to the Chinese Great Leap, Sar’s emphasis of the collective took on its own character. Mao had four major rules concerning the importance of a collective mindset. These rules stated that the individual is subordinate to the organization; the minority to the majority; the lower level is subordinate to the higher level; and the entire membership is subordinate to the Central Committee.⁹⁶ Even still, Mao often extolled individual triumphs in the same way that Stalin created “national heroes” out of workers who trove to achieve and surpass state quotas.

⁹⁴ Friesen, 421.

⁹⁵ Locard, 14.

⁹⁶ Mao Zedong, “The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 203-204.

Sar's encouragement of a collective mindset did not support individual accomplishment and instead condemned any independent thought, deeds, and goals. In China, individuals were rewarded for their efforts, whereas in Khmer Rouge Cambodia, individual contributions to the revolution were disregarded and usually ignored.⁹⁷ The *Angkar* was everyone so that everyone succeeded or failed in kind.⁹⁸ In collective terms", the country was able to galvanize and accomplish its ambitious ends.⁹⁹ In Democratic Kampuchea, he exclaimed that the people had become "masters of all means of production" because "every peasant was a master of the rice-fields and lands."¹⁰⁰ This was so because of the equal, socialist and collectivist relations of production, which had been very instrumental.¹⁰¹ His description of the importance of collective work reveals the strong Maoist influence on his ideology:

If there exist complications in a certain zone, if it is weak and the people are starving and thirsty and facing hardships in their standard of living, other places have to help, and thus if they have walked forward three steps, they have to walk back two. This is what comes about when there is unevenness among the separate...¹⁰²

Each of us must go all out even more, all out in *common study* and *common life outlook* sessions... Only by going all out will we be more imbued with what the line means when put into practice and will we be more razor-sharp ideologically and stronger organizationally."¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Pol Pot, "Learning from Our Four Year Plan", 4.

⁹⁸ Pol Pot, "Further Raise the Quality of the Party Leadership in Order to Lead in Defence Duties and the Duties Continuing the Socialist Revolution and Building Socialism", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (October-November, 1977) 2.

⁹⁹ Pol Pot, "Further Raise the Quality ...", 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ieng Sary, *Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary at the 33rd Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly Delivered on October 12, 1978*, (New York: Unity Publications, 1979) 7.

¹⁰¹ Ieng Sary, "Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister...", 7.

¹⁰² Pol Pot, "Further Raise the Quality..", 4-5.

¹⁰³ Pol Pot, "Further Raise the Quality....", 5.

As evidenced above, it was an important victory to have eliminated and dispersed the individualist mentality in Kampuchean society.¹⁰⁴ As a collective unit, Cambodia was expected to more effectively maximize rice outputs, work more quickly on irrigation projects, and more swiftly industrialize Cambodia from its backward state.¹⁰⁵

So was Sar's Super Great Leap a fundamentalist appropriation or merely an overly simplistic sophomoric interpretation? The Chinese communists had not ignored the serious problems of mismanagement, the consequence of which would have led to massive food shortages and famine,¹⁰⁶ that Sar had implemented in his Four Year Plan. While all Khmer money was abolished and the cities were completely vacated, the healthy maintenance of the urban centers guaranteed the stability of China's rural economy. In essence, with no cities to provide assistance to the countryside, the "result was chaos: earthen dams often broke, irrigation canals dried up before water reached the rice fields, and efforts to use unarable land failed."¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Sar strove for a goal similar to that of Mao's Great Leap Forward. He attempted the complete and rapid transformation to a Communist utopian collective where people would live and work for the good of the country

¹⁰⁴ Pol Pot, "Learn From the Political, Ideological and Organizational Experiences in Fulfilling the Party's 1977 Revolutionary Duties in Order to Impel Forward Victoriously the Implementation of 1978 Duties", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (December-January, 1977-1978) 19.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975-1982*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1984) 287.

¹⁰⁶ Frieson, 421.

¹⁰⁷ Frieson, 421.

and the party without any independent personal gain. In the end, he aimed for his leap to be even more aggressive and rapid than Mao's had been.¹⁰⁸

Due to high death tolls and months of excruciating labor, Sar's already shaky popularity had sunk to new lows by the end of 1975. There was a need to find the cause of the Plan's failure. Pol Pot refused to accept the shortcomings and denied any fault on his behalf. Instead, he blamed "internal agents", enemies within the party, for the failure of the Super Great Leap Forward in a very similar way than Mao had done twenty years earlier. It was then that Sar visited China again to learn from the results of Mao's Cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁹

Sar's second trip to China in 1975 was better recorded than his previous trip. It was on this trip that he met with Mao again and for the very first time discussed politics. Mao congratulated Sar for the total liberation of Phnom Penh, and attributed the success to the Cambodian people's "revolutionary tradition of combating imperialism."¹¹⁰ He revealed to Sar that the Chinese regarded the Cambodians as "very close brothers" and stressed China's unwavering support for Cambodia's people's revolution.¹¹¹ It is still unknown if Mao ever knew of the thousands of deaths that were associated with the exodus of Cambodia's cities.

It is very important to note that Sar's visit came in the last years of the Cultural Revolution. While historian Jean Louis Margolin denounces the Cultural

¹⁰⁸ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 245.

¹⁰⁹ Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 137-138.

¹¹⁰ Mao Zedong, *Message from Chairman Mao Zedong, Chairman Chu The and Premier Zhou En-lai to Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, Prime Minister Penn Nouth and Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1975) 1.

¹¹¹ Mao Zedong, *Message from Chairman Mao Zedong...*, 2.

Revolution as a possible influence, stating that it had “few echoes in Cambodia”,¹¹² Chandler calls it “the most important intellectual foreign influence on Pol Pot.”¹¹³ Sihanouk also believes in this theory and stated that Mao’s Cultural Revolution had a specific influence on the entire Khmer Rouge leadership.¹¹⁴ The Cultural Revolution was Mao’s most controversial policy in that it had been responsible for “the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People’s Republic.”¹¹⁵ What appealed to the spirited young Khmer were the concepts of bureaucratic purges, the creation of a new revolutionary culture, and youth brigades that were all associated with a personality cult.

Sar had been in China at the onset, when Mao attempted to purge the bureaucracy, reshape the past, and reinvigorate the nation with a new Chinese culture.”¹¹⁶ These three principles were the fundamental base for Mao’s newest, and still to this day, most controversial political movement. Although there was much more to Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution, Sar did not bother copying more than its basic tenets for his own Cambodian version.¹¹⁷

Regarding the purge of the bureaucracy, Mao believed that one of the reasons for the failure of his revolutionary reforms was the lasting legacy of the bourgeoisie in China. In his view, the capitalists had infiltrated the Chinese Party and were

¹¹² Margolin, 627.

¹¹³ Chandler, *Brother Number One*...66.

¹¹⁴ Morris, 70.

¹¹⁵ Mao Zedong, *Resolution on CPC History (1949-1981)*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1981) 32.

¹¹⁶ Spence, 166-178.

¹¹⁷ Quinn, 222.

planning to retake power. He explained his point in the following excerpt from his 1966 speech:

The overthrown bourgeoisie tries by hook or by crook to use literature and arts to corrupt the masses, thus paving the way for a capitalist restoration. This makes our tasks in literature and art heavier rather than lighter. Our leadership on the literary and art front should be strengthened instead of weakened. To carry out their glorious tasks, our literary and art organizations must carry the great proletarian Cultural Revolution through to the end.¹¹⁸

Here, the Chairman explained that the key point of this movement was to rectify those people in positions of authority within the Party who took the capitalist road.¹¹⁹ Of those people in positions of authority, few were in the open and many were concealed.¹²⁰ In order to persist with a continued revolution, these “agents” had to be rooted out.

In Mao’s policy, Sar found the most effective strategy to consolidate his leadership. According to Chandler, like with Mao’s China, the CPK devoted most of its energy to rooting out enemies from its ranks.¹²¹ The Cambodia purge intended to eliminate much of the bureaucracy, centralize the leadership even more, and root-out “some of the older organization men who dared to propose moderating changes.”¹²² Nuon Chea, Sar’s future right-hand man, was quoted by Kiernan as stating that in order to achieve the construction of socialism progressively and

¹¹⁸ Mao Zedong, “Directives Regarding the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969”, [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_84.htm], 11 November 1966.

¹¹⁹ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965) 428. See also Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s Last Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006) 13.

¹²⁰ MacFarquhar, 428, and MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 13.

¹²¹ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 12.

¹²² David Aikman, “Tales of Brave New Kampuchea”, *Time*, 21 November 1977, 42.

advance all together in the set period, the Party had to “take care to carefully screen internal agents¹²³ in the party, in the armed forces, in the various organizations and ministries, in the government, and among the masses of people.”¹²⁴ The screening was to take all measures so that people were pure.¹²⁵ He further stated that the line laid down “must be followed at all costs”, to ensure that if people could not do it, “they would be taken away and killed.”¹²⁶

The purges were, as they were to a degree in Maoist China, driven by a measure of revenge against the old capitalist order. The poor were expected to “return the bad deed to the oppressors”, and had a “moral obligation to return disproportionately the bad deed to the oppressors.”¹²⁷ Oppressors, usually categorized as the old aristocracy, were to receive the “disproportionate bad deed from the poor”, who will be “higher” than their former oppressors in the new Democratic Kampuchea. By virtue of this radical class shift, the honor of the poor was supposed to be “cleansed”, and the oppressors were to “hopefully not attempt further retaliation against the poor.”¹²⁸ This was made certain when the Party opted to execute anyone with “old people”¹²⁹ characteristics including education in math, foreign languages, and medicine. Through the extermination of the wealthy and

¹²³ Referred to in Khmer as *samrit samrainh phtey khnong*.

¹²⁴ Nuon Chea quoted by Chea Sim in interview with Ben Kiernan. See Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 56.

¹²⁵ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 56. Purity was referred to in Khmer as *borisot*.

¹²⁶ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 56.

¹²⁷ Hinton, 75.

¹²⁸ Hinton, 75.

¹²⁹ Old People: Cambodians who, according to the KR, possessed an old societal mindset of capitalism and oppression of the peasant.

middle class peoples, a new culture was expected to emerge from the hearts and souls of the people who now lived in an exclusively peasant society.

As for Mao, he also wanted to create a new culture in China. This was done through the creation of a new history and the recruitment of the next generation by the Party to lead the country into a new future. This was to be accomplished through the elimination of what Mao called “the Four Olds:” Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. Mao believed that “without destruction there can be no construction; without blockage there can be no flow; without stoppage there can be no movement.”¹³⁰

Sar followed Mao’s example and attempted to rewrite history in a very similar manner. He declared *Year Zero* in an effort to establish a utopian society while he also exercised absolute control and hoped to preside over the destruction of Cambodia’s past.¹³¹ Ieng Sary declared that the Cambodian people, “who were exploited, ragged, oppressed, despised and dragged into the mud for a very long time”,¹³² had ended this dark period forever through the support of the Khmer Rouge. Sary exclaimed that “through the glorious victory of Kampuchea, our

¹³⁰ Mao Zedong, “Directives Regarding the Cultural Revolution...”, Mao set very broad guidelines and did not specify what actually qualified as one of these “olds.” The major consequence of this approach was that anything that existed before 1949 was targeted for destruction. This included many artifacts, works of art, buildings, monuments, and other objects that were culturally significant in China’s past. Many statues were taken down as new ones made in Chairman Mao’s likeness replaced them. Lavish and colorful murals of the Great Helmsman were painted on factory walls and other important buildings throughout the country. Mao’s personality cult was born. See Wen Chihua and Bruce Jones, *The Red Mirror: Children of China’s Cultural Revolution*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995) xiii.

¹³¹ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 237. After 1979, many survivors recalled the failure of this attempt.

¹³² Ieng Sary, “*Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister...*”, 5.

people, in their capacity as masters of the country, have grasped in their hands the right to decide for themselves their own destiny and that of their country.”¹³³

The new society that was born out of the ashes of the 1975 liberation movement gave the people “equality, justice and genuine democracy, with neither rich nor poor citizens.”¹³⁴ The issue was that by killing the wealthy classes off, and the subsequent failure of the Four Year Plan, the Party had no one to blame. Instead of an admission of errors on his behalf Sar blamed his country’s adult population for hanging on to the “old mentality.” For his utopian vision to succeed, it required new leadership. This is why Sar embraced Mao’s “Young Pioneers Movement”¹³⁵ idea which allowed the children and youth to lead the country into a new tomorrow.

The Chinese youth had been aggressively recruited into the Young Pioneers Movement, and later the Red Guards. These young men and women were charged with the task of enforcing radical cultural changes throughout the country. Zhou En-lai described the responsibility of the Red Guard as the following:

We feel boundlessly happy now that we stand by the side of our respected and beloved leader Chairman Mao. We are here to learn from the Red Guards of the capital. We are here to learn successful experience. We are determined to carry back with us the dauntless revolutionary spirit of Beijing’s Red Guards, the spirit of daring to think, to speak out, to do, to break through and to make revolution so that all of China will be set ablaze by the revolutionary flame of Mao Zedong’s thought.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ieng Sary, “*Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister...*, 5.

¹³⁴ Ieng Sary, “*Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister...*, 5.

¹³⁵ Young pioneers of China: created on October 13, 1949 by the Communist Party of China, and given its present name in June 1953. They were replaced by the “Red Guards” movement during the Cultural Revolution.

¹³⁶ Zhou En-lai, “Speaking on August 10 to Beijing’s revolutionary masses celebrating the Party Central Committee’s Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution”, *Beijing Review* 9, No.37,(Sept. 1966) 5.

Here, Zhou describes the Red Guards as China's future since they symbolized the great and prosperous potential that was on the horizon. The young men and women extolled Mao's greatness and vowed to follow the Helmsman's teachings "most faithfully."¹³⁷ They also played instruments and exclaimed their unwavering devotion to hard work, learning from the People's Liberation Army, studying the 16 Points, knowing them well and applying them, and persisting in carrying on the struggle by reasoning and not by coercion or force.¹³⁸

When Mao focused on nurturing the minds of his country's youth, Sar thought of its possible advantages in a Cambodian context. The poor youth in China were likened to a "blank page on which we can write what we want."¹³⁹ In the same manner, the Khmer Rouge regarded adults as already poisoned by the Lon Nol regime, but children were still pure and could be properly indoctrinated.¹⁴⁰ In his 1977 speech, Pol Pot called upon young Khmers, whether single or married, to "generously throw themselves into their own ideological education" and to pledge themselves "body and soul" to the revolution.¹⁴¹ Sar, as Mao did before him, recognized youth as "a period of life in which there are very rapid changes... a time when consciousness is most receptive to revolution and when we are in full

¹³⁷ Zhou En-lai, "Speaking on August 10...", 6-7.

¹³⁸ Zhou En-lai, "Speaking on August 10...", 7.

¹³⁹ Cited in Hinton, *Why did They Kill?...*, 130.

¹⁴⁰ Martin Stuart-Fox and Bunheang Ung, *The Murderous Revolution: Life and Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea*, (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998) 54.

¹⁴¹ Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1977) 48

possession of our strengths.”¹⁴² He further stated that this was “the general directive of the Party” because “the youth of today will take up the tasks of tomorrow.”¹⁴³

The Khmer Rouge turned to the youngest members of the poorest strata of Cambodian society to recruit cadres who were equally as anxious to destroy the corrupt old society.¹⁴⁴ Sar had emphasized that those in particular who were “envious of persons with more” were the best candidates.¹⁴⁵ The young boys and girls were frequently drilled on how much to love the Party, since Cambodia’s future rested on their shoulders.¹⁴⁶ Young people were often rewarded quickly for good revolutionary behavior and given positions of authority and weapons. The more one portrayed a revolutionary demeanor and praised Pol Pot’s clear-sighted revolutionary strategy, the greater and more substantial the rewards.

Perhaps the most revolutionary display for many young Khmers was to learn the new culture and history of Democratic Kampuchea, to assist in the running of the collectives, and to spy on their relatives to prevent dissidence. According to historian Martin Stuart-Fox, “most who reported were teenage boys, but young girls and children less than ten years old were also encouraged to inform on parents and friends.”¹⁴⁷ There soon emerged an extremely militant corps of youthful cadres totally committed to Sar’s instructions.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, Sar’s application of Mao’s Young Pioneers and Red Guards movement, paired with the Cultural Revolution-

¹⁴² Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary...*, 49.

¹⁴³ Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary...*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Quinn, 236.

¹⁴⁵ Quinn, 236.

¹⁴⁶ Hinton, 131.

¹⁴⁷ Stuart-Fox and Bunheang Ung, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*, (Westview Press, 1984) 162.

style purges, served his Party's interests of maximizing production and rooting out "counter-revolutionaries."

Sar's Cultural Revolution-influenced political line until 1977 was much more closely to-the-letter than the Super Great Leap. The purges were motivated by the Party's desire to vanquish the evildoing bourgeoisie and the capitalist culture that had infected the minds of Kampucheans before the advent of Khmer Rouge rule. While Sar and his gang took many of Mao's teachings further than originally planned, they had initially been very faithful to following its example. All this would change, however, with the death of Chairman Mao which caused the Cambodian rulers to question continued and stable support from Hua Kuofeng.¹⁴⁹ As we will see, Sar's Cultural Revolution-influenced policies such as his approach to internal agents, recreating the national culture, and cult of personality, took on its own character by 1976-1977.

To conclude, Sar's Cambodian Super Great Leap and Cultural Revolution style social reforms reveal a very basic understanding and implementation of Mao's principles. The Chairman's military and anti-imperialist tactics that were meant to be Mao's contribution to the Third World were easily copied by Sar. This is also true in Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Laos, and other countries where its leaders had read Mao's works and launched a "people's war." In that sense, it was expected that these policies were capable of being transplanted to another country's context.

¹⁴⁹ Fox Butterfield, "Leading Cambodian In a Visit to Beijing: Trip by Pol Pot Sheds Some Light on the Hierarchical Structure of Secretive Indochina State", *New York Times*, 29 September 1977, 28.

Sar's application of the rudiments of Mao's agricultural and social reforms did not promise the same ends. Mao encouraged Sar's efforts but always cautioned him "not to completely copy China's experience", and that he should think for himself.¹⁵⁰ He said that "according to Marx, his theory is a guideline for action, but not a doctrine."¹⁵¹ As will be shown in the next chapter, Mao developed a doctrine of rectification to provide subtler means of dealing with intra-party disputes to counter the early extremism of his party in the years before the Long March. Now the Chairman was encouraging Sar to "do rectification!", implying that the time had come for Sar to abandon his early extremism.

¹⁵⁰ Mao Zedong, "Conversation Between Chinese leader Mao Zedong and Cambodian leader Pol Pot, [CWIHP Databases, CWIHP Working Paper 22, 77 Conversations", www.CWIHP.org], 21 June 1975.

¹⁵¹ Mao Zedong, "Conversation..."

CHAPTER THREE

Part One: Confronting the Crocodile- Sinification vs. Khmerization

Pol Pot was instead being *too dogmatic*, and in his view, “any little triviality was figured to be an error in terms of the political, ideological, moral or organizational line... We (the Party) were living these days like a gourd surrounded by thorns. This was not the way it was with the Chinese because they were quite flexible.¹ – *Brother Si, ex-cadre of the Khmer Rouge, 1977*

On the 8th of September, 1976, Mao Zedong died. For the second time in Saloth Sar’s life, his hero and mentor had passed away. As with Stalin’s death in 1953, Sar was left without a guiding light for his revolution. He considered that, up to that point, he had been rather successful in the implementation of Mao’s programs in Cambodia. Pol Pot² eulogized his mentor in a 1976 address during which he praised Maoism as the “brilliant beacon” for revolutionaries all over the world and the “most precious aid” that has been provided by China.³ At a Beijing banquet on September 29, 1977, Pol Pot spoke of Mao Zedong Thought as the inspiration behind his regime’s policies.⁴ However, without the Chairman around to help guide him through the complicated process of creating a synthesis of Maoism with Cambodia’s “unique context”, he drifted further away from Mao’s teachings and closer to older and more totalitarian forms of governance.

This chapter illustrates that Pol Pot’s espousal of “uniquely Khmer” elements was caused by his inability to understand and reconcile a foreign ideology with

¹ Brother Si quoted in Heder, “Khmer Rouge Opposition...”, 9, emphasis added.

² Saloth Sar was only identified as Pol Pot years later, but it was in 1977 that Pol Pot was revealed as the leader of Angkar. The name is short for *Politique Potentielle* meaning that his political vision for Democratic Kampuchea is a potentially great foresight.

³ Nayan Chanda, “Pol Pot Plays up to Beijing”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 October 1977, 30.

⁴ Morris, 70. See also FBIS-PRC, 77-189, 29 September 1977, A19.

conditions unique to Cambodia. His inability to successfully “localize” Mao’s Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution led him to fall back on more traditional and characteristically brutal forms of Khmer governance. The syntheses he tried to establish between Maoist concepts and Angkor era totalitarian rule⁵ led to disastrous results and completely derailed his revolution.

The first section of this chapter examines the incompatibility of Mao’s Sinification model with Pol Pot’s idea of socialism, Khmer culture, and history. The second section analyzes Pol Pot’s Super Great Leap Forward and his attempt to “overturn the basket.”⁶ The third section looks at Pol Pot’s *Angkar* and his disastrous failed attempt to implement Cultural Revolution-style policies in Democratic Kampuchea. The era after Mao’s death was characterized by a time during which Pol Pot’s policies began to transform into a new “Khmerization”⁷ program. These included the formation of policies that made reference to: Cambodia’s storied past; conservative forms of Khmer culture; and, an invasion motivated by extreme nationalism.

Since Khmer culture is a central part of this study, it is important to briefly introduce the major characteristics of this millennia-old civilization. Of all things

⁵ In 802 AD, Jayavarman II declared himself a “universal monarch” (chakravartin) and later took on the epithet of “god-king” (devaraja). As a god-king, the Cambodian monarch had uncontested control of the country and its people. Every edict and construction projects were considered to be the words of a god, and therefore, unquestioned. Pol Pot wanted to re-create the slave-state that epitomized the Khmer Empire and its lasting legacy of Hinduized structures and massive irrigation canal routes. See Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 39-42.

⁶ McCormack, 84.

⁷ Khmerization: Here, I don’t intend to say that Pol Pot truly understood his nation’s own essence. His interpretation was to refer to Angkor’s greatness, a universally understood measuring stick of Cambodia’s achievements, and to emulate that in cohesion with his sophomoric understanding of Maoism.

dear to the Khmer people, nothing is more important than the symbolic legacy of the Angkor civilization. Cambodia's greatest dynasty which rose to prominence in Southeast Asia as the region's most vast and powerful empire from 800 AD until the 1300s remains the symbol of the Khmer race's continuation. The still-standing Angkor monuments are seen as the Khmer symbol of longevity in spite of centuries of decline, assimilation, and the imperial expansionist policies of neighboring Vietnam and Thailand.⁸

Khmers, like the people of Angkor before them, are a mixture of Hinduized and Theravada Buddhist⁹ cultures. For centuries, Hinduism was the official religion of the Angkor kings. It was not until the thirteenth century that King Jayavarman VII introduced Theravada Buddhism as the official religion. It soon became more dominant and the gigantic monuments of Angkor Wat, Bayon, and Ta Prom formerly dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva became temples reserved for Buddhist ceremonies.¹⁰

Khmer Buddhism and culture have always been typically monastic in nature. Theravada Buddhism has frequently been recognized as more austere and closely-related to the Buddhist community than the Mahayana variety that is dominant in Vietnam and China.¹¹ The importance of the *Sangha*¹² and a person's relationship

⁸ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000) 70-71.

