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Cambodia for Christ

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1, ALEXANDRA TERRACE, WINCHESTER, HANTS, SO23 9SP, ENGLAND.

Telephone WINCHESTER (0962) 68525

"He delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You must also help us by prayer." (2 Corinthians 1:10, 11.)

ESCAPE

This month we received a copy of a letter from a Cambodian Christian telling of his escape from Cambodia.

January 12th, 1976

"I brought my family from Phnom Penh to Pailin around the first of the year 1974. We simply locked the door of our house there and sought refuge temporarily in Pailin thinking to stay there until the situation in Phnom Penh was more suitable for us to return. But the jewel business in which I was engaged did not yield sufficient profits. Right up until the time the Khmer Rouge came to Pailin, business continued to drop. They gave us three days in which to evacuate Pailin. At first the people just wondered in their hearts for they had not yet tasted the powerful medicine (ruthless methods) of the Khmer Rouge. Then the people began to leave, fleeing along the route mapped out for them. They travelled like herds of cattle or water buffalo driven before the Khmer Rouge who were beginning to enforce their plans. There were no jails or chains, just the muzzles of guns prodding us along. The road from Pailin to Battambang on either side was strewn with rotting corpses killed by them and filling the air with their smell. There was no way of knowing why these were killed nor when.

Our family took up residence at . As we have a large family of children, we were unable to bring any food or supplies. It was all we could do to save the children, so we did not bring anything else. Lacking food, we begged from the villagers and they gave us small amounts, enough to make some rice gruel for the children. We also foraged from the gardens of people who had run off. From them we got sufficient only to feed ourselves.

Later the Khmer Rouge divided us into groups of ten families, and for each group issued a ration of two bags of unhusked rice supposedly for one week's food supply. These rations were given out without regularity at all, so that before long we were receiving only one-half a bag of rice (unhusked) for our ten families for one half of a month. We had to fend for ourselves or die. By fending for ourselves, I don't mean spending money, as there was no medium of exchange — except for gold and wrist watches. A "catty" of gold (\$185.00 U.S.) or nineteen wrist watches would buy a bag of unhusked rice. From that time on people began dying of starvation, as many had neither gold nor wrist watches to trade for rice. Later those who had had gold and wrist watches found themselves without assets, and they were then in the same boat with everyone else. People died wholesale in a steady stream of malnutrition, disease and starvation. In some families all the children died; in others, the wife or the husband died; still others suffered the loss of both parents leaving only the small children to fend for themselves. Others, unable to stand such conditions any longer, spoke out against what is called "the organization." They were taken out and clubbed to death as if they were animals and not buried but tossed to the side of the roads as a warning to others who might be tempted to follow their example in rebelling.

As for myself, I bartered watches and clothes just like everyone else. Unable to get rice, we ate potatoes and roots. We were able to collect about 400 kilograms of these for our family. My two little ones were as thin as two sticks. We had no milk for them; they were only skin and bones. My wife could no longer feed the baby as her own milk supply stopped. Their little bodies alternately swelled and shrank from lack of essential vitamins. I lost all hope that they would live because of their physical condition. That night, my wife and I prayed constantly and they began to improve. I knew that this was the Lord's answer to our prayers. I tried to pray even more, telling the Lord with tears that I could no longer live with these people because they were so indescribably vicious. They considered us villagers as the "enemy" — not even as people of the land! Their ways are absolutely dictatorial! They permit no religion. They are totally nihilistic. There is only planting and hoeing potatoes, corn and rice from sun-up til sun-down unless we fell in our traces. I continually prayed that somehow the Lord would open up a way for me to lead my family out from under the Khmer Communist yoke. But week by week I was stymied in my efforts, constantly hearing of those who had tried to escape and been shot, their bodies tossed aside, because they had tried to escape to Thailand.

November 10, 1975, I decided to leave my family and flee by night so that I would know the way. I had little hope of surviving. I decided to find a way out for my family even if I died in the attempt; at least I would have tried. And I committed my adventure into the Lord's hands. In exactly one week I made it to Thailand. I had walked through forests and mountains and under overhanging rocks, not daring to go into the fields or valleys lest they see me. Occasionally I had to slither and crawl across roads. At last I crossed the border into Thailand on the evening of the seventh day at about five p.m. at a distance of about 300 yards from a group of Khmer Rouge on my left. Thank the Lord I didn't step on any of their mines, and they didn't see me. As soon as we made it across the border (several men were escaping with me) to safety, the Thai welcomed us and seemed glad at our escape. They pointed to our right and said we had just missed a group of forty Khmer Rouge. We could see the smoke of their rice pots cooking, and later in the evening we heard their voices as they talked together throughout the forest. Thank the Lord!

Arriving at Klong Yai refugee camp, I reached an all-time low of discouragement, for all my hopes for rescuing my family were dashed. The former Cambodian government soldiers whom I had been counting on to help me had all been disarmed. They were forbidden to do anything and were kept guarded inside the camps. They were allowed down to the river only for bathing. I was so smitten by adverse circumstances that I laid down and cried with such tightening of my chest that I felt it would burst, just thinking about the fate of my wife and children and all my Cambodian compatriots. We had heard reports before that the soldiers who had escaped to Thailand were forming into groups to free Cambodia — it was completely false information. I lived every day in hopelessness. I tried to read the Bible and pray constantly. In a short time I came down with severe malaria until I had to be given blood transfusions. It took a long time to recover. Though still not completely well, I escaped from the refugee camp back to Cambodia and in five days and nights made it back to . I didn't dare to approach the village but stayed in the forest by the mountain side until I was able to slip myself in to meet my family at night. It took two days to get our family together as the communists had taken my nephews to work in a dam project. Having finally all got together, we took off at eight p.m. In all we were fifteen including my sister and her children and her daughter-in-law and three relatives of this daughter-in-law. That night we marched clear through till daylight because we had to make it into the forest in order to be well hidden from them.

Each day before we started out, we always prayed together as a family. The nights were terribly cold sleeping as we were on the ground under the trees. Sometimes we were without water and had to pan-fry the rice kernels by night (under-ground) so they wouldn't see the smoke. After five days, our food gave out. On the sixth, seventh and eighth days, we were close enough to gardens of former Pail in folk and near the mountain ranges so that, hiding our family in the forest, we men were able to pull up potatoes by the roots to boil and eat. On the eighth evening, we made it to Thailand. Praise the Lord! Thank the Lord so much! He was with us all the way so that we were safe and did not run into them as others did whom they met and shot, piling their bodies one on top of another, old and young alike! God indeed gave me the courage and fortitude to bring my family out! The courage and fortitude were only mine because the Lord gave it to me!

Two of my nephews (or neices)-in-law who came with us saw the wonderful ways the Lord answered prayer and they repented and gave themselves to Christ without even my knowing about it until later. They went themselves to the refugee chapel, immediately, the day after our arrival, and accepted Christ. I really thank the Lord. I find that I am at an all time high of faith in the Lord."

UPHEAVAL

The Khmer Rouge have begun to transform Cambodia from a gentle Buddhist nation to an efficient communist machine. In their anxiety to emulate China, they seem to have ignored the basic fact that Cambodia, with its land-owning peasantry and underpopulated countryside would never fit into the Chinese pattern. Nor have the Khmer Rouge learned from the Chinese experience, since the chief lesson constantly affirmed by Mao Tse-Tung was the need to move forward only with popular support, using persuasion rather than force.

Tales of executions and peasant discontent coming out of Cambodia cannot be dismissed, desperation is driving more and more people to risk their lives in attempts to cross the borders to escape the conditions imposed upon them by Their liberators.