⁹ Theravada Buddhism: literally, "the Teaching of the Elders" or "the Ancient Teaching", is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It was founded in India. It is relatively conservative, and generally closest to early Buddhism.

¹⁰ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia...*, 29.

¹¹ Mahayana Buddhism: Mahayana is the larger of the two major traditions of Buddhism existing today. Like Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism takes the basic teachings of the Buddha as recorded in early scriptures as the starting

with the community was central to Khmer religious practice.¹³ In modern times, the connection was more prominent in the countryside than in the urban areas. The cities had become overpopulated with Vietnamese and Chinese merchants who practiced a different variant of the religion and were seen as less traditional than the Cambodian Buddhists. This is perhaps one reason for the traditional animosity of the rural people towards the urban dwellers. Nevertheless, the Cambodian attachment to conservative Buddhist practices was often synonymous with strong feelings of nationalism and preservation of Khmer racial continuity.

Far stronger than any outside ideology were the forces of patriotism in Southeast Asia. Every country had its period of supremacy and decline in history. The Khmer, Dai Viet, Lao and Thai empires were in constant territorial fluctuation. Each country occupied the dominant post at a given point in time in the last thousand years. In the post-Second World War era, this was Vietnam.

The Vietnamese had taken the leadership role in the region, established the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, and organized the anti-colonial fronts based on the study of Mao Zedong's people's war.¹⁴ The Vietnamese victory over the United States and their subsequent departure in 1975 "unleashed a torrent of

point of its teachings, such as those concerning karma and rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Middle Way and the Eightfold Path. Mahayana Buddhists use different recensions of these discourses in compilations known as the Agamas, which largely overlap with the *Pali Canon* in content.

¹² Sangha: Theravada Buddhist community.

¹³ Young boys were required to spend a couple of years training in the local monastery during which they learned the rudiments of Buddhism. Pol Pot and his brother spent several years at a Buddhist Wat in Phnom Penh.

¹⁴ Colin Mackerras and Nick Knight, *Marxism in Asia*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 1985) 214.

nationalist enmity that had been frozen by colonialism for more than a century”¹⁵ in Southeast Asia. In Cambodia, people soon got involved in a bitter set of conflicts with their former allies in Vietnam and Thailand sparked by centuries of territorial rivalry.¹⁶ In essence, the renewed sense of devotion to the survival of the Khmer nation rekindled the traditional forms of ethnic pride held closely by the Khmer people since the fall of Angkor.

After 1975, Pol Pot tried to fuse the Khmer nationalism, which he firmly believed was only exemplified in the past greatness of Angkor Wat, with Mao’s program of pure communism and the Cultural Revolution. This was Pol Pot’s “Khmerization” program. It took form after Mao’s death in late 1976 and gained its own distinct character by the beginning of 1977. In this way, Pol Pot’s efforts can be defined as an attempt to localize Maoism. For that reason, it is essential to understand O.W. Wolter’s definition of localization and culture.

According to Wolters, the term “localization” can be defined as “calling our attention to something else outside the foreign materials.”¹⁷ One way to conceptualize “something else” is as a local statement of cultural interest.¹⁸ In doing so, the foreign elements are distanced from their original source and take shape as something unique.¹⁹ These practices “have to be localized in different ways” before they can fit into various complexes of religious, social, and political systems and

¹⁵ Sydney Schanberg, “Vietnam vs. Cambodia”, *New York Times*, 6 May 1978, 20.

¹⁶ Schanberg, “Vietnam vs. Cambodia”, 20.

¹⁷ O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asia*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999) 56-57.

¹⁸ Wolters, 56.

¹⁹ Wolters, 56.

“belonging to new cultural ‘wholes’.”²⁰ Only upon the successful adaptation of the foreign idea or concept would the fragments be embraced and understood by the people. This also allowed the rulers of the society that localized the foreign concept to proclaim the uniqueness of the localized form.²¹ Ultimately, localization is the practice of cultural borrowings being transformed to fit unique historical, geographic, and religious contexts.

To use a Southeast Asian example, Indian customs and practices tended to be fractured and restated and, therefore, “drained of their original significance by a process of localization.”²² This was particularly evident in Cambodia where Indian religions, such as Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism, developed into localized Cambodian variants. The Hinduized Angkor temples, which had previously been built as temples devoted to the Hindu god Vishnu, eventually became Buddhist monasteries. In only a few centuries, the Indian influence on Cambodian society was localized to form something recognized as uniquely Cambodian forms.

It is also important to understand Pol Pot’s Khmerization in terms of localization. Pol Pot’s misunderstanding of both Maoism and his perceptions of Khmer culture reveal his failed attempt to localize Mao Zedong’s revolutionary programs. It is for that reason that a look at Mao’s theory of “Sinification”²³, an innovation historian Stuart Schram described as Mao’s “greatest theoretical and

²⁰ Wolters, 55.

²¹ Wolters, 55.

²² Wolters, 55.

²³ For more on Mao’s Sinification of Marxism, see Nick Knight, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong’s Thought*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007) 197-216, and Raymond F. Wylie, “Mao Zedong, Chen Po-ta and the ‘Sinification of Marxism’”, *The China Quarterly* 79, No.1, (September 1979) 447-480.

practical achievement” is elemental to the understanding of Pol Pot’s misapplication.²⁴

The famous Irish dramatist and socialist George Bernard Shaw once stated in an interview that “the reasonable man adapts himself to the world, while the unreasonable man seeks to adapt the world to himself.”²⁵ The “Sinification” of Marxism was Mao’s attempt to adapt Marxism to Chinese national and cultural forms.²⁶ Mao’s proposal in 1938 for the “Sinification of Marxism” referred to specific ways in which the foreign theory of Marxism-Leninism could be adapted to the concrete historical realities of modern China.²⁷ According to historian Raymond Wylie, these “realities” included the under-development of capitalism, the absence of a large urban proletariat, and the central role of the rural peasantry.²⁸ Wylie quoted Mao as saying the following regarding his attempt to make Marxism Chinese:

In the first stage of this complex process of interaction, new Marxist contents will fuse with traditional national forms, but the process will not terminate at this point but will instead progress to a second stage in which the interaction of content and form will transform the traditional forms into modern forms. In such a

²⁴ Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977) 68

²⁵ Famous quote of George Bernard Shaw

²⁶ The problem was that Marxism was, according to historian Raymond Wylie, “a foreign dogma that was hostile to the essence of Chinese culture and, therefore, without a foreseeable future in China.” To counter this seemingly insurmountable obstacle, Mao’s qualification of Freidrich Engels’ formulation of historical materialism suggested that an ideology which has its roots in social, economic and political circumstances vastly different from those that existed in China must be modified if it was to serve as templates and guides to actions. See Raymond F. Wylie, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Chen Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory*, (Stanford, Stanford U. Press, 1980) 77.

²⁷ Wylie, “Mao Zedong, Chen Po-ta...”, 447

²⁸ Wylie, “Mao Zedong, Chen Po-ta...”, 447.

synthesis, the final product will be a distinctive culture that represents the total integration of modern Marxist (scientific) contents and modern national forms.²⁹

As is evidenced above, Mao Zedong wanted to maintain the central Marxist features³⁰ and blend them with Chinese national forms.³¹ However, this level of precision was not present in Pol Pot's appropriation. Pol Pot's interpretation was fairly ignorant of various key components and was fabricated based on the quintessential ideal of long lost greatness.

The first major difference in Pol Pot's Khmerization process concerned the development of a Khmer socialism. The Khmer leader's appropriation of Maoism was not carried out with the same precision due to the ideology's incompatibility with Khmer culture and Pol Pot's "socialist vision."³² As we will see, Pol Pot omitted certain tenets of Maoism in favor of an implementation of his own assessments and interpretations. Unlike the Chinese regime which seemed "relaxed enough to be workable", the Cambodian regime was "excessively strict"³³ and entirely convinced that its vanguard force was the peasantry. Pol Pot stated that the Party "did not rely on the workers" since they "did not concretely become the vanguard force", which could only truly be the peasantry.³⁴ In that sense, he said,

²⁹ Mao quoted by Wylie, *The Emergence...*, 88

³⁰ The materialist concept of history (conflict between social classes), critique of capitalism's exploitation of the urban proletariat, and the theory of a proletarian revolution.

³¹ See Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: questioning Narratives of Modern China*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 190-192.

³² A pure communist society, inspired by twelfth century Angkor society, that is entirely driven by slave labor and total submission to the ruling Party.

³³ Heder, 9.

³⁴ Pol Pot, "Learning in Abbreviated Form from the History..", 4.

“we were not copying from anyone, since “we analyzed our society concretely and adopted a line of our own according to our tangible circumstances.”³⁵

This was why the Khmer Rouge leadership made very few efforts to build upon the country’s weak industrial sectors. Pol Pot believed that there were hardly any “industries of all types” in Cambodia because all industry was dependent on foreigners at that moment in his country’s history.³⁶ In Pol Pot’s view, if a backward agrarian state took the working proletariat as the vanguard force for attacking the “enemy”, it could not win.³⁷ He stated that were Cambodia to “fight in the industrial fields” it would not be strong since the country lacked “industrial characteristics.”³⁸ When confronted on the issue, he simply replied that “we fight in the field of agriculture because we have agricultural resources. We’ll move to other fields when the agricultural battle is finished.”³⁹ Pol Pot’s idea was foolhardy since Cambodians only harvested their crops once a year during the wet season. Under his regime, he expected his people to harvest all year round including dry seasons when rice yields were very minimal. Ultimately, no heavy industry and only the formation of a very insignificant light industry materialized in Democratic Kampuchea.

Another major difference was the supposed Khmer approach to class consciousness. Group status was “directly linked to revolutionary consciousness”

³⁵ Pol Pot, “Learning in Abbreviated Form from the History...”, 4-5.

³⁶ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46.

³⁷ Pol Pot, “Learning in Abbreviated Form from the History...”, 5.

³⁸ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 48.

³⁹ When Pol Pot made these often-confused promises, he avoided the real issues of industrialization and believed that only through rice cultivation could a working proletariat come into existence. See Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 48.

since each class “varied in its composition and traits.”⁴⁰ Where Mao had likened the peasantry to a blank paper, Pol Pot regarded the “New People”⁴¹ as oxen. Mao believed that the peasants were blank slates on which the Party could write what they wanted. Since people think differently, it was important to educate the peasants on Marxism-Leninism to increase their revolutionary consciousness.

In Cambodia, however, Pol Pot was less concerned with Marx and Mao. He likened the peasants to oxen. He neglected the education process in favor of creating mindless automatons who served one sole purpose. Khmer Rouge survivor and author Pin Yathay described the proper consciousness as the following:

The perfect revolutionary was submissive to Angkar, should not experience any feeling, was forbidden to talk about spouse or children and could not love... In an often-heard Khmer Rouge parable, the individual was compared to an ox: ‘You see the ox comrades. Admire him! He eats where we command him to eat. If we let him graze on this field, he eats... When we tell him to pull the plough, he pulls it. He never thinks of his wife or children.’ Often during meetings, the Khmer Rouge spoke about ‘Comrade Ox’ as the ideal revolutionary... One who never refused to work and was always obedient. Comrade Ox did not complain or even object when his family was killed.⁴²

As evidenced above, Pol Pot’s ideal citizen was one who obeyed everything and contested nothing. Like the ox, an ideal Khmer citizen was expected to work, eat, sleep, and above all else, never question the master who fed and housed him. He or she was to serve only the Party’s will and never think independently. Pol Pot’s “New Man”⁴³ was in reality a coerced servant programmed by the Party drills

⁴⁰ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 204.

⁴¹ New people: The poorest of the Khmer peasants.

⁴² Pin Yathay, *Stay Alive, My Son*, (New York: Touchstone, 1987) 170-171. See also Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 222.

⁴³ New Man or New People: people from urban areas who were generally wealthier. Since these people were held responsible for the plight of Cambodia’s peasantry, they were class enemies and forced to work tirelessly on little food or sleep as

to abandon all free thought, sentiments and attachments. Where Mao had expanded educational boundaries through the ideological tutoring of the people, Pol Pot created his own nation of monotonous slave-drones who toiled for his utopian vision. Since slaves were neither paid nor had enough money to purchase or invest in anything, all capital was completely wiped out.

Most importantly, Pol Pot's Khmer socialism was decidedly unique in its approach to capital. Pol Pot's total obliteration of the country's markets and currency meant that "vestiges of capitalism, together with the capitalist standpoint" were destroyed.⁴⁴ Along with the Khmer Rouge's total abolition of money, markets and paid labor were entirely removed.⁴⁵ As Chandler notes, Pol Pot and his comrades regarded the abolition of money combined with the radical collectivization as the total release of the imaginative and productive forces through the destruction of individualism and familial loyalties.⁴⁶ Ultimately, this "creativity" inspired the Party's attack on capitalist spheres and as of 1977 all articles of private possession were confiscated save two pieces of personal clothing and a sleeping mat.⁴⁷

Finally, Pol Pot's synthesis was not one of a direct exposure to Marxism with a national essence but instead was an attempt to create a synthesis between Khmer

punishment for their crimes. Pol Pot viewed this coerced form of labor as rehabilitation.

⁴⁴ Although Mao and others in China had occasionally considered the abolition of all monies and paid wages in China, the CCP never totally abolished all forms of capital. See Chandler, Kiernan, Boua, *Pol Pot Plans...*, 40.

⁴⁵ Locard, 69.

⁴⁶ Chandler, Kiernan, Boua, *Pol Pot Plans...*, 40.

⁴⁷ Wise, 33.

culture and Mao's interpretation of Marxian theory.⁴⁸ Historian Serge Thion believes that the major incompatibility of Maoism concerned Cambodia's Hinduized and Buddhist culture. Thion recognizes that the adoption of a Khmerized version of Maoism was a gradual and almost clandestine process which started with the leadership and transmitted downwards. Still, while the Pol Pot group followed along a rigid disciplinarian line and was converted to Maoism,⁴⁹ the strong moral overtones of Maoism and its disregard for material trivialities *only* fit comfortably with the Chinese Confucian mixture of morality, righteousness and intellectualism.⁵⁰ As a result, Maoism blended well with traditional Chinese culture but seemed a polar opposite with Khmer culture.

Although Chinese and Cambodian cultures have much in common, "there were many differences between them, especially in terms of individual and collective behavior."⁵¹ Historian Alex Hinton furthers this notion by asserting that Pol Pot's regime was "rationalist-apocalyptic in combination with influences from Cambodian Buddhism."⁵² For example, Hinton argues that while Mao's concept of permanent struggle can be paralleled to Khmer Buddhist notions of impermanence and change,⁵³ the fundamentally conservative nature of Khmer Buddhism caused a rift in the adaptation process. Certain aspects of Mao's version were omitted by the Khmer Rouge in favor of Pol Pot's perceived Khmer elements and his holding of

⁴⁸ Itself, a synthesis of Marxism with national forms.

⁴⁹ Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" 21-22.

⁵⁰ Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" 22.

⁵¹ Thion, "The Cambodian Idea of Revolution" 22.

⁵² Quoted in Robert Jay Lifton "Foreword to Alex Hinton's *Why Did They Kill?*", xxii.

⁵³ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 144.

Angkor as the quintessential Khmer ideal. Pol Pot's Angkor-inspired ideals were characteristically strict, revenge-driven, and chauvinist in nature.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the incompatibility of Maoism with the Khmer Rouge's interpretation of Cambodian culture left the Party without particular laws to blend with the universalism that Mao had preserved in his own ideology.

In brief, Pol Pot expected to employ his Khmerized version of Maoism as the instant solution to Cambodia's development problems. Unbeknownst to him, however, was the fact that his new line of thought was in total contradiction with modern development. When he chose to rely solely on his country's peasantry and abolished all money and markets, he erased any chance for Cambodia to grow economically and industrially.⁵⁵ To sum up his outlook, Pol Pot believed in a large leap forward and several steps back. To demonstrate how this was so, it is crucial to examine the Khmer ruler's greatest blunder- the Super Great Leap Forward.

Part Two: Den Turned to Swamp- Pol Pot and the Question of Angkar

Our revolutionary movement is a new experience, and an important one in the whole world, because we do not perform like others. We leap from a people's democratic revolution to a socialist revolution, and quickly build socialism. We do not need a long period of time for the transformation. Ours is a new experience, and people are observing it. We don't follow any book. We act according to the actual situation in our country.⁵⁶

In Chapter Two, it was shown in which ways Pol Pot was strongly influenced by Mao's revolution. However, it was emphasized that he only truly understood the

⁵⁴ See Hinton, *Why Did They Kill? ...*, 211-275.

⁵⁵ Chandler, Kiernana and Boua, 40.

⁵⁶ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four Year Plan...", 49.

basic fundamentals of the Chairman's policies. Regardless of the similarities, it is "patently obvious" that Maoism in China "was never carried to the extremes reached in Democratic Kampuchea."⁵⁷ Mao had never attempted the full evacuation of the cities, never aimed to annihilate every single official of the old capitalist order, and "never elevated bloodshed to a national ritual."⁵⁸ Pol Pot's oversimplification of Mao's ideas is no more evident than in his application of the Great Leap Forward.

This section examines Pol Pot's Super Great Leap Forward and how it was more closely associated with the Khmer Rouge's misinterpretation of Khmer culture and history than Maoist ideals. Here, I will focus on Pol Pot's attempt to outdo Mao's Great Leap Forward through the implementation of extremely totalitarian policies inspired by Khmer history and culture. "To overturn the basket", the Khmer Rouge chose "only the fruit that suited them perfectly."⁵⁹ As we will see, Pol Pot believed that his revolution was swifter than Mao's, that Khmers were more capable and more willing to work for his vision, and that the "fruit" was Cambodia's past greatness of Angkor.

It is very difficult to argue against the impact of Great Leap Forward on Pol Pot's policies. Mao's program deeply influenced the Cambodian leader to industrialize his backward, "semi-colonial and semi-feudal" country. However,

⁵⁷ Karl D. Jackson, "Ideology of Total Revolution", In *Cambodia 1975-178: Rendezvous with Death*, Karl D. Jackson ed., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 244.

⁵⁸ Jackson, 245.

⁵⁹ Francois Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1978) 70. See also Interview with Thai Newspaper *Prachachat* in McCormack, *op. cit.*, 84.

historian Jean Louis Margolin asserts that Pol Pot was “faithful to the Chinese Great Leap Forward beyond all hope and reason.”⁶⁰ This is not true because of the following: first, Pol Pot was driven to outdo Mao’s revolution through an even more extreme and more dogmatic agenda; second, while Mao’s revolution was characterized by voluntarism and willing participants during the Great Leap period, Pol Pot’s Super Great Leap relied exclusively on forced evacuees who were then forced to abandon all free thought and action; third, in Pol Pot’s quest to surpass Mao’s industrialization program, he sacrificed progress and industry in favor of more “traditional” Khmer tactics based on Angkor-era work camps.

To start, Pol Pot was determined to succeed where his mentor had, in his view, failed. On one hand, Kiernan suggests that by proceeding more cautiously, by setting lower targets, or by adopting more flexible policies, the CPK might have accomplished many of the goals it had set for itself in 1976.⁶¹ On the other hand, since “there is no evidence that the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea ever considered doing things differently”,⁶² the Four Year Plan was a disaster from its onset. Pol Pot referred to the plan as the Super Great Leap Forward because it aimed to be “doing the Chinese one better.”⁶³ According to Chandler, Cambodia’s “puritanical cultural policies” had most likely filtered through “policies of the Chinese Cultural Revolution”, themselves inspired by similar movements in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ Ultimately, Pol Pot’s haphazard quest to upstage his mentor and

⁶⁰ Margolin, 627.

⁶¹ Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, xiii.

⁶² Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, xv.

⁶³ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 245.

⁶⁴ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 245.

achieve pure communism in one fell swoop completely derailed his Four Year Plan.⁶⁵

The Cambodian chairman strongly believed that China's Great Leap was far too slow, and that if greater measures were taken, Democratic Kampuchea would "leap" immediately to pure communism.⁶⁶ Pol Pot wanted to build socialism and the country very quickly without a few years to develop his plan.⁶⁷ In the Super Great Leap Forward and the rhetoric used to describe it, "we see that the Khmer Rouge was motivated to *outdo* Mao Zedong and the Chinese communists in the radicalism of their revolution."⁶⁸ He called for the people to "make a prodigious Great Leap Forward" through increased work "by leaps and bounds", and for the Super Great Leap to achieve a "big leap beyond all reality."⁶⁹ As a party document stated: "Our socialism is characterized by its speed... Compared to other countries, in terms of method we are extremely fast."⁷⁰

Pol Pot's analysis was based on China, North Korea and Vietnam. When China was liberated in 1949, the Chinese prepared to end the people's democratic revolution before they set to carry out the reforms that led to socialism.⁷¹ Since China did not launch the People's Communes program until 1956-1957, it had taken them eight years to achieve socialism. Pol Pot described the North Korean and Vietnamese programs in the following statement:

⁶⁵ Nayan Chanda, "When the Killing Had to Stop", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 October 1976, 21.

⁶⁶ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four Year Plan...", 45-46.

⁶⁷ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four Year Plan...", 45.

⁶⁸ Morris, 71.

⁶⁹ Locard, 72.

⁷⁰ Pol Pot, "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views...", 29.

⁷¹ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four Year Plan...", 46.

Take the example of Korea, liberated in 1945. Not until 1958 did they establish cooperatives throughout the country; at that time, cooperatives consisted of between twenty and thirty families. After liberation, it took them a long time to reach socialism. They did not carry out a genuine socialist revolution until 1958. They needed fourteen years to make the transition. North Vietnam did the same. Now a similar situation applies in South Vietnam. They need a longer period of time to make the transition.⁷²

... the Vietnamese revolutionary method was ‘very slow,’ and ‘it took a long time to sort out the good from the counter-revolutionaries.’ Khmer methods do not require a large personnel, and there are no heavy charges to bear because everyone is simply thrown out of town... The Khmers have adopted the method which consists in *overturning the basket* with all the fruit inside... The Vietnamese did not tip over the basket, they picked out the rotten fruit. This is the Great Leap Forward of the Khmer revolution.⁷³

As we see, Pol Pot equated socialism with total collectivization, and the more swift, the more effective. In his mind, only when a society completely collectivized its people and relocated them en masse to the rural areas was it worthy of recognition as true socialism. In actuality, all three countries referenced had made significant strides through the construction of both heavy and light industry and through *partial* evacuations of the cities. Nevertheless, Pol Pot was firm in his belief that Kampucheans had “a different character from them” in that they were “faster than others.”⁷⁴

Since these three countries had launched multi-year plans that had not, in Pol Pot’s mind, ended successfully in the originally specified time frame, the Cambodian Four Year Plan aimed to end in exactly four years or less. Since he believed that it was possible to “build up the country quickly”, the Party only focused on “the organization of the strategy and tactics to strike in whatever way

⁷² Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46.

⁷³ Ponchaud, 70, and McCormack, 84.

⁷⁴ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46.

necessary.”⁷⁵ After all, “this was the Super Great Leap Forward, and the Super Great Leap Forward has meaning.”⁷⁶

While the overall goal was to triple the nation’s agricultural production within a year, the process was to be done without the use of modern machinery or tools. Pol Pot’s “Khmerist” element was the recognition of the reality of Cambodia’s available work force and resources.⁷⁷ Chandler states that “absolutely no attention was directed towards the state of the country and its population.”⁷⁸ As Ponchaud states, Mao’s policies worked in China because of its enormous population and “virtually limitless resources.”⁷⁹ Cambodia is a small country with a population of a few million, poor soil, and no mineral or industrial wealth.⁸⁰ In spite of this, Pol Pot was certain that he could modernize the country’s industry through the aggressive cultivation of rice. As a result, very little effort was made to bring in the necessary capital to create such an expansion.⁸¹

Where Mao had moved China forward towards modernization, irrespective of his program’s disastrous end, Pol Pot brushed industry aside. Historian Stuart Schram states that the “chiliastic vision which inspired Mao’s policies during the

⁷⁵ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 47.

⁷⁶ Pol Pot, “Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly”, *Tung Padevat*, June 1976, In Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, eds. *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, 29.

⁷⁷ Unlike Jayavarman VII who had access to a great labor force, Pol Pot did not. However, rather than look at Cambodia’s lack of human and natural resources, Pol Pot embraced the challenge. He argued that Khmers, while being lesser in number, were greater in revolutionary spirit and fighting will. This “natural characteristic” made their compositions superior to those of the Chinese and Vietnamese.

⁷⁸ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 245.

⁷⁹ Ponchaud, 86.

⁸⁰ Ponchaud, 86.

⁸¹ Frieson, 421.

Great Leap Forward did not imply any lessening of his commitment to development. The very slogan “steel as the key link!” which Mao made peculiarly his own in these radical years encapsulated the view of quantitative economic growth as a central and dynamic factor in revolutionary change.”⁸² He follows by stating that although “the new latifundia which Mao created at the time of the Great Leap Forward brought the peasants widespread misery rather than the promised collective prosperity and happiness, the successive phases in agrarian policy from 1946 onward destroyed the old landlord economy and thus laid the foundations for the emergence of a system of peasant smallholdings in the 1980s.”⁸³ This was not the case in Cambodia.

Pol Pot made no effort to build up Cambodia’s industry and create the urban proletariat required for industrialization. The Cambodian leader stated that “compared to other countries, in industrial terms, we are extremely weak.”⁸⁴ Since Democratic Kampuchea’s industry was so weak, the technology was also weak.⁸⁵ In his view, Kampucheans only had to earn capital from agriculture since “we have no other capital, unlike other countries, where their first plan includes a lot of foreign capital.”⁸⁶ The truth was, as Margolin states, that the absence of steel in the Cambodian version was striking “because no effort was made on behalf of the Party to recognize that iron ore or coal were non-existent resources.”⁸⁷ In spite of this

⁸² Stuart Schram, “Mao Zedong a Hundred Years on: the Legacy of a Ruler”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 137, (March, 1994) 131.

⁸³ Schram, “Mao Zedong a Hundred...”, 140.

⁸⁴ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46.

⁸⁵ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 47.

⁸⁶ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 97.

⁸⁷ Margolin, 627.

ignorance, the motivation behind many of Pol Pot's backward policies was rooted in his stubborn and narrow-minded emphasis on rice production. When he preached regression instead of progression, the plan turned out to be even more incompetent and hastily constructed than Mao's had been.⁸⁸

To motivate his people to surpass Mao's program, Pol Pot encouraged his peoples through the praising of an inherently superior Khmer natural disposition.⁸⁹ Pol Pot's view stressed how "our (Khmer) national characteristics⁹⁰ have given us great advantages compared with China, Vietnam, or Africa."⁹¹ In reality, his people were malnourished and exhausted from sixteen hour days of monotonous and repetitive labor. Even though his steadfast faith in the forcibly weak and now totally dependent people was very close to Mao's notion of voluntarism, it departed by virtue of the difference in intention.

Pol Pot's vision consisted of almost no volunteers. Pol Pot wanted to make his people totally dependent on the Party, and thus, completely unable to unseat him as

⁸⁸ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 246.

⁸⁹ Mao's concept of voluntarism was a major influence on Pol Pot. While Marx came down firmly "on the side of economic determinism" through the emphasis of development as the cause of social change, Mao advocated that the "human factor" was truly the locus for such a transformation. In this way, Mao departed from orthodox Marxism since he placed the emphasis on subjective rather than objective factors as decisive in socio-historical development. Moreover, Mao's theory of voluntarism rather than Marx's premise of economic determinism revealed the Chinese leader's dependence on a revolutionary spirit within his people. See Maurice Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism: Eight Essays*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) 60-61. See also Healy, 118-120.

⁹⁰ Pol Pot defined his peoples' "national characteristics" in very simple terms. Khmers were described as being "faster" than others in terms of ideological development and progression of socialist revolution. Also, Pol Pot held Angkor as the highest of all Khmer ideals. In doing so, he used Angkor Wat as the symbol of Khmer ingenuity and excellence- an icon of what Khmer were capable of when collectivized, drilled, and deprived of "corrupt" individualist thought.

⁹¹ Pol Pot, "The Party's Four Year Plan...", 46.

the uncontested ruler of Democratic Kampuchea. To accomplish this end, the Cambodian leader isolated all possible threats to his rule in the heavily-supervised countryside.⁹² The evacuation was entirely motivated by Pol Pot's quest to achieve pure communism "in one fell swoop" and solidify his rule atop the CPK hierarchy. According to Chandler, the CPK ordered everyone out of the cities and towns "to transform the country thoroughly at once."⁹³ The Khmer Rouge guerrillas had not fought for seven years "to take office as city councilors", but instead sought to assert their radical doctrine outside the "breeding grounds for counterrevolution."⁹⁴ As in the *Hsinfang* movement, Pol Pot relocated large masses of people from the urban centers to the rural collectives. Pol Pot's approach was so excessive that even the Chinese cautioned moderation.

Zhou Enlai, Mao Zedong's Foreign Minister and Premier, warned the Cambodian communists not to attempt to achieve communism in a single step. Since China's Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s had ended disastrously, Zhou cautioned the Khmer officials to proceed with extreme caution with their radical agenda.⁹⁵ Khieu Samphan and his wife Khieu Thirith reportedly "just smiled an

⁹² Richard Boyle, "Phnom Penh Exodus: Official Version Challenged", *Weekly People*, 12 July 1975, 1.

⁹³ Freshly removed from a brutal Civil War, the cities had become swollen with millions of refugees from the countryside. Chandler argues that the evacuation of the cities was more out of necessity to keep the swollen population from starving because the war with Lon Nol had forced many from their homes into the capital.⁹³ This is possible given that Phnom Penh in 1965 did not house a population in excess of five hundred thousand. By the end of the Cambodian Civil War in 1975, the city was filled with over two million Cambodians. See Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 256.

⁹⁴ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 257.

⁹⁵ Quinn, 220.

incredulous and superior smile.”⁹⁶ Khieu Samphan later boasted to Sihanouk that “we will be the first nation to create a completely communist society without wasting time on intermediate steps.”⁹⁷ Mao was spellbound by Pol Pot’s boldness when he completely vacated the cities. That autumn Mao and Le Duan, one of Vietnam’s top political figures, spoke and the Chairman asked whether Vietnam, were the country ever to attempt such a feat, could follow suit and do the same.⁹⁸ When Le Duan responded merely by shaking his head, Mao agreed: “No. We couldn’t do it either.”⁹⁹

Pol Pot’s conviction to succeed in the complete de-urbanization of his country was partially inspired by the haphazard anti-urban policies of his closest official. While Mao’s *Hsinfang* movement provided the motivation for the idea of de-urbanization, Khieu Samphan theorized the Khmer peasant’s historic disdain for the cities. The French-educated Marxist economist is widely regarded as the theoretician responsible for the Khmer Rouge’s murderous evacuation of the Cambodian cities after they seized power in 1975.¹⁰⁰ Thanh Tin described Samphan as an “anti-intellectual” since he thought the West was a “diseased society”, and lived a very austere life.¹⁰¹ The enthusiasm behind Samphan’s hatred of the cities was the perception of money as a byproduct of urbanization, and which “made the

⁹⁶ Russell R. Ross, ed. *Cambodia: A Country Study*, (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987), [<http://countrystudies.us/cambodia/29.htm>].

⁹⁷ Ross, *Cambodia: A Country Study*, See also Quinn, 220.

⁹⁸ Mao Zedong, “Transcript of Mao’s meeting with Le Duan”, (Beijing: Sept. 24 1975), In Short, 300.

⁹⁹ Transcript of Mao, Le Duan, 300.

¹⁰⁰ Newsweek, Author Unknown, “Pol Pot’s Regime Tries a New Name”, *Newsweek*, 7 January 1980, 38.

¹⁰¹ Thanh, “Notes of Discussion...”, 28.

cities the most disgusting.”¹⁰² As a result, Pol Pot’s evacuation of the cities was steeped in Samphan’s interpretation of the rural Khmer hatred of city people and the vanity of urban life.¹⁰³ Samphan’s interpretation was rooted in the hatred of city people- the Vietnamese and Chinese merchants- who perpetuated the system that deprived the peasants of considerable wealth.

Now with his countrymen and women freed from the corruption of the cities, Pol Pot exclaimed that Democratic Kampuchea did not go through a period of land reform or social change since it had “leaped from a people’s democratic revolution into socialism.”¹⁰⁴ In his view, Democratic Kampuchea was “already a socialist society, both in the countryside and in the cities”, where all goals were and always had been collective.¹⁰⁵

To respect the collective, the people were ordered to rid themselves of individual thought.¹⁰⁶ The only responsibility, as proclaimed by the Party, was to “carry out the collective’s tasks.”¹⁰⁷ The Party eliminated all free time and made sure all people were productive in the fields for sixteen hours minimum per day. According to Locard, each Cambodian was expected to “completely empty his mind, thereby abstaining from having personal ideas from the old order”¹⁰⁸, since pre-Revolutionary Cambodia was considered corrupted by bourgeois capitalism at

¹⁰² Thanh, “Notes of Discussion...”, 28-29.

¹⁰³ Like Saloth Sar, Samphan was raised in wealthy surroundings and had never truly experienced the hard life of the peasantry.

¹⁰⁴ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46.

¹⁰⁵ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 45.

¹⁰⁶ Individual thought was usually defined as anything that promoted individual gain over collective gain. An individual achievement or goal was only good for the person who achieved it, whereas collective goals benefited everyone equally.

¹⁰⁷ Locard, 294.

¹⁰⁸ Locard, 294.

the peasants' expense. However, Pol Pot used Cambodia's feudal past as the ideal model for his revolutionary program. As we will see, where Mao wanted the old, corrupt bourgeois society of Confucianism gone, Pol Pot looked to Cambodia's own feudal model for inspiration.

As a result of Pol Pot's skewed interpretation of Mao's pro-collectivist agricultural plan, the entire population was transformed into a slave colony not unlike those of the Angkor kings of Cambodia's past. It is in that respect that the Super Great Leap took on its most definitive character. Pol Pot created a synthesis of his accelerated and more-totalitarian version of Mao's Great Leap with Cambodia's most heralded dynasty. Pol Pot's utopia was Angkor Wat, "long buried in Khmer history, but still very much alive as the soul of 'Khmerness.'"¹⁰⁹ By extolling the greatness of Angkor, Pol Pot embraced a program that rejected progress. Nevertheless, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge soldiered on with their program of extreme regression.

Pol Pot's Four Year Plan was set to exceed the greatness of Angkor, Cambodia's twelfth century empire, through the employment of Angkor dynasty work methods. This called for the entire country to abandon all modernization and industrialization plans. The Angkor period, "symbolized Pol Pot's overall goal for the Four Year Plan"¹¹⁰ since the Khmer kings relied on numerous slave laborers to construct the iconic monuments and had a near limitless supply of unspoiled natural resources. In particular, Jayavarman VII, Cambodia's most famous ruler, had been

¹⁰⁹ Ozay Mehmet, "Development in a War-torn Society: What Next Cambodia?", *Third World Quarterly* 18, No. 4, (1997) 675.

¹¹⁰ Locard, 73.

especially brutal in his treatment of slaves, most of whom were conquered peoples from the nearby Thai and Cham kingdoms.¹¹¹

In spite of the total absence of comparable manpower and access to natural resources, Pol Pot continued to push his people to the limits of hard work. When compared to Mao's Five Year Plan, which made use of machinery and modern tools,¹¹² Pol Pot's plan was more totalitarian and backward. According to historian Elizabeth Becker, an ancient inscription records that to construct King Jayavarman VII's new capital of Angkor Thom, it required more than 306,772 laborers who "worked on the project and who were housed them in 13,500 specifically built villages."¹¹³ And much like Jayavarman's ambitious construction projects, many of which were "unparalleled in their enormity", Pol Pot's Plans were constructed in haste and with a great measure of carelessness.¹¹⁴ Nearly seven centuries after the decline and fall of Angkor, the Khmer Rouge "recreated the same tableau vivant, working the people like ants under the direction of Angkar."¹¹⁵ To achieve the Party's goal of surpassing Angkor, Pol Pot had to transform his people into "wandering tribes under totalitarian sway, and thus, to return to the Bronze Age."¹¹⁶

The people were forced to build dams, dikes, and canals throughout the country with "the sole use of *human hands*, as had been done during the Angkor

¹¹¹ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 4,22.

¹¹² Mao recognized the importance of maximizing production through the advancement of technology. While he was more than encouraging towards traditional farming means to meet his lofty quotas, he quickly realized the essential role played by light machinery in the farming process.

¹¹³ Becker, 200.

¹¹⁴ Becker, 200.

¹¹⁵ Becker, 201.

¹¹⁶ Locard, 32.

period”, since the Khmer Rouge *refused* to use modern machinery in the building of these enormous construction plans.¹¹⁷ Ngor described the Cambodian Chairman as a man who “did not examine the idea to see if it was practical.”¹¹⁸ He further asserts that “it was senseless to build huge canal systems and dams without the use of engineers, but then Pol Pot was like that and tried to make reality fit politics instead of the other way around.”¹¹⁹ In truth, he chose to rely on the people’s “revolutionary will” to complete his ambitious building projects.¹²⁰ Therein lies the rejection of progress, and ultimately, this idea was best conveyed in his focus on the use of his people’s “own hands” to build a great Kampuchea.

The Party’s emphasis on “Khmer hands” was important since it symbolized the Angkar’s intention to progress through Pol Pot-style regression. To “grasp in one’s hands” was to embrace the Angkar’s way and to work tirelessly as an example- as “Comrade Ox.” To rely only on oneself and the natural tools of the body was seen by the Party as an improved and accelerated version of Mao’s self-reliance, taken to a whole new level. In Pol Pot’s mind, if the people only used their hands and bodies to build the new Kampuchea, their revolution would be entirely unique and “owed nothing to anyone.”¹²¹ This is made clear in the following statements:

¹¹⁷ Locard, 73.

¹¹⁸ Ngor, 401.

¹¹⁹ Ngor, 401.

¹²⁰ The Chinese did not understand why the two hundred small tractors that had been sent were left to rust. When the Chinese sought an explanation for this, Pol Pot and his men answered that men, and not “iron buffaloes” are the most important resource to be exploited. See Locard, 69.

¹²¹ Pol Pot, “Learning in Abbreviated Form from the History...”, 5.

Lenin carried out a revolution with *empty hands*. We did the same thing; we made a revolution in difficulties and with *empty hands*.¹²²

Our people are happy to live in the present Democratic Kampuchean society under the most correct, most clear-sighted leadership of our revolutionary organization the CPK because *they are building the country with their own hands*, having eliminated slavery, and working as the masters of the water, land, country and revolution.¹²³

Concerning the working environment, we must have strict organization; *grasp tightly in both hands* the particular situation of each country, each region.¹²⁴

Through the glorious victory of Kampuchea, our people, in their capacity as masters of the country, have *grasped in their hands* the right to decide for themselves their own destiny and that of their country.”¹²⁵

Here, it is evident that the Party encouraged the simplest and most rudimentary forms of labor techniques in the development of the Four Year Plan. Pol Pot's quest to surpass both Mao and Angkor was successful, albeit in a different manner than expected. He had bested Jayavarman VII in brutal authoritarian rule and had surpassed Mao in the creation of a more lackluster industrialization program. In essence, Pol Pot succeeded in the implementation of his form of “pure communism” but did not develop industry or improve the living standard of his people. The end result was total conscription and uncontested totalitarian rule by the bloodily visionary Cambodian demagogue.

In the end, Pol Pot's Four Year Plan was starkly different than Mao's Great Leap Forward. Pol Pot's stubbornness and blind ambition to transform a war-torn,

¹²² Pol Pot, “The Party's Four Year Plan...”, 46.

¹²³ Radio Phnom Penh, 3 June 1976, In FBIS, *Daily Broadcasts Asia and the Pacific*, June 24, 1976.

¹²⁴ Ieng Sary, *Objectives to Direct the Work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from July 1976 to July 1977, 14 July 1977*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1998) 38.

¹²⁵ Ieng Sary, *Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister...*, 5.

bankrupt agricultural country into an industrial power¹²⁶ without any help from the outside world or from technical “experts” led to disastrous ends.¹²⁷ Instead, his quest to outdo Mao’s plan to reach pure communism led Pol Pot to completely conscript his people. Every single citizen was stripped of all individuality including all familial and marital bonds.¹²⁸ While the Cambodian leader tried to reconcile Maoism with a Khmer national essence, it was in his choice of “essence” that yielded the most catastrophic outcomes. By forcing his people to *return to the twelfth century* and create a society more magnificent than Angkor, Pol Pot had truly devastated his country.¹²⁹

Part Three: Like a Crocodile Submerged in the Swamp- Pol Pot and the Cult of Isolation

As we study Cambodian civilization, art and architecture, we realize that the Cambodian people have always been hard-working, active, creative, and skilled. As we look to Angkor, the Angkor Thom temple and the surrounding areas, we are struck by the fact that the whole area was a large city crisscrossed with straight roads and canals in a magnificent system... flawlessly planned and built with great precision and care... However, since our Cambodian nation and people have been regularly subject to imperialist aggression, the civilization, culture, art and architecture faded out... [Now] on the basis of our traditions, we are again blending tradition with science... matching the nation’s traditions with modern science. Our people are now in the process of building a new Cambodia.¹³⁰ - *Radio Phnom Penh Broadcast, 1978*

¹²⁶ Whether Pol Pot genuinely wanted to develop Cambodia into an industrial power remains unknown. Since virtually no effort was made to industrialize, it is possible that the Cambodian Chairman simply borrowed Mao’s Great Leap Forward slogans without understanding the substance of the words.

¹²⁷ Ngor, 401.

¹²⁸ Stuart-Fox and Bunheang Ung, 58-59.

¹²⁹ Becker, 202-202.

¹³⁰ Becker, 201.

Mao's Cultural Revolution had been the most influential foreign model for the Khmer Rouge political movement. The difference, however, was centered on the Party's formation of a personality cult. While the Khmer Rouge followed Mao's program rather closely, and in most cases, took the Chairman's ideas to whole new and more extreme levels, the Cambodian application took on its own unique character. Pol Pot's obsessive attempt to outdo Mao with the Super Great Leap Forward set the foundation for his later fixation. Rather than launch a "Super Cultural Revolution", he decided to create a Cultural Revolution style personality cult inspired by the divine worship of the Angkor kings. His determination to become a modern-day Jayavarman VII led him to discard Mao's Cultural Revolution ideas completely and brutally force his will onto his people.

The following section will examine the cult of Angkar that surrounded Pol Pot and how it was in complete contradiction with Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution. This was so because of the following three factors: first, Pol Pot established his personality cult through a fusion of a sophomoric understanding of Cultural Revolution-era tactics with Angkor era despotic absolutism; second, Pol Pot's purges were less guided by a Marxist-Maoist class analysis and more by traditionally-conservative Khmer cultural notions of disproportionate revenge; third, Pol Pot's attempts to reclaim lost Khmer territory in South Vietnam defied Mao's "defense first" policy and further revealed the revenge driven doctrine of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.

First, Pol Pot's officials¹³¹ were captivated with their leader's revolutionary course. According to Chandler, "scattered evidence suggests that Pol Pot was being edged toward a personality cult that, had his regime lasted longer, might have transformed his taciturn, clandestine style of government into a more personalistic one¹³² and deepened continuities with previous, non-revolutionary regimes."¹³³ The problem was that many of the Khmer Rouge officials wanted the same fame and praise that Mao had achieved in the 60s and 70s for their beloved *Brother Number One*¹³⁴ in spite of his requests to remain extremely secretive. Pol Pot's colleagues held him in the highest regard for being the mastermind behind the defeat of the American imperialists and the successful launch of the Four Year Plan.¹³⁵

Even though the cult of personality never grew to its full potential, strong efforts were made by the Party to deify Pol Pot. New and fairly expensive statues¹³⁶ that depicted Sar's likeness were planned to be built all over the country. Vann Nath, who had been the painter of various portraits of the man, recalled that towards the end of 1978 there were plans for a grandiose sculpture in Sar's honor:

We had to design a revolutionary monument with the design first taken to Nuon Chea who approved it and it was then supposed to be taken to Pol Pot for his

¹³¹ Most notably Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, Ta Mok, and Son Sen. These men were the highest ranked in the CPK other than Pol Pot himself.

¹³² As Chandler argues, Pol Pot had to contend with pressures for deification by some of his colleagues and supporters who were the beneficiaries of the revolution. However, the cult of personality never became "full blow" because the frequent exposure that such a cult would have entailed would have compromised his obsession with security. See Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 148-150.

¹³³ Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 148.

¹³⁴ Sar often took the title "Brother" and named his closest officials the same but numbered them 2-10.

¹³⁵ Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 149.

¹³⁶ Many of the statues were originally made in solid gold. Later, these same statues were broken up, sold for profit, and replaced by bronze ones.

approval. The monument was *like those in China* and Korea and featured Pol Pot in front of a line of people with his right hand stretched skywards and his left arm grasping a copy of the revolutionary works, Mao's red book. Pol Pot was *the only figure* depicted as a particular individual. Behind him were a number of people, indicating the progress of the revolutionary struggle, beginning with axes and knives and ending with abundance, with guns and B40s. The plan was to level the Wat Phnom temple and replace it with the monument.¹³⁷

As we can clearly see, the Khmer Rouge desired to create a lasting legacy of Pol Pot in the form of a magnificent monument. Even Pol Pot approved the expensive construction projects and often allowed his officials to barter Cambodia's surplus rice for expensive metals.

Strangely, the Khmer Rouge's cult worship of Pol Pot was not rooted in Maoism. The Chinese Cultural Revolution definitely inspired the concept of the leader as a charismatic and beloved icon that stood for nation, progress, and peace. In China, Mao had used the Great August Emperor Qin Shihuang as an inspiration. He greatly admired the second century BC ruler since he united China, standardized language and writing, purged dissident intellectuals¹³⁸, and ended five hundred years of civil war. In Cambodia, charisma was the most central characteristic a ruler could have.

¹³⁷ David Ashley, "Interview with Vann Nath", May 1995. In Christine Chameau, "No. 55 Delivers His Verdict on Pol Pot", *Phnom Penh Post*, 7-20 November 1997, and Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 149-150.

¹³⁸ The most famous comparison of the two great rulers concerned their similar treatment of the intellectuals. Mao was reviled for his persecution of intellectuals and was compared to the First Emperor for his brutality towards their treatment. Mao once said: Qin "buried 460 scholars alive; we have buried forty-six thousand scholars alive... You [intellectuals] revile us for being Qin Shi Huangs. You are wrong. We have surpassed Qin Shi Huang a hundredfold." See Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform*, (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995) 129.

In the twelfth century, the Angkor kings were regarded as living gods since they possessed a *charismatic* demeanor. According to historian Milton Osborne, the virtues of these rulers were “celebrated in panegyrics lauding their military prowess, their religious devotion and their incomparable charismatic attraction.”¹³⁹ In the case of Isanavarman, who ruled Cambodia in the seventh century, an inscription boasts that women of his court felt “it would have been worth rape by the enemy to be a recipient of his smile.”¹⁴⁰

In more modern times, Prince Sihanouk had gained the favor of his people during his *Sangkum*¹⁴¹ days of the 1950s “because he was a god-king and a charismatic medieval ruler.”¹⁴² This was based, according to Hinton, on the “syncretic blend of animist, Hindu, and Buddhist conceptions” that contributed to Cambodian understandings of power as “an animating energy that shifts and flows through time and space.”¹⁴³ Since beings vary in their capability to contain and amass this power, certain persons inevitably “become centers in which power is disproportionately concentrated.”¹⁴⁴ These special individuals were embraced as holy persons who held the mandate to rule the country based on their connection with supernatural power and the human realm. The Khmer-Sanskrit idea of

¹³⁹ Milton Osborne, *The Mekong: Turbulent Past, Uncertain Future*, (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2000) 27.

¹⁴⁰ Osborne, 27.

¹⁴¹ Sangkum: The Sangkum Reastr Niyum, or “Organization devoted to the commoners”, was a political organization set up in 1955 by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. He stepped down from the throne in that year in favor of his father Norodom Suramarit, with the intention of concentrating on politics. See Arthur J. Dommen, *The Indochinese experience of the French and the Americans*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001) 318.

¹⁴² Becker, 8.

¹⁴³ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 99.

¹⁴⁴ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 99.

devaraja, or literally translated into “king of the gods”, legitimizes a tradition of cult worship by divine royalty which, “by putting emphasis on form rather than substance and ritual rather than accountability”,¹⁴⁵ lifts the sovereign to an otherworldly position of absolute and uncontested rule.

The great Khmer hero, King Jayavarman VII fits the description and was an important influence on Pol Pot.¹⁴⁶ Jayavarman VII chose to leave his mark on Khmer tradition, and imposed, “in a brutal and totalitarian way”, a rapid and widespread Hinduization program on his subjects.¹⁴⁷ He forced his people to abandon the Mahayana Buddhist tradition in favor of the Theravada variant, an event that Chandler has compared to the cultural transformation of Pol Pot’s brutal Khmer revolution.¹⁴⁸

During the Khmer Rouge era, Pol Pot capitalized on the rural peoples’ devout religious belief in the charismatic despot. The rural peoples’ tendency to be more connected with the *Sangha* resulted in a stronger religious attachment to the king than to the urban populace. Also, there existed a close link between the *Sangha* and the charismatic leader. In return for the legitimation provided by the *Sangha*, the king was “expected to demonstrate his religious commitment by donating generously to the upkeep of the monastic order, and by further extending the *Dhamma*¹⁴⁹ throughout his realm.”¹⁵⁰ According to historian Martin Stuart-Fox, by

¹⁴⁵ Mehmet, 676.

¹⁴⁶ In Southeast Asia, rulers are often imbued with a spiritual aura. The blind following of Pol Pot explains the servitude of Khmers to the charismatic ruler.

¹⁴⁷ Mehmet, 677.

¹⁴⁸ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 68-70.

¹⁴⁹ Dhamma: the teachings of Buddha.

virtue of its presence in almost every lowland village, the *Sangha* “acted as a force for unity within the state and reinforced the legitimacy of the king.”¹⁵¹

Khmers are taught to live by *neak chuo*, to know one’s place in society, with silent dignity, but always in awe of higher authority.¹⁵² Pol Pot recognized the importance of the charismatic despot in Cambodian political culture.¹⁵³ The rural people were swift to regard Pol Pot as such a figure especially with Prince Sihanouk in absentia. Mehmet states that this created a structure “that appears to be incompatible with the idea of modern development and economic growth.”¹⁵⁴ As for Pol Pot, development was the least of his concerns. Since the poor rural peoples were traditionally “at the bottom of the social pyramid, and the Khmer Rouge praised the lowest of the low on the social strata, he expected to be embraced by the people as a living god- not unlike Sihanouk or Jayavarman VII before him.”¹⁵⁵

The Khmer Rouge fixation with the establishment of Pol Pot as Democratic Kampuchea’s uncontested despot led to a break from Maoist-style Cultural Revolution tactics and the espousal of a traditionally Khmer style of absolute rule driven by a slave state. In one fell swoop Pol Pot sought to surpass King

¹⁵⁰ Martin Stuart-Fox, “Marxism and Theravada Buddhism: The Legitimation of Political Authority in Laos”, *Pacific Affairs* 56, No. 3, (Autumn, 1983), 432.

¹⁵¹ Stuart-Fox, “Marxism...”, 432.

¹⁵² Mehmet, 676. The political traditions that Pol Pot drew upon were still salient because Khmers regarded him as a charismatic leader who possessed a divine aura. Cambodian history is very dynastic and was always characterized by the continued traditions of charismatic rule.

¹⁵³ However, according to historian Stephen Morris, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge broke with Cambodian political culture because they “disavowed of Buddhist practices that were at the core of Khmer culture... The regime banned all religious worship, destroyed Buddhist temples, and forced monks to become peasant laborers.” See Morris, 70.

¹⁵⁴ Mehmet, 676.

¹⁵⁵ Mehmet, 676.

Jayavarman VII, to break with the past, “to cleanse all injustices and oppression and to rebuild Khmer society afresh.”¹⁵⁶

To carry out this vision, the Khmer Rouge enacted a brutal series of purges. All of these search and destroy programs were motivated by revenge against the former aristocracy. In Cambodia, there exist numerous historical notions of revenge that served as the primary example for the Khmer Rouge and took a variety of different forms. According to Hinton, this ranges from “disproportionate revenge to notions of “justice” and “law”, adopted from Western legal discourse, to Buddhist ideas about the origins, consequences, and elimination of such violence.”¹⁵⁷

One of the major issues that remained within Kampuchea was the issue of the class struggle. The Khmer Rouge had made strong efforts to cleanse the country of its wealthier, soft-living peoples. On one hand, Mao merely forced the wealthier classes and intelligencia to become peasants.¹⁵⁸ On the other, Pol Pot wanted to completely kill them based on the Khmer cultural concept of disproportionate revenge. As Hinton argues, the Khmer Rouge “revamped the cultural model of disproportionate revenge in accordance with Marxist-Leninist-Maoist views of class resentment and contradiction.”¹⁵⁹

While Mao had never sought to liquidate all of the officials of the old order,¹⁶⁰ Pol Pot’s newly embraced ideological model encouraged the poorest peasants to seek absolute vengeance against the old order that had “traditionally oppressed

¹⁵⁶ Mehmet, 680, and Becker, 187-188.

¹⁵⁷ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 28-29.

¹⁵⁸ Mao Zedong, “The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party”, *Selected Works, Vol. II*, 308.

¹⁵⁹ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ Jackson, 244-245.

them.”¹⁶¹ As Hinton writes, Maoist notions of peasant exploitation made a certain amount of sense to most of Cambodia’s poor. In contrast, “the Khmer Rouge leadership attempted to couch such philosophical abstractions in terms that would inspire them to embrace the Khmer Rouge movement and take arms against its enemies.”¹⁶² This was the spirit behind Khmerization since the Khmer Rouge combined the “new and the old into ideological palimpsests.”¹⁶³

In the previous chapter, it was briefly shown how the Democratic Kampuchean class vengeance was driven by “disproportionate revenge” against the “soft-living” classes of the bourgeoisie and rich peasants. The quote, translated by Hinton, reads:

The poor should return the bad deed to the oppressors (disproportionately). The poor have a moral obligation to return disproportionately the bad deed to the oppressors... The poor will be “higher” than their former oppressors. The honor of the poor will be cleansed, and the oppressors will (hopefully) not attempt further retaliation against the poor.¹⁶⁴

It was a policy of “a head for an eye”, where the “new people” were told to fight tirelessly against “old people” in a struggle for the survival of socialist Kampuchea.¹⁶⁵ More importantly, the idea of “a head for an eye” stemmed from more traditional forms of Khmer cultural practice and resonated well with the poor who had been “wronged” by the wealthy and were urged to seek recompense in the form of violence and murder.

¹⁶¹ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 26.

¹⁶² Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 46.

¹⁶³ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 46.

¹⁶⁴ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 75

¹⁶⁵ Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four Year Plan...”, 46-47.

Disproportionate revenge was “the stain on the Cambodian national soul.”¹⁶⁶ According to Ngor, Cambodia was a peaceful country to outsiders but to those on the inside, there was recognition of *kum*- a Khmer word for “a particularly Cambodian mentality for revenge” based on “a long standing grudge that led to a revenge that was always much more violent and damaging than the original offense or injury.”¹⁶⁷ The Khmer Rouge version of *kum* “suggested that when a person seeks vengeance, he or she may not only ‘defeat’ the offender but also elevate one’s own honor.”¹⁶⁸ The honor sought by the victim cannot be attained unless there is a complete defeat of the enemy so as to permanently eliminate the risk of a repeated offence or threat.¹⁶⁹ The most extreme measure was to kill the offender and murder his family before him.

In comparison, Mao’s purges paled in comparison. “Cleansing the class ranks” was all about getting rid of those whom the Chinese communists “regarded as waste matter.”¹⁷⁰ However, according to historian Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, a second, kinder gentler movement, aimed at resolving contradictions among the people, was promoted at roughly the same time.¹⁷¹ This program used non-violent means to re-educate the class enemies rather than execute them.

¹⁶⁶ Ngor, 45.

¹⁶⁷ Ngor, 45.

¹⁶⁸ James A. Tyner, *The Killing of Cambodia: Geography, Genocide and the Unmaking of Space*, (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2008) 158.

¹⁶⁹ Tyner, 158.

¹⁷⁰ MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 253.

¹⁷¹ Accused persons were expected to espouse “three loyalties and four boundless loves”: “loyalty to Chairman Mao, Mao Zedong Thought, and Chairman Mao’s proletarian revolutionary line; boundless love for Chairman Mao, the Communist Party, Mao Zedong Thought, and Chairman Mao’s proletarian revolutionary line.” See MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 262.

In contrast, to prevent the return of the bourgeoisie and capitalist-imperialists, Pol Pot sought to kill every single member of the old order along with their families. This included former Lon Nol soldiers and officials, doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, nurses, merchants, businessmen, and everyone else who had benefited from a form of education. Cambodia's few doctors, as members of the old aristocracy, were executed and medical care was non-existent.¹⁷² Virtually all intellectuals and professionals were liquidated, and other people were said to be "liquidated instantly for playing anything but communist music on their flutes, dancing or taking part in any form of philosophical, political or cultural discussion."¹⁷³ The soldiers took captives morning and afternoon and made public examples of them, tied them to trees and shouted to anyone who would listen what the offender had done wrong.¹⁷⁴ Since Pol Pot's overall goal was to eliminate the impure classes from Democratic Kampuchean society, the aggressive elimination of entire aristocratic families was believed to be the most effective method to remove any impure minds from corrupting the pure socialism he had, in his mind, achieved.¹⁷⁵

In summation, the Khmer Rouge's vengeful approach to class struggle revealed the truly barbaric nature of the regime. Party officials ordered the indiscriminate killing of entire families including women, children and infants. As Tynes writes, in the brutal quest to promote total national conformity, the

¹⁷² Butterfield, "Situation in Cambodia 'Excellent' ...", A4.

¹⁷³ Wise, 33.

¹⁷⁴ Haing S. Ngor, *Survival in the Killing Fields*, (London: Basic Books, 2003) 277.

¹⁷⁵ Tynes, 158-159.

consequences of nonconformity were well known.¹⁷⁶ The Khmer Rouge “attempted to fix the spatiality of Democratic Kampuchea as a mimetic representation of Pol Pot’s own geographical imaginations.”¹⁷⁷ The most central of these concerned the “lost territory” of Angkor in Southern Vietnam.

The final piece to the Pol Pot cult puzzle surrounded his absolute fixation with Angkor’s stolen territory in Southern Vietnam. Formerly known as *Kampuchea Krom*, or *Cochinchine* by the French, the territory was historically very significant for whoever held sway over it. According to the *Livre Noir*, the 17th century king of Annam asked for the authorization to open trade counters and to administrate the custom-service in the region of Prey Nokor, modern day Saigon, in exchange for the marriage of his daughter to the Khmer king Chey Chetha II.¹⁷⁸ As a result, tens of thousands of Vietnamese settlers migrated to the region and took possession of the territories around Prey Nokor, Ba Ria and Kampong Sraka Trey.¹⁷⁹

In the Khmer Rouge’s opinion, these people were entirely responsible for the expulsion of the Khmer inhabitants of the region since “they forced them to move to the more remote regions while the Vietnamese army took control of the three provinces.”¹⁸⁰ In truth, the territories were legitimately given as a dowry with the intention of sharing the land peacefully. While both parties were to blame for the mismanagement of the truce- the Khmers for trusting a former foe and the

¹⁷⁶ Tynes, 160.

¹⁷⁷ Tynes, 160.

¹⁷⁸ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 6.*

¹⁷⁹ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 6.*

¹⁸⁰ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 6.*

Vietnamese for the forced removal of Khmer inhabitants- the French colonial administration exacerbated Cambodian territorial decline.

While the *Livre Noir* accuses the Vietnamese “expansionist nature” in collusion with the arrival of the French colonizers for the loss of Khmer territories, the French colonial administration was wholly responsible for the unfair land distribution. As we saw in the first chapter, the French established new borders with the intent to favor Cochinchina and its vast territorial richness. However, the French had been removed since 1954 and the Khmer Rouge was no longer angry towards its former masters. It was in this spirit that the *Livre Noir* was written- to accuse and condemn the Vietnamese for the annexation of Khmer territory.¹⁸¹ Ultimately, based on Khmer notions of *kum* and Pol Pot’s desire to surpass both Mao and Angkor, it was seen as the best course of action to invade South Vietnam and take back what was perceived as theirs.

Under Pol Pot, the Party believed Khmers had suffered “hundreds of years of aggression and the territorial attrition at the expense of its neighbors to the East, the Vietnamese.”¹⁸² While the Party had sporadic conflicts with the Thai along the Northwestern border, the Vietnamese were considered more of a threat to the national security based on their proximity to the capital. Pol Pot said that because Cambodia had “lost much of its territories” in the last century, “the entire Kampuchean people must defend our existing frontiers and “see to it that they will

¹⁸¹ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 46-47.

¹⁸² According to historian Patricia Marchak, the Khmer people are “ethnically different from their Lao, Thai and Vietnamese neighbors”, and throughout their history they have been “rather hostile towards those neighbors.” See M. Patricia Marchak, *Reigns of Terror*, (Montreal: McGill- Queen’s University Press, 2003) 228.

never be lost.”¹⁸³ Former New York Times Foreign Correspondent Fox Butterfield described Pol Pot’s new policy in the following excerpt:

Cambodia’s newly identified principal leader, Pol Pot said in Beijing yesterday that the situation in Cambodia was “excellent”, contrary to reports of refugees, and indicated that Cambodia’s recent border clashes with Vietnam and Thailand had apparently grown out of dispute over territory lost by Cambodia in the 19th century.¹⁸⁴

The motivation behind the Khmer Rouge invasion was “to re-conquer surrendered territory.”¹⁸⁵ The Party waged an outright war against the “expansionist and hegemonic forces of the Vietnamese lackeys.”¹⁸⁶

Although sporadic skirmishes between Vietnamese and Kampuchean forces began immediately following the April 17th takeover in 1975, the war did not formally begin until 1978. According to the *Livre Noir*, the Vietnamese replied to the Khmer advancement with “a strategy of lightning attack, lightning victory.”¹⁸⁷ In Pol Pot’s opinion, the strategy was countered rather successfully by the Khmer army’s employment of protracted war tactics¹⁸⁸ in the Mao Zedong style.¹⁸⁹ At long

¹⁸³ Butterfield, “Situation in Cambodia ‘Excellent’...”, A4.

¹⁸⁴ Butterfield, “Situation in Cambodia ‘Excellent’...”, A4.

¹⁸⁵ Fox Butterfield, “Vietnam vs. Cambodia”, *New York Times*, 6 May 1978, 20.

¹⁸⁶ Through the use of fear tactics, the Party created a national paranoia around a fictional doomsday where Vietnam was counting down the days until its seizure of Cambodia, and that an invasion would deter the “Yuon enemy.” How the Khmer Rouge intended to accomplish a successful invasion of Vietnam without militarily trained officers, whom they purged, and a supply of modern weapons, remains a total mystery. See Pol Pot, “The National Duties of All of Us”, 1-3.

¹⁸⁷ *Livre Noir*, *Chapitre 6*, 82.

¹⁸⁸ In truth, the Khmer Rouge did not evoke a protracted war, but instead were forced into one by virtue of a superior Vietnamese counter attack. Nevertheless, Pol Pot and his Party were convinced that they had revealed the true nature of the Vietnamese aggressor.

¹⁸⁹ *Livre Noir*, *Chapitre 6*, 83.

last, he believed, the “annexationist and swallower of territories had been unmasked in front of the whole world.”¹⁹⁰

To summarize this chapter, we have seen how Mao Zedong’s policies that had served as major influences to the Khmer Rouge were misunderstood and completely misapplied. Pol Pot’s decision to define Khmer culture based on its past greatness in history, personified in King Jayavarman’s autocratic rule and carried out by Angkor-era authoritarianism, created the chauvinistic slave-state he wrongfully believed to be his pure communist utopia. When Pol Pot invaded South Vietnam, he threw his beleaguered and dilapidated Khmer forces into an open-ended war against a tried and true Vietnamese military force. In the end, Khmerization revealed the Khmer Rouge’s total break from Maoist policies. Pol Pot’s own dogma that was set on outdoing his ideological and cultural mentors was merely a framework from which to exact his personal xenophobic ambitions.¹⁹¹

As we will see, the end result of his failed synthesis prompted Pol Pot to shift the class warfare to a racial struggle against foreigners and minority populations. A corollary of the Angkor period was that anything that went wrong in Cambodia could be blamed on foreigners.¹⁹² With the aristocracy virtually wiped out, the struggle was turned towards the eradication of racial enemies. These “impure beings”, characterized by the regime as the Vietnamese, Thai, Cham Muslim, and Chinese population, threatened the wholesomeness of the Khmer race.

¹⁹⁰ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 6*, 83.

¹⁹¹ Becker, 220-221.

¹⁹² Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

Part One: To “Purify” the Swamp- Pol Pot, Xenophobia, and Race Hygiene

In a remarkable interview in 1997, shortly before his death, Pol Pot, the deposed Khmer Rouge leader, blamed everything on the Vietnamese, who had supposedly infiltrated Cambodia and caused famine. Pol Pot asserted: “To say millions died is too much... Another aspect you have to know is that the Vietnamese agents were there. There was rice, but they didn’t give rice to the population... My conscience is clear... If we had not carried out our struggle, Cambodia would have become another Kampuchea Krom.”¹ - Pol Pot interview with Nate Thayer, 1997

Since Pol Pot’s time in France where he and his fellow Khmer nationalists “looked back at an idealized, rural, large Khmer Empire as a model”, the preservation of the Khmer ethnic nation from extinction was a major guiding precept.² Pol Pot’s new localized policies encouraged backward economic policies and held the old Angkor society as the quintessential Khmer ideal. From 1977 to 1979, however, Pol Pot’s revolution became more concerned with the eradication of “hereditary enemies” in a counter-revolutionary shift away from Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.³ As Kiernan states, instead of continuing the revolution against the class enemies and the threats of imperialism, Pol Pot imposed new policies of

¹ Thayer, “My Education...”, 21, and Chirot and McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All?..*, 87.

² Liah Greenfeld and Daniel Chirot, “Nationalism and Aggression”, *Theory and Society* 23, No. 1, (February 1994), 120.

³ Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the CCP praised Maoism as the next evolutionary step of Marxism-Leninism. Posters and murals portrayed Chairman Mao’s face in front of Lenin’s and Marx’s profiles as if he was the modern incarnation of these pioneering leftist revolutionaries. See Dr. Stefan Landsberger’s collection of Mao posters at www.chineseposters.net, hosted by the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 2009.

“nationalist revivalism⁴ on a socialist organization.”⁵ Pol Pot’s localized ideology embraced the darkest, most xenophobic,⁶ and racially-motivated tenets of Khmer history. Soon, the ethnic Vietnamese, mixed Khmer-Vietnamese, and former allies to Vietnam⁷ were blamed for the “corruption” of Pol Pot’s clear-sighted revolution and were accused of plotting to take down Democratic Kampuchea “from within.”⁸ The Cambodian leader’s strongly nationalist resurgence, which used historical events and the threat of racial contamination as justifications for mass murder, was employed to serve the Cambodian leader’s interests.

The following chapter illustrates the ways in which Pol Pot’s localized Maoist ideals developed into ultra-nationalism. Both the Cambodian leader’s sense of Khmer racial superiority and his long standing grudge against the Vietnamese defined his notion of Khmer nationalism. The chapter is organized into three sections. Each examines Pol Pot’s methods to justify the mass murder of the

⁴ Nationalist revivalism: the act of reviving traditionally conservative and characteristically xenophobic forms of nationalism as guiding precepts.

⁵ Ben Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981*, Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua eds., (London: Zed Press, 1982) 228.

⁶ In accordance with Pol Pot’s promotion of “self-reliance” and “independence-mastery”, Cambodia had become completely isolated from the rest of the world. By 1977, all international ties were cut, including those with China by 1978. See Nayan Chanda, “Cambodia: Beijing Pulls Back”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 September 1978, 22-23, and Nayan Chanda, “Cambodia and China Cool”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 September 1977, 22.

⁷ These people were trained by the Vietnamese Communists in the Khmer Issarak movement in Cambodia in the 1950s. Former members include Keo Moni, So Phim, Chou Chet, and Non Suon, Pol Pot’s Party biographer. According to Kiernan, all of these men were executed by 1978 because of their association with the Vietnamese left in the past. The irony is that Pol Pot was also trained and mentored by the Vietnamese Communists. See Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, 229.

⁸ Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy...”, *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7, (July 1978) 1.

Vietnamese ethnic population. The first section examines Pol Pot's Angkor-inspired xenophobia and his desire to "racially purify" Democratic Kampuchea of all non-Khmer peoples. In this section, Robert Jay Lifton's analyses of racial hygiene and genocide⁹ will be instrumental to the understanding of Pol Pot's idealized view of Khmer racial purity as well as his perceptions of the Vietnamese. The second section analyzes Pol Pot's attempts to create a clearly-defined way of differentiating the Khmer from the Vietnamese by reinvigorating Khmer nationalism through the use of propaganda. The third section examines the ways in which Pol Pot was guided by disproportionate revenge in racialist way, namely, against the ethnic Vietnamese for past offenses¹⁰ against Cambodia. The Cambodian ruler postulated that it was necessary to kill every single Vietnamese person, in mind and in body, since they posed a threat to Kampuchea "from outside and within."¹¹ Some comparisons will be drawn between the Khmer Rouge race killings and the anti-Semitic murders of Jews in Nazi Germany during the late 1930s and 1940s. Since the Nazis relied on historically racist stereotypes, eugenics, and virulently ultra-

⁹ Lifton asserts that healing, killing, and the relationship between them were redefined in a wholly new relationship he calls "medicalized killing." His book, *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, examines the role of doctors, medical diagnoses, and racial stereotypes in the development of eugenics and concepts of racial superiority, race hygiene, and ill peoples. Unlike the Nazi, however, who noxiously promoted sophisticated medical justifications for mass murder, Pol Pot merely employed medical terminology to justify the virulently ultra-nationalist genocide of Vietnamese populations.

¹⁰ Pol Pot often postulated that the Vietnamese committed various crimes against Kampuchea's line of independence-mastery, sovereignty, and self-reliance. He once stated that "the true nature of the Le-Duan-Pham van Dong Yuon regime is corruption and subservient flunkeydom to imperialism and international expansionism." See Pol Pot, "Another Step in our Cooperative Victories", *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7, (July 1978) 44-45.

¹¹ Pol Pot, "Pay Attention to Sweeping Out...", 1-2.

nationalist sentiment to justify the political mass murder of Jews, it is important to show the ways in which Pol Pot undertook similar measures to demonize and condemn the Vietnamese.

To understand Pol Pot's political purpose, it is first important to analyze his attempts to "purify" his country from external influences through a xenophobic and ethno-centrist form of "medical" diagnosis. By 1977, it was clear that Pol Pot's numerous errors in calculation produced too many casualties. The rice yield was particularly low, the Four Year Plan was already disastrous, and the total casualties caused by starvation, overwork, and disease numbered in the hundreds of thousands. In spite of these realities, Pol Pot was unwilling to admit his failure. In his search for answers, he chose to blame the failings of his disastrous regime on "Vietnamese provocateurs."¹² His animosity toward the Vietnamese, dating back from the tumultuous years of the anti-colonial struggle now manifested itself in a racially-motivated campaign to rid Cambodia of foreign influence and what he considered "racial impurity."¹³

This section analyzes Pol Pot's xenophobia and ultra-nationalist notions of racial purity. The first part examines the ways in which Pol Pot modeled his isolationist policies after Angkor. Since the Cambodian leader was driven by a desire to surpass Angkor, comparisons will be drawn between Pol Pot's racialist agenda and the ethno-politics of Angkorean Cambodia. The second part describes

¹² Terry McCarthy, "Vietnamese Flee 'Cleansing' by Khmer Rouge: History is Repeating Itself as the Cambodians Turn on their Traditional Scapegoats", *The Independent*, [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/vietnamese-flee-cleansing-by-khmer-rouge-history-is-repeating-itself-as-the-cambodians-turn-on-their-traditional-scapegoats-1452803.html>], 2 April 1993.

¹³ Chirot and McCarthy, 88.

Robert Jay Lifton's analyses of Nazi racial hygiene and medical terminology. Lifton's studies of Nazi doctors and the use of medical diagnoses as justifications for mass murder are instrumental since they provide an interpretive prism through which one finds similarities in Pol Pot's ideology. The third part compares Pol Pot's perceptions of Khmer racial purity with those employed in National Socialist Germany.¹⁴ Ultimately, this section reveals Pol Pot's ultra-nationalism and the ways in which it directed his approach to dealing with Cambodia's "direct life and death adversaries."¹⁵

Robert Jay Lifton, an American psychologist and reputable historian, believes that there exists "a fine line between love of country and people on the one hand, and hate-filled, violent nationalism on the other."¹⁶ In his view, one major form of nationalism can be explained as one race's "quest for immortality."¹⁷ He uses the case of Japan during the Second World War when nationalism and a sense of racial superiority were the driving forces behind many of that nation's expansionist policies. According to Lifton, the nationalist individual is "energized by merging with what can be called an 'immortal biocultural substance' for which he willingly gives his life, and even more willingly, take the lives of others."¹⁸ This "biocultural substance" enables the individual to "triumph over death" through guaranteeing the

¹⁴ Jean-Louis Margolin, "Le Cambodge des Khmers Rouges: De la Guerre Totale au Genocide", *Vingtieme Siecle, Revue d'Historie* 77, No. 1, (Janvier-Mars 2003) 3, 14.

¹⁵ Pol Pot, "Learning from Important Experiences...", 8.

¹⁶ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1979) 20.

¹⁷ Lifton, *The Broken Connection...*, 19, 32.

¹⁸ Lifton, *The Broken Connection...*, 19.

continuation of his race and nation even at the expense of others.¹⁹ In relation to Cambodia, historian Elizabeth Becker states that the counterpart to the “xenophobia implicit in the targeting of foreigners and ethnic groups was an idealization of Khmer racial purity and a ‘mission to revive the ancient glory and honor of Cambodia and to ensure the perennality of the Khmer race.’”²⁰

Since the Khmer Rouge regime “consciously and expediently modeled itself on the peoples who built Angkor”,²¹ it is logical to suggest that Pol Pot’s race policies were derived from the same source. Pol Pot genuinely believed that the people who had built Angkor Wat were superior to any other in the region. One of Pol Pot’s most infamous slogans extolled the Khmer race’s superiority over others since they had built Angkor Wat and, therefore, were unstoppable.²² Locard believes that Pol Pot’s repeated references to Angkor’s grandeur and the Khmer race’s inherent superiority based on long past greatness “vindicated their inordinate chauvinism.”²³

¹⁹ Lifton, *The Broken Connection...*, 20-21.

²⁰ Alex Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: the Anthropology of Genocide*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002) 109, quoting Becker, 239. Khmer nationalism draws inspiration from the dynastic legacy of the Angkor civilization (ca. 802-1431 AD). According to Chandler, the rise of such ideology after World War II “is attributed to the struggle for independence from France. Khmer nationalism is rooted in two trends: The first was the rise of national and cultural consciousness in response to French reform towards ‘modernization.’ In 1943, The French authority introduced a plan to replace the forty-seven-letter Khmer alphabet with the roman one, but the move met resistance from both the Buddhist institution (the *sangha*) and King Sihanouk, and the independent Cambodian government in the later years officially moved to stop romanization.” See Chandler, *A History...*, 169-171.

²¹ Hinton, *Annihilating...*, 109.

²² Locard, 31.

²³ Locard, 32. Khmer Rouge political culture “consisted of the leadership’s traditional cultural values and perceptions, its revolutionary ideology, and its

Pol Pot's interpretation of Cambodian civilization held the great Angkor dynasty as the quintessential Khmer ideal. According to Becker, excavations by the French of Angkor Wat "revealed that Cambodia had once been a great and powerful empire, rich in agricultural resources and conquered territory."²⁴ It was a society that had built the magnificent temples that graced the countryside and that was regarded by surrounding states as relatively modern by comparison. In spite of these tremendous accomplishments, however, the Khmer rulers of Angkor were characteristically xenophobic. According to Kiernan, when the Chams²⁵ invaded Angkor Thom in 1177 and "completely destroyed the capital" and left nothing in their wake, a great fear of outsiders spread throughout Cambodian lands.²⁶

When Jayavarman VII ascended to the throne and invaded Champa, the people immortalized the Cham invasion in the form of a relief carving on the side of

paranoid delusional thought patterns. Among the range of traditional Cambodian values and perceptions, the ones relevant to the KR were a sense of inferiority and a deep resentment toward their more powerful neighbors." The hatred of the Vietnamese was a uniquely un-Maoist element to Pol Pot's ideology. See Morris, 17.

²⁴ Becker, 109.

²⁵ Chams: an ethnic group in Southeast Asia that have, since the dissolution of the Kingdom of Champa in the 15th century, have become scattered throughout the region. The most concentrated populations presently live in Kompong Cham province in Southern Cambodia and Southern Vietnam. Historically, the Cham ruled a vast kingdom. They were a territorial force to contend with and for years fought against Cambodian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Lao expansion. Chams are predominantly Muslim and during the Pol Pot regime were forced to eat pork on pain of death. This practice was an act of total humiliation and intended to condemn the person in both their existences on earth and in the afterlife. For more information on Chams, the former Champa kingdom, and their subjugation in Southeast Asia, see Philip Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery*, (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007).

²⁶ Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007) 551.

Bayon temple at Angkor Thom and titled it “the Struggle of the People of Kampuchea against Foreign Invasion.”²⁷ Events such as these inspired a fear and distrust of foreigners that soon led Cambodians to define Khmer lands in ethnic terminologies. Territory was soon defined exclusively in ethnic terms and all land that was inhabited by a Khmer racial majority was classified as part of Angkor’s realm. The most telling example concerns the collective memory of Kampuchea Krom. The Mekong Delta area known by Cambodians as Kampuchea Krom was identified as a Cambodian territory since it was largely Khmer in population and belonged to the Khmer people in the years before colonial subjugation.²⁸

Pol Pot revitalized these traditional notions of xenophobia and incorporated them into his own utopian vision of a great Khmer Empire. Since the medieval empire of the Khmers was revered as culturally pure, it was, therefore, essential in the Khmer Rouge mindset to destroy *all* foreign influences and ideas. According to Kiernan, Pol Pot once stated in a 1977 address that “loose morals make the good and clean social environment in every unit become bad... We must resist this situation because it affects tradition (our society used to be good and clean).”²⁹ Cambodia’s tainted “pure history” and the “pure Khmer tradition” had to be restored.³⁰ Pol Pot viewed the Vietnamese as “running dog CIA agents” and “concealed enemies boring from within”, and thus, believed the only way to restore

²⁷ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 551.

²⁸ Jan Overson and Ing-Britt Trankell, “Cambodia”, In *Ethnicity in Asia*, Colin Mackerras ed., (New York: Routledge, 2003) 195.

²⁹ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 551, Pol Pot, Alan S. Rosenbaum, *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009) 225.

³⁰ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 551.

Cambodia's purity was to remove them from Khmer society.³¹ Ironically, the *Livre Noir* accuses the Vietnamese of committing "fascist acts against Kampuchea's people."³² For that reason, it is integral to examine Lifton's study of Nazi doctors to show the ways in which Pol Pot's precepts were inherently ultra-nationalist.

In Lifton's view, nationalist leaders often refer to the nation as the body and the people as its vital organs. When a group of people becomes a problem, it is often recognized by the leader as infectious. Lifton notes a stress on the "integrity of the organic body of the folk- the collectivity, people, or nation as embodiment of racial-cultural substance."³³ By this rationale, the use of medical terminology can be viewed as a way to diagnose the harmful elements and restore health to the national body.³⁴ The first instances in Cambodia concerned Pol Pot's encouragement of his people to adhere to the "ten-fold characteristics of the Party", of which the "cleanliness of an individual's morality of living" was stressed above all other things.³⁵ Cambodians were urged to possess "a staunch revolutionary stance in terms of a *clean* morality of living and *cleanliness* in political terms."³⁶ Ultimately, since Pol Pot deemed his revolution "the only *clean* one in history",³⁷ it was necessary for him to remove the *unclean* elements from Democratic Kampuchea.

³¹ Pol Pot, "Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...", 2.

³² *Livre Noir, Chapitre 4*, 60.

³³ Robert Jay Lifton, *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, (London: Basic Books, 1988) 46.

³⁴ Lifton, *Nazi Doctors...*, 46.

³⁵ Pol Pot, "Another Step in Our Cooperative Victories", *Revolutionary Flag*, No.7 (July 1978) 6-7.

³⁶ Pol Pot, "Another Step...", 6-7. Emphasis added.

³⁷ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil.*, 550.

The notion of societal cleanliness was by no means a Khmer Rouge innovation. According to historian Georges Vigarello, in fifteenth century France, having a clean appearance and guising foul bodily odors with beautifully scented perfumes was considered as both an act of moral decency and part of a universally-understood social code.³⁸ Protecting the body from vermin such as fleas and other parasites was perceived as the dominant idea of hygiene.³⁹ These concepts spread throughout Europe and became synonymous with being civilized. By the early nineteenth century, these concepts were used to describe the nation as the body and the people as the vital organs. Most famously, Adolph Hitler employed race hygiene rhetoric in the 1920s and 1930s to explain the “plaguing nature”⁴⁰ of the Jews on the German “body politic.”⁴¹ Pol Pot was of a very similar mind.

Khmer racial superiority over the “other” was soon idealized in the form of a pure Angkor. The inherently plaguing nature of the “other’s” inferiority was regarded as equally powerful in plaguing the pureness of Khmer society. All peoples who were not descended from the great Khmer people of years past, and were Cambodia’s historic rivals in the region, were not as worthy or did not possess the same *clean* “national character.”⁴² Pol Pot employed this sort of rhetoric in the following statements:

³⁸ Georges Vigarello, *Le Propre et le Sale: L'hygiene du Corps depuis le Moyen Age*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985) 90-91, 102-107

³⁹ Vigarello, 50-51.

⁴⁰ The European Jewish population was likened to numerous forms of vermin by the Nazi regime. Hitler stressed the need to cleanse the German national body of these “pests” to re-establish the purity of the German race.

⁴¹ Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 77.

⁴² Pol Pot, “The Party’s Four-Year Plan...”, 46.

In 1976, for example, speaking only of internal Party matters, while we are engaged in a socialist revolution, there is a sickness inside the Party, born in a time when we waged a people's and a democratic revolution... The illness must emerge to be examined. Because of the heat of the people's revolution... we search for the microbes within the Party without success. They are buried... If we wait any longer, the microbes can do real damage."⁴³

Our people must have a staunch revolutionary stance in terms of a *clean* morality of living and *cleanliness* in political terms.⁴⁴ We have the potential for a much greater expansion of the Party membership than in 1977 because our foundation in *a lot cleaner* than in 1977.⁴⁵

While the above statements can also be regarded as references to the class enemies and traitors to the Party, by the late 1970s Pol Pot viewed traitors and the Vietnamese as one and the same. To Pol Pot, the resident Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, and Muslim Chams were constituted as the unclean elements in the utopian Khmer society and became targets for extermination.

While Pol Pot made "no claims of genetic racism or 'scientific precision,'" he employed various "biological metaphors that suggested the *threat of contamination*."⁴⁶ According to Lifton, the Nazi eugenic purification program was termed in medical vocabulary. "Therapy through mass murder" was seen as the "final solution"⁴⁷ to "cure" the German national body.⁴⁸ Pol Pot referred to the

⁴³ Pol Pot, "Report on Activities of the Party Center According to the General Political Tasks of 1976", From *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977*, Kiernan, Chandler and Boua eds., 183-184.

⁴⁴ Pol Pot, "Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...", 6-7. Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Pol Pot, "Learn from the Political, Ideological and Organizational Experiences in Fulfilling the Party's 1977 Revolutionary Duties in Order to Impel Forward Victoriously the Implementation of 1978 Duties", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (December-January 1977-1978) 39.

⁴⁶ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*., 549. Emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Final Solution: Adolph Hitler's plan to completely execute the total population of European Jews.

⁴⁸ Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1994) 269.

national minorities, especially the Vietnamese, as “diseased elements”, “microbes”, “pests buried within”, and traitors “boring in.”⁴⁹ This is conveyed in the following statement:

... The *concealed enemies boring from within* who are CIA agents, Yuon running dog agents and KGB agents have spread the fire of the quick-burning flames of national and class hatred... These flames... have been broadly transformed into a great mass movement to eliminate... and sweep cleanly away *the concealed enemies boring from within*.⁵⁰

As we can see, Pol Pot created a medical diagnosis of the diseased elements that presently plagued the Khmer national body and the purity of his idealized society. He also regarded the Vietnamese and other minority groups as “criminal by nature, and this criminality was seen as transmittable from husband to wife, as well as an inherent trait.”⁵¹ This is evident in his belief that Vietnam had “always carried out *successive activities* and *criminal schemes* for years in order to prevent Kampuchea from living in full independence and sovereignty and to subjugate her...” To Pol Pot, the Vietnamese were “nothing but *aggressors, annexationists* and *swallowers of territories*”⁵², and their nature was “nothing different from that of the imperialists and colonialists.”⁵³

In summary, Pol Pot’s totalistic xenophobia was the inspiration behind his diagnosis and subsequent attempts to cleanse Cambodia of the Vietnamese and

⁴⁹ Pol Pot, “Another Step...”, 1-2, and Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 549.

⁵⁰ Pol Pot, “Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...”, 2-3. Emphasis added.

⁵¹ Margolin, 634.

⁵² *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 2,6, 22, and Pol Pot, Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...”, 2-3.

⁵³ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences on the Vietnamese Aggression against Democratic Kampuchea*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, July 1978) 1,6. Emphasis added.

other minority peoples. He undertook the responsibility to “cure” the infection of foreign influence and totally isolate, expose, and exterminate people deemed by him to be an infection. As we will see, Pol Pot’s diagnoses and justifications for the elimination of the Vietnamese “microbes”⁵⁴ were but a few of his strategies. The Cambodian leader soon provided his own interpretation of Vietnamese history to play upon historical enmity and to incite anti-Vietnamese sentiment across Democratic Kampuchea.

Part Two: Separating Crocodiles from Alligators- Pol Pot and Racial Difference

I came to join the revolution, not to kill the Cambodian people. Look at me now. Am I a violent person? No. So, as far as my conscience and my mission were concerned, there was *no problem*.

Whoever wishes to blame or attack me is entitled to do so. *I regret I didn't have enough experience to totally control the movement*. On the other hand, with our constant struggle, this had to be done together with others in the communist world *to stop Kampuchea becoming Vietnamese*.⁵⁵

- Pol Pot, Interview with Nate Thayer, October 1997

One of the most crucial tenets of Pol Pot’s localized ideology was the reinvigoration of Cambodian nationalist enmity toward Vietnam. While hatred of the Vietnamese is not an inherent characteristic of the Khmer, there does exist a collective Khmer historical memory that fueled animosity toward Vietnam. Many Khmers continued “to have racist attitudes toward the Vietnamese”, providing nationalists like Pol Pot with an “emotionally charged theme to tap into, particularly

⁵⁴ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 2-4.*

⁵⁵ Pol Pot, “Day of Reckoning: Interview with Nate Thayer”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 1997, 19-20.

during times of socioeconomic upheaval when people seek a scapegoat for their problems.”⁵⁶ Cambodians viewed the Vietnamese as a “hereditary enemy”, which conveniently played into Pol Pot’s hands.⁵⁷ Although historically there were many reasons for Cambodians to dislike the Thais, Lao, and Vietnamese for their expansion into Khmer lands, Cambodian enmity was almost wholly focused on Vietnam. According to Short, despite the many atrocities committed by the Siamese in the nineteenth century, “there were *no* comparable stories about the Thais.”⁵⁸ The Vietnamese were viewed by Khmers as “the Cambodian bogeyman”⁵⁹, and when Khmer children fought, an older child would intervene and remind them that “Cambodians had enemies enough without fighting among themselves.”⁶⁰

This section examines the ways in which Pol Pot played upon an anti-Vietnamese Cambodian collective memory to inspire, foment, and direct ultra-nationalist racial hatred. Pol Pot postulated that the “Yuon” possessed an inherently “perfidious and annexationist nature.”⁶¹ To this end, the Cambodian leader referenced three historical events that exemplified Vietnamese offences against Cambodians. His intent was to portray their Eastern neighbors as the “Evil

⁵⁶ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 217.

⁵⁷ Short, 25.

⁵⁸ Short, 25. Emphasis added.

⁵⁹ According to historian Philip Short, the idea of the Vietnamese was hated the most. He states that Cambodians had “a national inferiority complex which took refuge in dreams of ancient grandeur.” The cultural fracture between the Chinese world and the Indian world, Confucianism and Theravada Buddhism, mutual distrust of each other, and further differences of opinion, beliefs, and practices, “periodically exploded into racial massacres and pogroms.” See Short, 25.

⁶⁰ Short, 25.

⁶¹ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences...*, 3-4.

Vietnamese Other.”⁶² Each sought to scapegoat the Vietnamese for both Cambodia’s historical decline⁶³ and Pol Pot’s errors in calculation. The Cambodian leader possessed an apocalyptic view of a declining Khmer history leading to his flagrant accusations against the Vietnamese.⁶⁴ The first of these was a Khmer Rouge reinterpretation of the Vietnamese invasion of Champa in the fifteenth century. The second was *The Legend of the Master’s Tea*, an early nineteenth century oral tale that recalled the Vietnamese savagery toward Khmer workers on a canal project.⁶⁵ The third event was called *The Coconut Floss* and was used both to depict the Vietnamese as having “naturally treacherous”⁶⁶ characteristics and to explain the notion of “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds.”⁶⁷ This tale was used to provoke a national paranoia to create a clear division between “us” and “*them*.”⁶⁸ Using the *Livre Noir* as the main source of study, we will see how Pol Pot revitalized a collective memory of Vietnamese savagery and “evil characteristics”

⁶² Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 220.

⁶³ Since the fall of Angkor in 1431 AD, the Vietnamese and Thai kingdoms had grown exponentially and swallowed much of Cambodia’s territories. Until the advent of the French in the mid 1860s, the Vietnamese ruled over Southern Cambodian land and threatened to wipe Cambodia off the map.

⁶⁴ Pol Pot firmly believed that Cambodia was on the verge of total annihilation at the hands of the Vietnamese. This feeling was not uncommon throughout Cambodia since many regarded their history and culture in near total decline and on the verge of disappearing forever.

⁶⁵ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 9.*

⁶⁶ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 9.*

⁶⁷ Pol Pot postulated that “concealed enemies” were plaguing the revolution from within. These enemies were classified as “Yuon running dog agents, CIA and KGB agents.” The Cambodian leader stated that the only way to expose the enemies “boring from within” was to force them to struggle with one another in the fields. Based on their revolutionary spirit, the “moles” would be discovered and eliminated. See Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping out the Concealed Enemy...”, 2-6.

⁶⁸ “Them” is italicized to emphasize the demonization of the Vietnamese “Other.”

to fuel his own ultra-nationalist ambitions. However, it is important to convey Pol Pot's use of history and, in particular, his manipulation of historical events to demonize the "Other".

Historian Homi K. Bhabha states that "nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye."⁶⁹ He follows by stating that "to study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself."⁷⁰ Many Khmers were aware of their tumultuous descent from power in the region over the past four hundred years. Most Cambodians recognized the offences committed against them by neighbor states during this decline.⁷¹ Pol Pot used historical events and oral tales to play upon this collective memory and garner enough popular support to carry out his vengeance-driven anti-Vietnamese campaigns.

The first historical event to which Pol Pot referred in order to incite anti-Vietnamese sentiment was a new Khmer Rouge interpretation of the historical expansion of Vietnam into the Kingdom of Champa in the fifteenth century (1402-1471). According to historians Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, the Dai Viet Kingdom sacked Champa under the leadership of Le Thanh Tong. In spite of

⁶⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation", from *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha ed., (New York: Routledge, 1990) 1.

⁷⁰ Bhabha, 3.

⁷¹ The oral tales *The Legend of the Master's Tea* and *The Coconut Floss* were examples of historical events being preserved in the national consciousness. The collective trauma of a declining civilization paired with Vietnamese treachery in the nineteenth century meant that generations of Cambodians recognized their responsibility to protect Cambodian language and culture from Vietnamese annexation.

successful raids and numerous military triumphs, the Dai Viet took nearly seventy years to conquer the entire Cham kingdom. The millennia-old Champa kingdom, which had been a regional powerhouse since the first century AD, fell to Dai Viet forces in a brutally aggressive invasion in 1471.⁷² While the balance of power between the two Southeast Asian kingdoms became destabilized, there is no evidence to suggest that the Dai Viet kingdom “totally exterminated the Cham race.”⁷³ But this extermination was alleged by the *Livre Noir*.

The document, written by Pol Pot or one of his loyal cadres, asserts that the Vietnamese conquered Vijaya⁷⁴ and renamed it Binh Dinh. It also states that the Vietnamese “annexed the region of Phu Yen in the South of Qui Nhon.”⁷⁵ These events seem rather accurate in spite of the lack of references cited by the author. However, the accusation that Vietnamese “totally exterminated the Cham race” is lacking in historical fact. Pol Pot had a very selective historical analysis concerning the event since he ignored the fact that Cham armies had frequently attacked Dai Viet and had expansionist ambitions of their own. Instead, Pol Pot portrayed the ancient Chams as a peaceful, non-intrusive people. In truth, the Chams had expansionist ambitions of their own and made numerous attempts to acquire territory from both the Dai Viet and Khmer Empires.

The Vietnamese responded to Cham invasions with equally violent measures of their own. As historian Serge Thion states, the defeat and annexation of Champa

⁷² Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, *Vietnam: Borderless Histories*, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006) 99.

⁷³ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 3.

⁷⁴ Vijaya: ancient capital of the Cham kingdom.

⁷⁵ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 3.

in the seventeenth century “certainly entailed major massacres.”⁷⁶ However, contrary to Pol Pot’s assertions in the *Livre Noir*, Thion states that “a population of Chams numbering in the tens of thousands still lives in Vietnam today.”⁷⁷ Moreover, the Cham population was greater in Cambodia “since many Chams sought refuge there after losing their independence.”⁷⁸ While this does not absolve the Vietnamese for their atrocities against the Cham people, it does reveal the Cambodian leader’s selective analysis of the historical event. Ultimately, Pol Pot was seductive in his recounting of historical events in order to portray the Vietnamese as brutally savage by nature and a potential threat to exact the same measures against Cambodians.

Pol Pot’s determination manipulate history is also evident in the story of Kampuchea Krom. As mentioned before in chapter three, Pol Pot attributed the loss of Cambodia’s territory in present-day South Vietnam to deceit. One aspect not discussed by Pol Pot, however, is the allegation that the Vietnamese made “sordid use of girls” to trick the Cambodians into trusting them.⁷⁹ According to the *Livre Noir*, the Vietnamese “have often resorted to these sordid methods consisting of selling their girls in order to achieve their annexationist ambitions... and today do not hesitate to carry out the same repugnant methods.”⁸⁰ In essence, Pol Pot wanted to explain Cambodia’s loss of territory as a Vietnamese betrayal of Cambodian trust.

⁷⁶ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 47.

⁷⁷ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 47.

⁷⁸ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 47.

⁷⁹ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 6.

⁸⁰ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 6.

The second event, albeit more factual, was expected to foment the same racially-motivated rancor. In 1816, a Vietnamese military mandarin⁸¹ named Nguyen Van Thuy was asked by his superiors in Saigon to recruit nearly five thousand Cambodian laborers in Cambodia and Vietnam to excavate and restore the Vinh Te Canal.⁸² According to Chandler, the laborers were recruited by Khmers but were paid and instructed by Vietnamese supervisors.⁸³ The conditions were very harsh since, according to Chandler, the Vietnamese “masters” did not particularly care about the numerous injuries and casualties.⁸⁴ Khmer workers who did not adequately complete work details or simply refused to participate in the most dangerous tasks were arrested and buried to their necks and a pot was placed on their exposed heads.⁸⁵

The Vietnamese masters’ brutality against Cambodian workers was recounted throughout Cambodia in a story called *The Legend of the Master’s Tea*. *The Livre Noir* describes the legend in the following passage:

In order to maintain vigilance, Kampuchea’s people have kept alive two phrases in their mind. The first one says: “Be careful not to spill the master’s tea!” It recalls the barbarous crime committed by the Yuon in 1813 during the digging of the Vinh Te canal. The Yuons buried alive the Khmer people up to their necks and used the latter’s heads as a stand for a wood stove to boil water for their master’s tea. As they burned and suffered, the victims shook their heads. At that moment, the Yuon torturers said to them, “Be careful not to spill the master’s tea.”⁸⁶

⁸¹ Mandarin: a high government official or bureaucrat.

⁸² David Chandler, “An Anti-Vietnamese Rebellion in Early Nineteenth Century Cambodia: Pre-Colonial Imperialism and a Pre-Nationalist Response”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6, No. 1, (March 1975) 20.

20.

⁸³ Chandler, “An Anti-Vietnamese...”, 17-18.

⁸⁴ Chandler, “An Anti-Vietnamese...”, 18.

⁸⁵ Locard, 178.

⁸⁶ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 9.

As we can see, the *Livre Noir* demonizes the Vietnamese for their savage treatment of Khmer laborers. As Hinton states, the story “embodies a number of Khmer nationalist themes regarding the Vietnamese: their ‘evil nature,’ their attitude toward Cambodians, and their “desire to destroy Cambodia and its people.”⁸⁷ Also, Chandler notes that the harsh conditions “probably helped to ignite the 1820 rebellion which broke out nearby and may have included former prospective workers on the canal.”⁸⁸

The Khmer Rouge encouraged violent reprisal against anyone they branded as a Vietnamese “agent.”⁸⁹ As Locard asserts, “for the Khmer Rouge, the victim became the torturer, and the torturer became the victim.”⁹⁰ Party slogans called for Cambodians to “Smash the Viets until you break their backs”, and were disseminated to further foment Cambodian enmity.⁹¹ Another Party slogan translated by historian Henri Locard describes the Vietnamese as the following:

Beware of the enemy from Vietnam who takes Khmer heads as trophies and ingredients for the giant pot in which he boils water for his master’s tea! Let us violently attack and scatter the Vietnamese vermin!⁹²

Here, we can clearly indicate that the Khmer Rouge made a strong reference to Vietnamese “savagery” towards Cambodian workers on the Vinh Te canal.

Ironically, the Khmer communists were characteristically brutal in their treatment

⁸⁷ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?..* 216, and *Livre Noir*, 1-93.

⁸⁸ Chandler, “An Anti-Vietnamese...”, 18. See also Tran Van Hanh, “Inscription de la Montagne de Vinh Te”, *BSEI*, No. 48(1904) 20-45.

⁸⁹ See Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy...” *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7, (July 1978) 1-2.

⁹⁰ Locard, 177.

⁹¹ Locard, 176.

⁹² Locard, 178.

of *their fellow* Khmers. Dissident Khmer workers were often severely punished in particularly vile ways.

While the Vietnamese masters of the Vinh Te canal castigated Khmer workers in a uniquely brutal manner, the Cambodian punishment of Khmer workers in the 1970s was far more violent and implied a total humiliation of the accused. According to Alex Hinton's interview with a former KR cadre named Teap, his former cadres had an equally barbaric way of punishing disobedient workers during the Pol Pot regime. The Khmer Rouge brutality toward Cambodian workers who disobeyed orders is exemplified in the following passage:

The condemned man was tied to a tree, his chest bare and blindfolded over his eyes. Ta Sok, the executioner, using a large knife, made a long cut in the stomach of the poor man... In pain, the man screamed like a wild beast. Even today his cries still ring in my ears. Blood rushed out everywhere, his insides were all laid bare, and Ta Sok cut out the liver and cooked it on a little stove that Ta Chea had just heated up... They divided up the liver among them and ate it hungrily.⁹³

It is important to note the symbolism of eating the liver. In Khmer culture, the liver represents a "vitalizing organ that initiates action and emboldens a person."⁹⁴ Hinton states, "if English speakers refer to a person as 'having a lot of heart,' Cambodians may characterize a brave or daring individual as 'having a lot of liver (*mean thlaoem*)."⁹⁵ By extracting the offender's liver, the cadre could see the level of the person's revolutionary spirit. The consumption of the liver by the Khmer Rouge officials is said to give them a higher status and ability while subverting the deceased person into a permanent state of hell. In essence, the atrocious act of

⁹³ Howard J. De Nike, John B. Quigley, and Kenneth Jay Robinson, *Genocide in Cambodia: The Trials of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 450.

⁹⁴ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 290.

⁹⁵ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?...*, 290.

removing the liver was seen a way to identify anti-revolutionary peoples and explains Pol Pot's obsession with exposing "hidden anti-revolutionary agents in Democratic Kampuchea."⁹⁶

The third event, a tale called *The Coconut Floss*, was intended to instill a national paranoia and distrust among Cambodians with respect to their Vietnamese "brothers." The *Coconut Floss* recalls an event, possibly fictional or greatly exaggerated via years of oral story-telling, where a Vietnamese man who commits a crime against a Cambodian. While escaping, the offender threw himself into a pool of water and tried to hide his face under coconut floss but was discovered by the people.⁹⁷ The *Livre Noir* contends that this tale "upholds the vigilance of Kampuchea's people against the dupery and treacherous acts of the Yuons."⁹⁸ Moreover, the tale is meant to show that the Vietnamese try to hide themselves among the population after committing crimes against Cambodians. Ultimately, the tale is meant to encourage every Cambodian to distrust the "hidden" Vietnamese enemy that plots to "wreck Cambodia's standard of living and revolution... from within."⁹⁹

The roots of Cambodia's distrust of Vietnam are very complex and linked to specific historical events. Pol Pot portrayed the Vietnamese as an evil, invading people who seek only to annex Cambodian lands and swallow Kampuchea whole.¹⁰⁰ Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge contemporaries had felt betrayed by their

⁹⁶ Pol Pot, "Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy...", 1-6.

⁹⁷ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 9.

⁹⁸ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 9.

⁹⁹ Pol Pot, "Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...", 2.

¹⁰⁰ Pol Pot, "The National Duties of All of Us...", 1-3.

former Vietnamese communist allies, who by virtue of their “arrogance”, ignored Cambodian wishes and “abandoned them at the international negotiating table.”¹⁰¹ After taking power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge forces immediately engaged the Vietnamese forces over coastal islands. As a result, Pol Pot felt that the Vietnamese did not respect the Khmer Rouge political line of “independence- mastery, sovereignty and self-reliance.”¹⁰²

As the Cambodian chairman’s policies waned in overall effectiveness and the dead bodies began to pile up, Pol Pot proceeded to blame *every* political miscalculation, error, and outbreak of famine on the covert workings of the Vietnamese. As Thion states, Pol Pot attributed the Vietnamese “all the ills of the universe.”¹⁰³ The Vietnamese were an “easily identifiable” enemy¹⁰⁴ and were widely regarded as the “real enemies” in the CPK’s propaganda. According to Locard, Party slogans “encouraged broadly traditional stereotypes and racial prejudice.”¹⁰⁵ Paired with the racist stereotypes portrayed in propaganda songs and slogans, the supposed “painful experiences” of Kampuchea’s people had taught Khmers “to clearly discern the insatiable... seduction maneuvers” of the Vietnamese.¹⁰⁶ There were, however, so few Vietnamese who remained in Democratic Kampuchea by 1977-1978. According to Hinton, approximately “310,000 of Cambodia’s 450,000 ethnic Vietnamese are *thought* to have fled

¹⁰¹ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?..*, 218.

¹⁰² Pol Pot, “Another Step in our Cooperative Victories...”, 4-5.

¹⁰³ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Locard, 175.

¹⁰⁵ Locard, 175.

¹⁰⁶ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 9.

Cambodia by August 1970... The DK regime dealt with the remainder.”¹⁰⁷ With few left to scapegoat, Cambodians themselves also became marked. Pol Pot soon cautioned Cambodians to fear “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds.”¹⁰⁸

Like the poor Vietnamese thief who tried to hide his face from impending judgment, the Khmer-Vietnamese also had a motivation to stay hidden. They were part Vietnamese and, by virtue of this one fact, could be detained, tortured, and executed by any Khmer Rouge cadre. By 1978, Pol Pot broadcasted the “Who Are ‘We?’” speech on Radio Phnom Penh. This speech was intended to draw a clear line between the Khmer race and the Vietnamese race. All those with mixed ancestry or deemed as possessing an “evil and perfidious nature”, were classified as ethnic Vietnamese and were summarily hunted for elimination. While Pol Pot had forced nearly 150,000 Vietnamese to leave Cambodia, the ethnic Vietnamese and mixed Khmer populations that remained became the new targets for his violent race purges.

The Cambodian ruler accused the “Vietnamese agents” that had “infiltrated into the Party” for the many shortcomings of the revolution.¹⁰⁹ To rationalize his outlandish accusations, Pol Pot manipulated recent historical events to serve his own private and ultra-nationalist intentions. The Cambodian tyrant traced the Vietnamese “corruption” of the Cambodian revolution all the way back to the first years of the clandestine movement. The *Livre Noir* makes the following statements:

They (the Vietnamese) intensified their activities *against* the Communist Party of Kampuchea. In the East and Southwest revolutionary bases, the Vietnamese

¹⁰⁷ Hinton, *Why Did They Kill?..*, 217. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 272.

¹⁰⁹ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 2*, 25.

carried out activities aimed at creating confusion and division in the ranks of the Kampuchean revolution. They both acted themselves and also manipulated Khmer elements that they had been organizing for a long time and had infiltrated into the ranks of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.¹¹⁰

Here, we can see how Pol Pot raised the issue of a supposed Vietnamese infiltration to the fore. The *Livre Noir* unwittingly confirms “a long list of conspiracies and plots” which is attributed to “the wickedness of the Vietnamese.”¹¹¹ Moreover, the document argues that these “perfidious crimes”¹¹² continue to harass the Kampuchean movement.¹¹³ The *Livre Noir* makes the case that the border clashes that continued from 1975 to the late years of the regime were Vietnam’s attempt to “create a base for its future aggression.”¹¹⁴ The only evidence that supports these claims was extracted from captured Vietnamese soldiers who were forced to confess Vietnamese “crimes.”¹¹⁵

The preface to the short collection of confessions titled *Evidences on the Vietnamese Aggression Against Democratic Kampuchea* postulates that the “perfidious and intriguing nature of the Vietnamese” makes their “deeds exactly opposite to words.”¹¹⁶ The confessions are entirely contrived and cannot serve as fair historical evidence for Pol Pot to base his outrageous claims. Colonel Nguyen Van Chen, called Nguyen Binh Chinh according to the text, states that his Vietnamese army intended to lead attacks into Cambodian territory but was easily defeated since his men “were very much afraid of the Revolutionary Army of

¹¹⁰ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 2, 27-28.*

¹¹¹ Thion, *Watching...*, 63.

¹¹² Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences...*, 4.

¹¹³ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 4, 31-32.*

¹¹⁴ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 6, 74.*

¹¹⁵ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences ...*, 1-63.

¹¹⁶ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences ...*, 4.

Kampuchea... and the guerrilla war.”¹¹⁷ Another captive named Tran Van Thuong, a Major in the ninth division of the Vietnamese army, conveniently admits Vietnam’s intention to annex Cambodia for the purpose of creating an “Indochina Federation.” Perhaps the most telling confession came from Vong Nguoc Xuan who stated that his major had told him the following: “We are in the army, we don’t have to think about this problem, we have just to succeed in attacking and taking possession of Kampuchea in conformity with the objective of the Central Committee of our Party.”¹¹⁸

These supposedly honest confessions are all too convenient and should not be accepted as evidence of Vietnamese plots to annex Cambodia and destroy the revolution. First, the confessions were extracted by force. Second, and most importantly, after the 1951 breakup of the Indochinese Communist Party into three national parties, the Vietnamese “never again spoke of an ‘Indochina Federation.’”¹¹⁹ Thion explains this in the following passage:

The war against the French made the whole of Indochina a theatre of operations. The *Black Paper* is entirely correct in reminding us that, in Cambodia, operations on the Viet Minh side were directed by a Vietnamese committee presided over by Nguyen Thanh Son. The country was divided into several operational zones and an intense effort at political organization was carried out among the Khmer population... This is why, when the *Black Paper* states that the Viet Minh, with a support base among some of the Khmer Krom in Cochinchina, “kidnapped several Khmers in order to train and supervise them, with a view to furthering their strategy of an ‘Indochinese Federation’ in Kampuchea”¹²⁰, we can not believe a word of it.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences...*, 11.

¹¹⁸ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences ...*, 62.

¹¹⁹ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 57.

¹²⁰ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 2*, 18.

¹²¹ Thion, *Watching Cambodia...*, 57.

Moreover, Kiernan asserts that “the Vietnamese proposal for an ‘Indochinese Federation’ had literally not been mentioned by Hanoi since the dissolution of French Indochina in 1954”, and there is “no evidence that Vietnamese leaders harbored such all-consuming ambitions thereafter.”¹²² In the end, like the tale of the *Coconut Floss*, the forced confessions, and allegations against Vietnam for covert sabotage of the Cambodian revolution, Pol Pot manipulated history to instill paranoia and buttress the divide between “us” and “*them*.”

In summary, Pol Pot employed a variety of historical justifications for the political mass murder of the country’s ethnic Vietnamese population. He revitalized some isolated events in the history of Cambodia-Vietnam relations and used them to serve as a universal slander of the Vietnamese people. Kiernan postulates that the Cambodian leader merely diverted attention from the harsh realities of his own brutally murderous policies and relied on the historic enmity of the Khmer people toward their Eastern neighbors.¹²³ As a result, he created a scapegoat to explain his numerous failures in exceedingly racist terms. The defamatory propaganda was, however, only the beginning of the anti-Vietnamese policies. As we will see, Pol Pot treated the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia in a uniquely brutal and totalistic manner.

¹²² Ben Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, From *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981*, Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua eds., (London: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1982) 302.

¹²³ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist...”, 303-304.

Part Three: Disproportionate Revenge and the Mass Killing of Ethnic Vietnamese

To unite our compatriots through the Party, bring our workers up to their highest level of productivity, and to make the *yotheas*' [troops] ardor and valor in combat even greater, the best thing we can do was incite them to hate the *youns* [pejorative for Vietnamese] more and more everyday. Our *bang- phaaun* [literally, older and younger brothers and sisters] are willing to make any sacrifice the minute we wave the "Hate Vietnam" flag in front of them.¹²⁴ - Prince Sihanouk

... We need only 2,000,000 troops to crush the 50,000,000 Vietnamese, and we would still have 6,000,000 people left. We must formulate our combat line in this manner, in order to win victory. This is the combat line to be implemented on the battlefield.¹²⁵ - Pol Pot, 1978

Pol Pot's seemingly strong grip of control over Democratic Kampuchean society was greatly loosened by 1978. He no longer trusted the Chinese, and cut ties with Beijing that very year. Beijing believed the Khmer Rouge had gone too far in forcibly evacuating the major cities and executing masses of people in an effort to remake their society.¹²⁶ Journalist and historian Nayan Chanda reported that apart from the question of a united front in Cambodia, what reportedly irked China the most was Cambodia's ruthless series of purges and executions.¹²⁷ Cambodia's "internationally bloody image" was regarded as "a serious obstacle to China seeking alliances with the non-communist world against the Soviet Union."¹²⁸ Lines had therefore been drawn and Cambodia's leader was now as concerned as ever.

¹²⁴ Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope: The Case for Cambodia*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 92. See also Thu Huong Nguyen-vo, *Khmer-Viet Relations and the Third Indochina Conflict*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Inc., Publishers, 1992) 96.

¹²⁵ Democratic Kampuchea, "Cambodia's Strategy of Defense Against Vietnam", [http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Cam_Defence_VN.html], 15 May 1975.

¹²⁶ Fox Butterfield, "Leading Cambodian In a Visit to Beijing: Trip by Pol Pot Sheds Some Light on the Hierarchical Structure of Secretive Indochina State", *New York Times*, 29 September 1977, 28.

¹²⁷ Chanda, "Cambodia: Beijing Pulls Back." 22.

¹²⁸ Chanda, "Cambodia: Beijing Pulls Back." 23.

Without a powerful ally, anti-Pol Pot sentiment was on the rise in Cambodia's Eastern Zone, a historically and culturally Vietnamese area within Democratic Kampuchea.¹²⁹ To counter the dissent, Pol Pot embraced the most intense forms of Khmer total revenge.

Revenge was a central element in Pol Pot's approach to the treatment of both class and race enemies. As defined in the previous chapter, disproportionate revenge, or *krasangsoek* in Khmer, was a crucial cultural form that Pol Pot espoused to eradicate class enemies and regain what he perceived to be the lost honor of the Cambodian peasants. It is equally logical to suggest that the Khmer notion of disproportionate revenge was also an essential feature of Pol Pot's anti-Vietnamese race policies. He asserted that the Vietnamese had deeply offended the Cambodian people with numerous acts of treachery and their continued existence in Cambodia and across the border in Vietnam threatened to bring down the revolution from the inside.¹³⁰ To repay the insult and restore Cambodian honor, Pol Pot sought to exact revenge against the Vietnamese through the act of systematic mass murder of all Vietnamese populations.

This section examines two of Pol Pot's most extreme revenge policies. Two types of revenge are outlined to show the extent to which the Cambodian leader was willing to go to regain face, prevent a Vietnamese annexation, and vanquish the Vietnamese race. This, of course, spun out of control and resulted in the bloody Eastern Zone massacres. Here, Pol Pot's quest for revenge was wrought against his own ethnic Khmer population out of the fear that they possessed "Vietnamese

¹²⁹ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 298.

¹³⁰ Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences...*, 11.

minds.”¹³¹ The first type of revenge was centered on the need to punish the Vietnamese for the treacherous annexation of Kampuchea Krom. The second example concerns a much broader framework of Pol Pot’s anti-Vietnamese plan: the total elimination of the Vietnamese race. In his “Cambodian final solution”, Pol Pot proclaimed that only 2,000,000 troops were needed to crush the 50,000,000 Vietnamese in Democratic Kampuchea and abroad.¹³² The third part analyzes the effect of the Party’s “final solution” on Khmers in the Eastern Zone. The massacres of 1977-1978 reveal the paranoid-xenophobic nature of Pol Pot’s totalistic ideology.

Total revenge, the most extreme form of disproportionate revenge, requires the offended party to exact such a strong act of vengeance that it prevents the offender from ever committing the offense again. In order to justify the invasion of South Vietnam, Pol Pot claimed that it was every Cambodian’s duty to repay the Vietnamese for the offense of stolen territory.¹³³ In historian Ben Kiernan’s view, the anti-Vietnam war “was not simply the last tactical refuge of the Pol Pot group”, but instead was an offensive designed to rely on “historically-based racism to offset popular reaction to what his own regime had done to ruin millions of lives.”¹³⁴ The most paramount feature of Pol Pot’s racism was the desire to pay back the Vietnamese for their dishonorable crimes. In essence, the Cambodian leader was fixated on a very extreme approach to the exaction of revenge.

The invasion of South Vietnam was intended to prevent the Vietnamese from repeating the offense they had committed in 1715. It was both a matter of retaking

¹³¹ Chandler, *A History of Cambodia...*, 97.

¹³² Democratic Kampuchea, “Cambodia’s Strategy...”

¹³³ Pol Pot, “The National Duties of All of Us”, 1-3.

¹³⁴ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, 303.

lost Khmer lands and preventing a Vietnamese counter-offensive. Sihanouk stated that in a conversation with Pol Pot, the Cambodian leader asserted that “if there are sugar palm trees, the soil is Khmer.”¹³⁵ Since there were these types of trees in Chaudoc and Ha Tien, “we must occupy.”¹³⁶ According to Sihanouk, KR troops “committed horrible atrocities on a large number of Vietnamese male and female civilians (including old people, women and children).”¹³⁷ By invading the country in 1977-1978, re-conquering lost Khmer territory, and killing as many of the Vietnamese civilians, the country was expected to prevent the threat of a Vietnamese invasion and total annexation of territory.¹³⁸ Pol Pot’s policy is captured in the following passage:

We must continue to be on guard and be prepared to do battle with and smash the enemy at all times... If the enemy commits aggression... we must cross into and stop and smash him right on his land. This is intended to further increase his difficulties... He will no longer dare to repeat his aggression against us; rather, it will be his turn to strain and stop us.¹³⁹

As we can see, the Khmer Rouge intention was to exact a very extreme measure of revenge while also reacquiring their coveted territories. Ta Meng, an older KR veteran cadre, boasted that in 1977 his forces had “killed 30,000 Vietnamese in Svay Rieng Province, destroyed fifty tanks and shot down four

¹³⁵ Norodom Sihanouk, “Speech at the Asia Society”, (New York: 22 February 1980).

¹³⁶ Sihanouk, “Speech...”,

¹³⁷ Norodom Sihanouk, op. cit. 79,81, 114. See Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, 236.

¹³⁸ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 302.

¹³⁹ Pol Pot, “Document Addressed to Comrade Rin, Committee Chairman of the Fourth Division of the Eastern Zone”, 17 July 1977, In Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 302.

Russian-made planes.”¹⁴⁰ Further brutal massacres that followed the quick attacks and brief occupation of small coastal Vietnamese cities exemplified the brutality of Pol Pot’s vengeance. The Ba Chuc Massacre of April 1977 conveyed the extent of the Cambodian regime’s violent reprisal.

The Khmer Rouge Massacre at Ba Chuc village in South Vietnam was one of the regime’s most violent attempts to exact disproportionate revenge against the Vietnamese. Toward the end of April 1978, Pol Pot’s troops launched “a surprise attack on thirteen villages in eight Vietnamese border provinces.”¹⁴¹ The small town of Ba Chuc was the focal point of the regime’s savage quest for revenge. During the twelve days of Khmer Rouge occupation, from April 18-30, 1978, all but two of the town’s inhabitants were murdered.¹⁴² In all, 3,157 people were indiscriminately murdered in schools and temples in Ba Chuc and the surrounding area. The intent was to remove every single “Yvon enemy” from potentially committing an offense against Cambodia. Since all Vietnamese were “annexationist by nature”,¹⁴³ none were excluded.

The manner in which the killings were carried out reflects Pol Pot’s attempt to regain lost face through the subordination of the enemy. It was believed that the Cambodian people could obtain a higher status of honor if they exacted worse punishment on the Vietnamese. According to Hinton, in Cambodian society,

¹⁴⁰ Ben Kiernan, “Interview with Ta Meng”, (Rouen, France: 10 October 1979). See also Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean Communist Movement”, 238.

¹⁴¹ Huu Ngoc, “The River Flows Quietly Once Again”, *Vietnam News Agency-Traditional Miscellany*, 8 May 2005.

¹⁴² James Pringle, “Meanwhile: When the Khmer Rouge Came to Kill Vietnam”, *New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/07/opinion/07iht-edpringle_ed3_.html], 7 January 2004.

¹⁴³ Thion, *Watching...*, 46.

individuals are “strongly motivated to want to be ‘higher than’ others.”¹⁴⁴ As Ngor states, “If I hit you with my fist and you wait five years and then shoot me in the back one dark night, that is *kum*.”¹⁴⁵ This action, in a sense, can “purify one’s honor” and drastically reduce the enemy’s standing in society.¹⁴⁶ To subordinate the Vietnamese “offenders”, the Khmer Rouge soldiers shot the villagers, “slit their throats or beat them to death with sticks”, and “babies were flung into the air and pierced with bayonets while women were raped and left to die with stakes planted in their genitals.”¹⁴⁷ Ultimately, the Ba Chuc Massacre captured the essence of the CPK’s quest to use the cultural form of disproportionate revenge to restore lost land and honor.

In other areas, Khmer Rouge soldiers assaulted small border towns and slaughtered entire village populations. Under the command of Son Sen, Pol Pot’s Defense Minister, Khmer soldiers “crossed into Tay Ninh province in Vietnam and massacred nearly three hundred civilians in five villages in Tan Bien and Ben Chau districts.”¹⁴⁸ According to Kiernan, the soldiers killed ethnic Khmer residents of the villages along with the Vietnamese.¹⁴⁹ All in all, the Khmer Rouge murdered virtually all of Cambodia’s fifteen percent Vietnamese population. Ultimately, the regime was not satisfied with the success of their domestic ethnic cleansing program.

¹⁴⁴ Hinton, “A Head for an Eye...”, 357.

¹⁴⁵ Ngor quoted in Hinton, “A Head for an Eye...”, 357.

¹⁴⁶ Hinton, “A Head for an Eye...”, 357.

¹⁴⁷ Huu Ngoc, “The River Flows Quietly Once Again”, *Vietnam News Agency-Traditional Miscellany*, 8 May 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 373.

¹⁴⁹ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 373.

Under Pol Pot's leadership, Cambodia launched a purification program "by which they aimed to eliminate the Vietnamese in their own version of a 'final solution.'"¹⁵⁰ The most extreme Cambodian solution to the predicament of lost honor is to kill the enemy and sever the continuation of the family line. According to Hinton, the origins of this tradition "go far back in Cambodian history to times when, after winning a war, a victorious Cambodian king would attempt to kill the opposing king and his entire family line."¹⁵¹ In many cases, the king had the family killed in a public display so that all could see his total defeat of the enemy and the restoration of his honor. Pol Pot's race hygiene program was driven by this same sense of lost "face" and a need to guarantee prevention of a potential Vietnamese invasion.

The Khmer Rouge soldiers were instructed to continuously assault Vietnamese civilians to kill thirty Vietnamese people for every dead Khmer.¹⁵² From a mathematical standpoint, this is how Pol Pot viewed the undertaking of the anti-Vietnamese campaign:

So far, we have succeeded in implementing this slogan of one against 30; that is to say, we lose one against 30 Vietnamese. Thus, our losses are one-thirtieth of the Vietnamese losses. Using these figures, one Cambodian soldier is equal to 30 Vietnamese soldiers. Then how many Vietnamese are equal to 10 Cambodian soldiers? The answer must be 300. And 100 Cambodians are equal to 3,000 Vietnamese. And 1,000,000 Cambodians are equal to 30,000,000 Vietnamese. We should have 2,000,000 troops for 60,000,000 Vietnamese. However 2,000,000 troops would be more than enough to fight the Vietnamese, because Vietnam has

¹⁵⁰ Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy: The War After the War*, (London: Harcourt, 1986) 86. See also Jennifer S. Berman, "No Place Like Home: Anti-Vietnamese Discrimination and Nationality in Cambodia", *California Law Review* 84, No. 1, (1986) 834.

¹⁵¹ Bun Chan Mol, *Cambodian Character*, Timothy Carney ed., (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Kehadtan 79, 1973) 179.

¹⁵² Democratic Kampuchea, "Cambodia's Strategy..."

only 50,000,000 inhabitants. We don't have to engage 8,000,000 people. We need only 2,000,000 troops to crush the 50,000,000 Vietnamese, and we would still have 6,000,000 people left. We must formulate our combat line in this manner, in order to win victory. This is the combat line to be implemented on the battlefield.¹⁵³

Here, we can see that not only was Pol Pot delusional in his assessment of Khmer fighting skill, but also that his intention was to kill every single Vietnamese. Pol Pot believed that this plan was the most effective way to “ensure the elimination of the entire Vietnamese population” even if the total cost was “approximately two million Cambodian lives.”¹⁵⁴

Since the entire Cambodian population was under close supervision in the countryside, Khmer Rouge cadres easily had total control over the systematic removal of Vietnamese people from the Khmer utopian society. According to historian Ben Kiernan, by the late years of the regime, all Vietnamese “were forbidden to leave Cambodia.”¹⁵⁵ The Cambodian leader thought that by holding the Vietnamese hostage in his highly supervised agrarian state, it would be easy to suppress potential Vietnamese opposition to his rule. The following year, “Directive from Zone 870” instructed local officials to “arrest all ethnic Vietnamese, and all Khmers who spoke Vietnamese or had Vietnamese friends, and hand them over to state security forces.”¹⁵⁶ The anti-Vietnamese massacres had begun.

In the Northwest Zone, Khmer Rouge cadres “started killing people with any Vietnamese blood.”¹⁵⁷ Anyone with Vietnamese ancestors, siblings, spouses, or Vietnamese friends, was found guilty of counterrevolutionary behavior and

¹⁵³ Democratic Kampuchea, “Cambodia’s Strategy...”

¹⁵⁴ Berman, 835.

¹⁵⁵ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 296.

¹⁵⁶ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 297.

¹⁵⁷ Becker, 252.

summarily executed. Officials responsible for carrying out the executions used excessive violence and went so far as to order “husbands to kill their own wives who were Vietnamese... and those of us who were attached to their wives and children.”¹⁵⁸ The largest mass killing of ethnic Vietnamese in Democratic Kampuchea occurred in Kompong Chhang province in May, 1977 where “about four hundred and twenty Vietnamese adults and children” were executed at once.¹⁵⁹ In Region 37 in Northern Cambodia, officials called on Vietnamese volunteers for repatriation and were massacred upon arrival.¹⁶⁰ Also in the north, Khmer Rouge officials arrested all the ethnic Vietnamese, “even if they could speak Cambodian”, and beat them “to death with poles.”¹⁶¹ Pol Pot’s paranoia soon extended the killing to include Cambodia’s own population, men and women accused of possessing “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds.”¹⁶²

The concept of “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds” was derived from Pol Pot’s desire to oust counter-revolutionary agents from Kampuchea. Pol Pot “impelled forward the countrywide movement to sweep cleanly away the concealed enemy boring from within”, including the enemies within the Party, “in the collective masses and the revolutionary army.”¹⁶³ He believed that “only when we remove the Yuon agents from within”, can the Kampuchean government “make

¹⁵⁸ Ben Kiernan, “Interview with Heng Samrin”, (Phnom Penh, 2 December 1991).

¹⁵⁹ Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) IV, (2 September 1977), H1, and *Bangkok Post*, 1 September 1977. See also Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 297.

¹⁶⁰ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 297.

¹⁶¹ United States Department of State, “Interview with Cambodian Refugee in Buriram, Thailand. Conducted by American Embassy Officer in June, 1978”, Report No. 10, declassified 1978, 1. See also Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 297-298.

¹⁶² Chandler, *A History of Cambodia...*, 97.

¹⁶³ Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy...”, 1.

socialist revolution deeply and construct socialism with *great leaps forward* in accordance with the correct and clear-sighted revolutionary line of the CPK.”¹⁶⁴ The most effective way to accomplish this end was through struggle since “once they struggle with one another, it will definitely be revealed clearly who is revolutionary and who is a traitor to the revolution.”¹⁶⁵ Even though the Vietnamese “moles” may conceal themselves and “wear the signboard of revolution for a temporary period”, these enemies will never fool the people and trump the vigilance of the great Kampuchean people.¹⁶⁶

The Cambodian leader’s growing paranoia and suspicion of Vietnamese intentions manifested itself in the killing of his ethnic Khmer population. Pol Pot turned against the Cambodian people to exact revenge against the Khmer-Vietnamese “traitors” and to eliminate every single “Vietnamese element” from Democratic Kampuchea.

In May 1978, Pol Pot decided “the Eastern Zone cadres and population possessed ‘Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds,’”¹⁶⁷ and it began a “large-scale

¹⁶⁴ Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy ...”, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy ...”, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Pol Pot, “Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy ...”, 3-5.

¹⁶⁷ Eastern Zone massacres: Cambodia’s Eastern Zone was rather autonomously governed when compared to other KR controlled zones. By virtue of this fact, for years Cambodians regarded the Eastern Zone as particularly moderate when compared to other areas. By 1978, this changed dramatically. The zone’s leaders were purged and Khmer-Vietnamese became marked for systematic extermination. See Kiernan, “Wild Chickens, Farm Chickens, and Cormorants: Cambodia’s Eastern Zone under Pol Pot”, in David Chandler and Ben Kiernan eds., *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*. (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983) 136-211.

program to eliminate them.¹⁶⁸ According to Kiernan, the “greatest slaughter of all in Pol Pot’s Kampuchea- the 1978 massacre and evacuation of the inhabitants of the Eastern Zone and its aftermath- was, significantly, preceded by a radio broadcast on the 10th of May outlining the need to purify the masses of the people.”¹⁶⁹ The people in this instance were “overwhelmingly peasants, whose ‘impurity’ stemmed from their years of living under control of the Eastern Zone opposition¹⁷⁰ and consequent government suspicion that they would welcome a Vietnamese invasion to overthrow Pol Pot.”¹⁷¹

Humiliation was a key component of the total revenge procedure. Hinton mentions an event during which Pol Pot’s troops ran over the heads of defeated Vietnamese soldiers with a truck.¹⁷² In a way similar to the Nazi identification of the European Jews with a “Jewish armband”¹⁷³ to distinguish them from “pure peoples”, Pol Pot also had his enemy “microbes” marked for elimination. Khmer-Vietnamese and anti-Pol Pot soldiers, were given “a blue scarf not as a token of loyalty but a sign to distinguish them from other Khmers.”¹⁷⁴ The Khmer Rouge

¹⁶⁸ Ben Kiernan, *Genocide and Resistance in Southeast Asia: Documentation, Denial and Justice in Cambodia and East Timor*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008) 11.

¹⁶⁹ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 245.

¹⁷⁰ In May, 1978, So Phim, a Khmer Rouge official, launched an anti-Pol Pot uprising. It was supported by the Vietnamese who, by that point, were at war with the Khmer Rouge.

¹⁷¹ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 245.

¹⁷² Hinton, “A Head for an Eye...”, 359. This is similar to when King Rama raked off the heads of all the buried members of Archoun’s family in the *Tum Teav* story.

¹⁷³ Jewish Armbands: European Jews forced to live in the Ghettos were ordered to don a Star of David armband as a way to identify and subjugate them.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 319.

introduced new blue and white “*krama*”¹⁷⁵ scarves and in rare cases blue colored pants and shirts as the Party’s “mark for death.” Kiernan’s interview with Chhun Vun, a twenty one year old who witnessed the Khmer Rouge massacres, described the marking in the following:

Men wore blue short-sleeved shirts and blue trousers, and new blue-and-white scarves... The colors were mixed but the blue was more prominent than the black, and a little bit of white... And when we got there they knew the sign of the Eastern Zone people. Whatever clothes they wore, they did not use those scarves in that area... When we got there, there was no confusion. And if they saw us from afar they could see by our blue clothes and blue scarves that we were Eastern Zone people... Everyone was the same. One hundred percent... We had to wear them when we went to work. If we did not wear them, they would send us to a meeting where they would lecture us... They would ask me, “Why are you not wearing that scarf? These are scarves given to you by *Angkar*.” If we did not wear one, they would accuse us, because it was a sign for them.¹⁷⁶

According to Gellately and Kiernan, the object of this form of identification was to make certain people more visible as the dissident and impure peoples to be exterminated.¹⁷⁷ In this way the regime hoped to not only separate the *clean* from the “microbes” but also to fuel Khmer animosity against an identified and visibly exposed “enemy boring within.”¹⁷⁸ Here, the Eastern Zone exposure and systematic execution of race enemies was by far the most telling of Pol Pot’s paranoid and xenophobic ethnic cleansing program.

Pol Pot felt it was necessary to humiliate and punish the Eastern Zone traitors for the anti-Pol Pot uprising in late 1978. The Eastern Zone population was “driven

¹⁷⁵ Krama: Traditional Khmer scarf often colored in a variety of hues with many purposes and functions. The Khmer Rouges cadres wore mostly red scarves as the Party’s insignia.

¹⁷⁶ Ben Kiernan and Chhun Vun, “Videotaped Interview with the Author”, (Peam Chor, 24 December 1986). See Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 406-407.

¹⁷⁷ Gellately and Kiernan, 319.

¹⁷⁸ Pol Pot, “Another Step...”, 1.

to outright rebellion” against Pol Pot’s brutally paranoid and racist ethnic purification program.¹⁷⁹ So Phim, formerly the chief of the Eastern Zone who had overseen the purges of the Khmer returnees, was now leader of the anti-Pol Pot resistance.¹⁸⁰ Much of the Zone’s people were now armed with ex-Khmer Rouge weapons. To halt the insurgency and completely punish the Eastern Zone cadres for their treachery, Pol Pot sent the Southwest guard¹⁸¹ to set an example. Known for their particularly iron-fisted governance of the Southwestern zones of Takeo, Kompong Speu, Kampot, and Kandal, the Southwest guard indiscriminately detained, tortured and killed dissident Eastern Zone civilians and ex-cadres to send a message to the whole country.¹⁸² The Cambodian leader decided that the Eastern Zone population possessed “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds”, and it began a large-scale program clean the region.¹⁸³

All ethnic Vietnamese and Khmer peoples who possessed “Vietnamese minds” were to be systematically executed. The focal point of the purification program was the notion of total *cleanliness*. Pol Pot stated that “we resolved the Eastern Zone *cleanly*... Region 24, *clean*... Region 23, *clean*, like the whole nation... Regions 20-21-22 are *being cleaned*. Now the Party is clean. The soldiers

¹⁷⁹ Ben Kiernan, *Genocide and Resistance in Southeast Asia: Documentation, Denial and Justice in Cambodia and East Timor*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008) 11.

¹⁸⁰ Becker, 179.

¹⁸¹ The Southwest guard was known for their particularly violent governance of their zone.

¹⁸² Meng-Try Ea, *The Chain of Terror: The Khmer Rouge Southwest Zone Security System*, (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Documentation Center of Cambodia Publications, 2005) 23-32.

¹⁸³ Kiernan, *Genocide and Resistance*..., 11.

are *clean*. *Cleanliness* is the foundation.”¹⁸⁴ Pol Pot “linked the East with Vietnam, and it linked the 1.5 million Cambodians there with the Vietnamese enemy.”¹⁸⁵

Ironically, the once ardently materialist Khmer Rouge were dealing with people who were “overwhelmingly peasants, whose ‘impurity’ stemmed from their years of living under control of the Eastern Zone opposition, as well as consequent government suspicion that they would welcome a Vietnamese invasion to overthrow Pol Pot.”¹⁸⁶ Ultimately, the rebellion was swiftly put down, So Phim committed suicide, and the brutal genocide of Cambodia’s minorities continued for another year until the capitulation to Vietnamese forces in 1979.

The Cambodian leader garrisoned an enormous army of Khmer Rouge soldiers to begin the “cleansing” of the region. According to Kiernan, “the 1978 massacre and evacuation of the inhabitants of the Eastern Zone and its aftermath was, significantly, preceded by a radio broadcast on the 10th of May outlining the need to ‘purify the masses of the people.’”¹⁸⁷ Kiernan estimates that “over 100,000 and possibly as many as 250,000 Eastern Khmers” were brutally killed on racial grounds.¹⁸⁸ Others, such as former Lon Nol soldiers, Vietnamese loyalists, and anti-Pol Pot insurgents, were placed in the same category as the ethnic enemies and summarily put to death.¹⁸⁹ By the end of 1979 and the advent of Vietnamese troops to halt the killing, virtually all of the Eastern Zone’s people were either dead,

¹⁸⁴ Pol Pot, “Observations of the Situation of the Kampuchean Revolution Today”, *Santebal Files*, 13 July 1978. See also Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 550, emphasis added.

¹⁸⁵ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 393.

¹⁸⁶ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 245.

¹⁸⁷ Kiernan, “Pol Pot and the Kampuchean...”, 245.

¹⁸⁸ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil...*, 550.

¹⁸⁹ Kiernan, *Genocide and Resistance...*, 11.

incarcerated at Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh, or on the verge of starving to death. The Cambodian demagogue's xenophobic attitude toward Vietnam resulted in the Vietnamese minority population's near total extermination. According to Kiernan, of the estimated two million deaths in the Khmer Rouge genocide, as many as twenty thousand ethnic Vietnamese were killed in Cambodia alone.¹⁹⁰ Nearly two hundred thousand mixed Khmer-Vietnamese, Southern Khmers known as Khmer Krom, and Muslim Chams were killed before the fall of the Pol Pot regime.¹⁹¹ Fortunately, the Vietnamese response was very effective and the blood-thirsty demagogue was forced from power into over twenty years of hiding in 1979.

To sum up, the bloody Cambodian genocide against the Vietnamese minority populations in Cambodia was motivated by Pol Pot's desire to foment the divide between Khmers, whom he deemed as pure, and "full of goodwill"¹⁹², and the evil and "perfidious" Yuon.¹⁹³ He held Angkor society, and more specifically, the cultural pureness of Khmer people before the arrival of the French in the 1860s, as the highest of all ideals. This sentiment increasingly grew over time to develop a sense of Khmer racial superiority reminiscent of Hitler's notion of Aryan racial supremacy of the 1930s and 1940s. Without any medical training or scientific results that proved his theories to be true, Pol Pot postulated that the Vietnamese were a disease that infected the pure national body of Cambodia, and thus, had to be removed in order to restore the national health. He also asserted that Vietnamese people possessed a "nature" that was always inherently evil, treacherous, and

¹⁹⁰ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 458.

¹⁹¹ Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime...*, 458.

¹⁹² *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1*, 1, 18-19, 21.

¹⁹³ *Democratic Kampuchea, Evidences...*, 4.

annexationist at the core.¹⁹⁴ Once again, very little logical or factual analysis was provided to reinforce these obtuse accusations. Attempts were made at using biased interpretations of historical relations between Khmers and Vietnamese to use history as justification for murdering the Vietnamese. Traditional stereotypes were exacerbated to incite a national disliking and turn it into a full-on race-related rancor toward Vietnamese people.

Perhaps the most telling part of the Pol Pot ideological puzzle concerns his ultra-nationalism in action. He genuinely believed in exacting disproportionate revenge against the hereditary Vietnamese enemy and ordered his soldiers to totally subvert, humiliate, and violate all defeated Vietnamese in an effort to restore “face” and repay the bad deed. It is also shocking to draw comparisons between Pol Pot’s totalistic approach to revenge, best shown in the massacres in the Eastern Zone, and the Nazi “final solution.” Both sought to completely wipe out a race as an act of total revenge. To conclude, the Cambodian genocide was the birth-child of Pol Pot’s marriage of ultra-nationalism with his long-standing grudge against the Vietnamese. His penchant for revenge paired with his dystopian neo-Angkor idealism brought his once peaceful country to its knees and on the brink of total annihilation.

CONCLUSION

The Cambodian revolution did not destroy so many people or fail because it was too Marxist-Leninist or because it was not Marxist-Leninist enough, although Marxism-Leninism in DK was a blunt instrument and a destructive weapon. The Cambodian revolution crashed to the ground because of the persistence of so many

¹⁹⁴ *Livre Noir, Chapitre 1, 2, 3-13.*

counterrevolutionary ideas among rulers and ruled so much poor leadership, and so much counterrevolutionary behavior.¹⁹⁵

- David Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*

Attempting to summarize Pol Pot's ideological development from his comfortable upbringing to his ultra-nationalist ethnic cleansing program remains a difficult undertaking. While this thesis has tried to show the ways in which Pol Pot took tenets of Maoism and employed them in conjunction with his own ultra-nationalist ideals, there remains a cloud of mystery surrounding the motivations behind such a bloody doctrine. While this thesis attempted to portray Pol Pot as the sole manipulator of genocidal policies, his closest advisors and Khmer Rouge politicians are not absolved of their crimes. Pol Pot's ultra-nationalist ambitions may never have been realized were it not for Khieu Samphan, the ideological founder of the Khmer Rouge, or Ieng Sary, the savvy foreign minister who orchestrated arms trade agreements with China and North Korea. These cases remain open for further investigation.

This thesis attempted to show the ways in which Pol Pot was not a Maoist fundamentalist. Mao did not advocate genocide, nor did he encourage any form of ethnic cleansing. Pol Pot was motivated by revenge, an idealist form of Angkor-era Cambodia, and his rancorous grudge against the Vietnamese. This was rooted in his experiences during the clandestine anti-colonial movement and for years of Cambodian decline at the expense of Vietnamese prosperity. The anti-Vietnamese genocide was, thus, the Pol Pot regime's doing and no one else.

While he may have been fascinated with Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution and voluntarist rhetoric, he did not wholly grasp the Great Helmsman's intentions

¹⁹⁵ Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History...*, 237.

behind them. He saw Mao's praise of the peasant and desired the same sort of national admiration for the Cambodian farmers and agriculturalists. However, he proceeded with an appropriated Maoism without any logical or sophisticated analysis. He did not realize that Maoism succeeded in China because Mao had successfully fused Marxism-Leninism with Chinese traditional cultural elements such as Confucianism. The same precision was not applied in Pol Pot's analysis of Cambodian culture since he merely defined Cambodia in terms of lost glory, honor, and territory. When this friction caused multiple deaths and cries for Pol Pot's immediate dismissal arose, he reverted to an idealized Khmer utopia based on his interpretation of the Angkor kingdom.

In doing so, Pol Pot revitalized a virulent Khmer nationalism that included a great fear of foreigners and reinvigorated his desire to exact revenge against Cambodia's "life and death adversaries." His decision to repay the Vietnamese for their past offenses shifted the revolution away from improving the national living standard and sought only to destroy both the lives of his comrades and foes. What followed was a racially-motivated genocide that scapegoated the Vietnamese for virtually all of Pol Pot's miscalculations. The manners by which the ethnic Vietnamese, Khmer-Vietnamese, and "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds" were executed paired with the planned total annihilation of the Vietnamese race, reveals the genuinely ultra-nationalist and counter-revolutionary character of Pol Pot's ideology. In conclusion, we can dismiss the convenient accusation that Pol Pot was a Maoist fundamentalist and should now shed light onto the study of his fascist and ultra-nationalist political dogma.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Aikman, David, "Cambodia: An Experiment in Genocide", *Time*, 31 July 1978, 39-40.
- Aikman, "Tales of Brave New Kampuchea", *Time*, 21 November 1977, 42.
- Boyle, Richard, "Phnom Penh Exodus: Official Version Challenged", *Weekly People*, 12 July 1975, 1-3.
- Bun Chan Mol, *Cambodian Character*, Timothy Carney ed., Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Kehadtan 79, 1973.
- Butterfield, Fox, "Leading Cambodian in a Visit to Peking: Trip by Pol Pot Sheds Some Light on the Hierarchical Structure of Secretive Indochina State", *New York Times*, 29 September 1977, 5.
- Butterfield, Fox, "Situation in Cambodia 'Excellent,' Its Leader Says at Peking Banquet", *New York Times*, 30 September 1977, A4.
- Butterfield, Fox, "Vietnam vs. Cambodia", *New York Times*, 6 May 1978, A1.
- Chanda, Nayan, *Brother Enemy: The War After the War*, London: Harcourt, 1986.
- Chanda, Nayan, "Cambodia and China Cool", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 September 1977, 23-24.
- Chanda, Nayan, "Cambodia: Peking Pulls Back", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 September 1978, 22-23.
- Chanda, Nayan, "Cambodia-Vietnam Relations: Peace Prospects Grow Dim", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 February 1978, 22-24.
- Chanda, Nayan, "Pol Pot Plays up to Peking", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 October 1977, 30.
- Chanda, Nayan, "When the Killing Had to Stop", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 October 1976, 20-23.
- Democratic Kampuchea, *Biography of Comrade Pol Pot*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information, September 1978.

- Democratic Kampuchea, "Cambodia's Strategy of Defense Against Vietnam", [http://www.dccam.org/Archives/Documents/DK_Policy/DK_Policy_Cam_Defence_VN.html], 15 May 1975.
- Democratic Kampuchea, *Livre Noir: Faits et Preuves des Actes D'Aggression et D'Annexion du Vietnam Contre le Kampuchea*, Paris: Les Editions de L'Encre, 1979.
- Democratic Kampuchea, *Evidences on the Vietnamese Aggression against Democratic Kampuchea*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, July 1978.
- Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 2004.
- Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).
- Hou Youn, *The Cambodian Peasantry*, Paris: The Sorbonne, 1955.
- Ieng Sary, *Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary at the 33rd Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly Delivered on October 12, 1978*, New York: Unity Publications, 1979.
- Ieng Sary, *Objectives to Direct the Work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from July 1976 to July 1977, 14 July 1977*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1998.
- Ieu Yang, *Khmer Nisut* [Khmer Student] 11 January 1951, 36.
- Lin Biao, *Long Live the Victory of People's War: In Commemoration of the Twentieth Anniversary of Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan*, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965.
- Khieu Samphan, *Cambodia's Economy and Problems of Industrialization*, Paris: The Sorbonne, 1959.
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Harcourt, 1936.
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia: Collected Works of Karl Mannheim, Vol. I*, New York, Routledge, 1997.
- Mao Zedong, "Directives Regarding the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969", Beijing, [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_84.htm], 11 November 1966.

- Mao Zedong, "Interview with the Hsinhua News Agency Correspondent", Beijing: 29 September 1958.
- Mao Zedong, *Message from Chairman Mao Zedong, Chairman Chu The and Premier Zhou En-lai to Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, Prime Minister Penn Nouth and Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan*, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1975.
- Mao Zedong, "On the Ten Major Relationships", Beijing: 25 April, 1956.
- Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*, Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1965.
- Mao Zedong, "Rectify the Party's Style of Work", Beijing: 1 February 1942.
- Mao Zedong, *Resolution on CPC History (1949-1981)*, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1981.
- Mao Zedong, *Selected Works, Vols. I-IV*, Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1965.
- Mao Zedong, "Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution", Beijing: 6 November 1957.
- Mao Zedong, "The Present Situation and Our Tasks", In Mao Zedong, *Selected Military Writings, 2nd ed.*, Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1965.
- Marx, Karl, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1920.
- Mathews, Tom, Harry Rolnick and Lloyd Norman, "We Beat the Americans", *Newsweek*, 5 May 1975, 34-41.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Democratic People's Republic of Kampuchea, *The Chinese Ruler's Crimes Against Kampuchea*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Press and Information, April 1984.
- Newsweek, Author Unknown, "Pol Pot's Regime Tries a New Name", *Newsweek*, 7 January 1980, 38.
- Norodom Sihanouk, "Speech at the Asia Society", New York: 22 February 1980.
- Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope: The Case for Cambodia*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Pol Pot, "Another Step in Our Cooperative Victories", *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7 (July 1978), 2-8.

Pol Pot, "Document Addressed to Comrade Rin, Committee Chairman of the Fourth Division of the Eastern Zone", Phnom Penh, Cambodia, July 1977.

Pol Pot, "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly", *Tung Padevat*, June 1976, In *Pol Pot Plans the Future*, Kiernan and Boua eds., 13-35.

Pol Pot, "Excerpt from Pol Pot's Speech to a Press Conference in Beijing, September 29, 1977, During his Visits to China", *Peoples Daily*, October 3, 1977.

Pol Pot, "Further Raise the Quality of the Party Leadership in Order to Lead in Defense Duties and the Duties Continuing the Socialist Revolution and Building Socialism", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (October-November, 1977), 42-74.

Pol Pot, *Interview du Camarade Pol Pot a la Delegation des Journalistes Yougoslaves en Visite au Kampuchea Democratique, 17 Mars 1978*, Phnom Penh: Departement de la Presse et de l'Information du Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres du Kampuchea Democratique, 1978.

Pol Pot, "Interview with Cai Ximei", Phnom Penh, Cambodia: May 1984.

Pol Pot, "Day of Reckoning: Interview with Nate Thayer", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 1997, 14-20.

Pol Pot, "Learning from Important Experiences in the Fulfillment of the Party's First Semester 1978 Political Task", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (May-June 1978), 1-13.

Pol Pot, "Learning from Our Four Year Plan", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (October-November), 1977, 113-128.

Pol Pot, "Learning from the Political, Ideological and Organizational Experiences in Fulfilling the Party's 1977 Revolutionary Duties in Order to Impel Forward Victoriously the Implementation of 1978 Duties", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (December-January, 1977-1978), 1-63.

Pol Pot, "Learning in Abbreviated Form from the History of the Kampuchean Revolutionary Movement under the Leadership of the Communist Party of Kampuchea", *Revolutionary Flag*, Special Number, (October-November, 1977), 93-112.

Pol Pot, "Lettre du Comite Permanent du CC du CPK au Bureau Politique du CC du CPC", Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 6 Octobre 1967.

- Pol Pot, *Long Live the 17th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea: Speech by Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Kampuchean Communist Party, 29 September 1977*, Chicago: Liberator Press, 1977.
- Pol Pot, "Observations of the Situation of the Kampuchean Revolution Today", *Santebal Files*, 13 July 1978.
- Pol Pot, "Pay Attention to Sweeping Out the Concealed Enemy...", *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7, (July 1978), 1-6.
- Pol Pot, "Pol Pot Presente les Experiences du Cambodge a Khamtan, Secretaire-General du Parti Communiste Thailandais", Phnom Penh, Cambodia: August, 1977.
- Pol Pot, "Speech made by Comrade Pol Pot at the Banquet given in Honor of the Delegation of the Communist Party of China and the Government of the People's Republic of China", Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 5 November 1978.
- Pol Pot, "The National Duties of All of Us", *Revolutionary Flag*, No. 7, (July 1978), 1-3.
- Schanberg, Sydney, "Cambodia Reds are Uprooting Millions as they Impose a 'Peasant Revolution,'" *New York Times*, 9 May 1975, 73.
- Schanberg, Sydney, "Vietnam vs. Cambodia", *New York Times*, 6 May 1978, 20.
- Sun Yat-Sen, *Sun Min Chu: The Three Principles of the People*, Shanghai, China: China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927.
- Than Tin, Than Tin, "Notes of Discussion with Than Tin, Deputy Editor of Nhan Dan, Former Editor of Quan Doi Nhan Dan, War Correspondent, Colonel in the Vietnamese People's Army, Two Talks", Phnom Penh, Cambodia: 1 June 1983, 28-30.
- United States Department of State, "Interview with Cambodian Refugee in Buriram, Thailand. Conducted by American Embassy Officer in June, 1978", Report No. 10, declassified 1978.
- Wise, Donald, "Eradicating the 'Old Dandruff,'" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 September 1977, 32-33.
- Zhou En-lai, "Speaking on August 10 to Peking's revolutionary masses celebrating the Party Central Committee's Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", *Peking Review*, 9, No. 37, (September 1966), 5-9.

Secondary Sources

Becker, Elizabeth, *When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and its People*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Berman, Jennifer S., "No Place Like Home: Anti-Vietnamese Discrimination and Nationality in Cambodia", *California Law Review* 84, No.1, (1986), 817-874.

Bhabha, Homi K., ed. *Nation and Narration*, New York: Routledge, 1990.

Brocheux, Pierre, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Burglar, R.A. *The Eyes of the Pineapple: Revolutionary Intellectuals and Terror in Democratic Kampuchea*, Saarbrücken, Germany: Verlag Breitenbach Publishers, 1990.

Burchett, Wilfred, *The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle*, Chicago, Illinois: Vanguard Books, 1981.

Carrere, Helene and Stuart Schram, *Marxism in Asia: An Introduction with Readings* London: Penguin Books, 1969.

Chan, Anita, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village Under Mao and Deng*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992.

Chandler, David, *A History of Cambodia*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000.

Chandler, David, "An Anti-Vietnamese Rebellion in Early Nineteenth Century Cambodia: Pre-Colonial Imperialism and a Pre-Nationalist Response", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 6, No. 1, (March 1975), 16-24.

Chandler, David, *Brother Number One*, David Chandler ed., Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999.

Chandler, David and Ben Kiernan eds., "*Revolution and its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*", New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1983.

Chandler, David, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

Chenshan Tian, *Chinese Dialects: From Yinjing to Marxism*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2005.

- Chirot, Daniel and Clark R. McCauley, *Why not Kill Them All: the Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Coombs, Robert H. "Karl Mannheim, Epistemology and the Sociology of Knowledge", *The Sociological Quarterly* 7, No. 2, (Spring), 1966, 229-233.
- Courtois, Stephane and Mark Kramer eds., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Debre, Francois, *Cambodge: la Revolution de la Foret*, Paris: Flammarion, 1976.
- De Nike, Howard J., John B. Quigley, and Kenneth Jay Robinson, *Genocide in Cambodia: The Trials of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Dirlik, Arif, "Modernism and Antimodernism in Mao Zedong's Marxism", *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought*, Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy and Nick Knight eds., Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997.
- Dommen, Arthur J., *The Indochinese experience of the French and the Americans*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Duara, Prasenjit, *Rescuing History from the Nation: questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Duara, Prasenjit, "The Great Leap Forward in China: An Analysis of the Nature of Socialist Transformation", *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, No. 32/34, Special Number, (August 1974), 1365-1390.
- Duiker, William J., *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981.
- Engelbert, Thomas and Chris Goscha, *Falling out of Touch: A Study of the Vietnamese Communist Policy Towards an Emerging Cambodian Communist Movement, 1930-1975*, Clayton, Australia: Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash Asia Institute, 1995.
- Etcheson, Craig, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*, Westview Press, 1984.
- Etheridge, F. Maurice and Joe R. Reagan, "Varieties of Fundamentalism: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis of Two Protestant Denominations", *The Sociological Quarterly* 20, No. 1, (Winter 1979), 37-48.

- Frieson, Kate, "The Political Nature of Democratic Kampuchea", *Pacific Affairs* 1, No. 3, (Autumn 1988), 405-427.
- Garver, John W., *Chinese-Soviet Relations, 1937-1945: the Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Gellately, Robert, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Gellately, Robert, and Ben Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Greenfeld, Liah, and Daniel Chirot, "Nationalism and Aggression", *Theory and Society* 23, No. 1, (February 1994), 79-130.
- Gutman, Yisrael, and Michael Berenbaum, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1994.
- Haing S. Ngor, *A Cambodian Odyssey*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Haing S. Ngor, *Surviving the Killing Fields*, London: Basic Books, 2003.
- Heder, Stephen, "Khmer Rouge Opposition to Pol Pot: 'Pro-Vietnamese' or 'Pro-Chinese,'" *Talk at the Australian University, Canberra*, 28 August 1990.
- Heder, Stephen, "The Kampuchean-Vietnamese Conflict", In *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Singapore: Heinemann, 1979.
- Herf, Jeffrey, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hinton, Alex, "A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide", *American Ethnologist* 25, No. 33, (1998), 352-377.
- Hinton, Alex, *Annihilating Difference: the Anthropology of Genocide*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002.
- Hinton, Alex, *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005.
- Huu Ngoc, "The River Flows Quietly Once Again", *Vietnam News Agency-Traditional Miscellany*, 8 May 2005.

- Jackson, Karl D. ed., *Cambodia 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Joseph, William A., "A Tragedy of Good Intentions: Post-Mao Views of the Great Leap Forward", *Modern China* 12, No. 4, (October 1986), 419-457.
- Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Kiernan, Ben, *Genocide and Resistance in Southeast Asia: Documentation, Denial and Justice in Cambodia and East Timor*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008.
- Kiernan, Ben, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Kiernan, Ben, "Interview with Heng Samrin", Phnom Penh, 2 December 1991.
- Kiernan, Ben, "Interview with Kieu Minh", Phnom Penh, 22 October 1980.
- Kiernan, Ben, and Chhun Vun, "Videotaped Interview with the Author", Peam Chor, 24 December 1986.
- Kiernan, Ben and Chanthou Boua eds., *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981*, London: Zed Press, 1982.
- Kiernan, Ben, David Chandler and Chanthou Boua eds., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977*", New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1988.
- Kiernan, Ben, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1975*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Kiernan, Ben, "Why Pol Pot? Roots of the Cambodian Tragedy", *Indochina Issues*, No. 52, (December 1984) 1-4.
- Knight, Nick, *Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism: Writings on Philosophy*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1990.
- Knight, Nick, *Rethinking Mao: Explorations in Mao Zedong's Thought*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2007.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, London: Basic Books, 1988.

- Lifton, Robert Jay, *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life* Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1979.
- Lippit, Victor D., "The Great Leap Forward Reconsidered", *Modern China* 1, No. 1, (January 1975), 92-115.
- Locard, Henri, *Pol Pot's Little Red Book: The Sayings of Angkar*, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2004.
- Mabbett, Ian and David Chandler, *The Khmers*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1995.
- MacCormack, Gavin, "The Kampuchean Revolution 1975-1978: the Problem of Knowing", *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 10, No. 2, (1980), 75-116.
- MacFarquhar, Roderick and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- MacFarquhar, Roderick, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
- Mackerras, Colin and Nick Knight, *Marxism in Asia*, London: Taylor & Francis, 1985.
- Marchak, M. Patricia, *Reigns of Terror*, Montreal: McGill- Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Margolin, Jean-Louis, "Le Cambodge des Khmers Rouges: De la Guerre Totale au Genocide", *Vingtieme Siecle, Revue d'Historie* 77, No. 1, (Janvier-Mars 2003), 3-18.
- McCarthy, Terry, "Vietnamese Flee 'Cleansing' by Khmer Rouge: History is Repeating Itself as the Cambodians Turn on their Traditional Scapegoats", *The Independent*, [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/vietnamese-flee-cleansing-by-khmer-rouge-history-is-repeating-itself-as-the-cambodians-turn-on-their-traditional-scapegoats-1452803.html>], 2 April 1993.
- McIntyre, Kevin, "Geography as Destiny: Cities, Villages and Khmer Rouge Orientalism", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, No. 4, (October 1996), 730-758.
- Mehmet, Ozay, "Development in a War-torn Society: What Next Cambodia?", *Third World Quarterly* 18, No. 4, (1997), 673-686.
- Meisner, Maurice, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism: Eight Essays*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

- Meng-Try Ea, *The Chain of Terror: The Khmer Rouge Southwest Zone Security System*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Documentation Center of Cambodia Publications, 2005.
- Migozzi, Jacques, *Cambodge: Faits et Problemes de Population*, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1973.
- Morris, Stephen J. *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Myrdal, Jan, "Why is There Famine in Kampuchea?", *Southeast Asia Chronicle* 77, No. 1, (February 1981), 16-18.
- Nagata, Judith, "Beyond Theology: Toward an Anthropology of 'Fundamentalism'" *American Anthropologist*, New Series 03, No. 2, (June 2001), 481-498.
- Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony Reid, *Vietnam: Borderless Histories*, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- Pin Yathay, *Stay Alive, My Son*, New York: Touchstone, 1987.
- Pobzeb Vang, *Five Principles of Chinese Foreign Policies*, Bloomington, Indiana: Author House Publishing, 2008.
- Ponchaud, Francois, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Pringle, James, "Meanwhile: When the Khmer Rouge Came to Kill Vietnam", *New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/07/opinion/07iht-edpringle_ed3_.html], 17 January 2004.
- Schoenhals, Michael, "Yang Xianzhen's Critique of the Great Leap Forward", *Modern Asian Studies* 26, No. 3, (July 1992), 591-608.
- Schram, Stuart, "Mao Zedong a Hundred Years on: the Legacy of a Ruler", *The China Quarterly*, No. 137, (March 1994), 125-143.
- Schram, Stuart ed. *Mao Zedong Unrehearsed: Talks and Letters, 1956-1971*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Schram, Stuart, *The Political Thought of Mao Zedong*, New York: Praeger, 1977.
- Sethi, Suringer Singh, *The Kampuchean Tragedy: Maoism in Action*, New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan, 1979.

- Short, Philip, *Pol Pot: The History of a Nightmare*, London: John Murray, 2004.
- Spence, Jonathan, *Mao Zedong: A Life*, London, Penguin Books, 1999.
- Staub, Ervin, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Stuart-Fox, Martin, "Marxism and Theravada Buddhism: The Legitimation of Political Authority in Laos", *Pacific Affairs* 56, No. 3, (Autumn 1983), 428-454.
- Stuart-Fox, Martin and Bunheang Ung, *The Murderous Revolution: Life and Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea*, Bangkok: Orchid Press, 1998.
- Tang Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Terrill, Ross, "Mao Now", *The Wilson Quarterly* 30, No. 4, (Autumn 2006), 22-28.
- Thayer, Nate, "My Education: How Saloth Sar Became Pol Pot", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 October, 1997, 21.
- Thion, Serge, *Watching Cambodia: Ten Paths to Enter the Cambodian Triangle*, Bangkok, Thailand: White Lotus, 1993.
- Thu Huong Nguyen-vo, *Khmer-Viet Relations and the Third Indochina Conflict*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Inc., Publishers, 1992.
- Tran Van Hanh, "Inscription de la Montagne de Vinh Te", *BSEI*, No. 48 (1904) 20-45.
- Tu Wei-ming, "Destructive Will and Ideological Holocaust: Maoism as a Source of Social Suffering in China", *Daedalus* 125, No. 1, (Winter 1996), 149-179.
- Vigarello, Georges, *Le Propre et le Sale: L'hygiene du Corps depuis le Moyen Age*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985.
- Vittal, Nalini, "Tribulation Before the Tribunal in Cambodia: Confronting Auto-Genocide", *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, No. 3, (Jan. 20-26, 2001), 199-203.
- Walder, Andrew G., "Marxism, Maoism and Social Change", *Modern China* 3, No. 1, (January 1977), 101-118.

- Wei Li and Dennis Tao Yang, "The Great Leap Forward: Anatomy of a Central Planning Disaster", *Journal of Political Economy* 113, No. 4, (2005), 840-877.
- Wen Chihua and Bruce Jones, *The Red Mirror: Children of China's Cultural Revolution*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995.
- Wylie, Raymond, "Mao Zedong, Chen Po-ta and the 'Sinification of Marxism,' 1936-1938", *The China Quarterly* 79, No. 1, (September 1979), 447-480.
- Wylie, Raymond, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Chen Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory*, Stanford, California: Stanford U. Press, 1980.
- Xizhe Peng, "Demographic Consequences of the Great Leap Forward in China's Provinces", *Population and Development Review* 13, No. 4, (December 1987), 639-670.
- Yao Shujie, *Economic Growth, Income Distribution and Poverty Reduction in Contemporary China*, New York: Routledge, 2005.