RADIO PHNOM PENH

Radio Phnom Penh portrays quite the opposite picture of today's Cambodia from that of the refugees, e.g. "Smiling happy people laughing and joking together" — "festive atmosphere constantly prevailing" — "utter delight with the collectives" — "enough for everyone." (BBC Monitoring Service).

SOME CLEAR FACTS EMERGE:

- 1) The nation is organised into collectives for all production.
- 2) The nation is working feverishly to increase rice production and is clearing land, building newer, higher and better rice field embankments, many irrigation ditches are being dug to take water to dry areas, methods of fertilisation of the land are often discussed. An excellent rice harvest is reported.
- 3) The nation is very closely linked to China diplomatically and is receiving much aid and advice from there. An air link from Peking to Phnom Penh has been set up.
- 4) There is now a Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh functioning. Cambodia has also set up trade liason offices with Thailand, trading by barter. (Oil and salt from Thailand for Khmer fish and lumber.) Occasional border clashes are still reported.
- 5) Factories and workshops are running, to provide local and immediate needs. 3

NORTH KOREA

It is reported that in North Korea there are small groups of Christians. If they are found out their lives are endangered. Christian literature has been smuggled into this country and loudspeakers have been used to speak to the population along the border with South Korea.

VIETNAM

In South Vietnam Christian workers are alive and free. The government has allowed distribution of Bibles to begin again. There exists no open persecution of Christians in the South. There is a tussle for the leadership of the Catholic and Protestant Churches between the left and right. A law that allows men of the Vietcong to take any girl in marriage has meant that many Christian girls are hurriedly marrying Christians to avoid this fate.

In North Vietnam the churches are free in the sense in which the official church in Russia would be free. The pastors can only preach what the communists allow them to preach, and they have to report on their own members. There is no evidence of an underground church in the North.

LAOS

The reports from Vientiane (the Capital) as well as other parts of Laos are that everyone must go to re-education classes. No one is excused, not even housewives. Prince Mangkhala, son of the former Lao Prime Minister is reported as saying, "The Laotian people are prisoners now. They cannot escape anywhere. They are not really happy. Before they smiled a lot. Instead of songs of love, they now have to sing revolutionary songs." (*Bangkok Post*).

CAMBODIANS IN THE USA

Rose Ellen Chancey writes:

"I was put on furlough status in Oct. after the work at Camp Pendleton, closed. Since then, my primary job has been to take care of some thirty Cambodians here in New Orleans. 16 of them are Christians that my friends sponsored and others were sponsored by the Catholics here, but have largely been left to themselves. The Christians have a Bible class which I teach through translation with the same interpreter I had at Camp Pendleton. They all have jobs, homes, and are making good adjustment into their new lives. I would ask continued prayer for our Christian Cambodians here in the States, though, because many have had cultural adjustments. I do not know how many are continuing to go on in the faith, but have reason to believe that the majority are. In fact, in Salem, Oregon, The Cambodian Christian Fellowship meets at least once a month, with 50 or more attending and they are taught each Sunday in the Salem Alliance Church. The leader is Joe Kong Sarom."

Mr. Mau Phat worked for the Khmer Republic in the United Nations and when the country fell he was left without a job. His cousins and relatives who were studying in the USA suddenly lost their source of support from Cambodia and came to him. One cousin, Miss Eng Sui Huoy has been visited by a Christian missionary, and though she was in despair at times, they were able to talk about faith in Jesus Christ.

Remember this family in your prayers.

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

"For many years now the gospel has had free and open access to some areas of South-east Asia, and revival and unparalleled spiritual advance have been evident. At the same time other areas were utterly without Christian witness. The Bamboo Curtain effectively insulated certain sections from contact with Christians.

Now things have changed. For the first time in decades the three former French provinces in Indo-China are again under one political system. Doubtless there will be an increase of trade and communication. Roads built for war will be used for commerce, and again there will be travel and trade between the cities of North and South Viet Nam, perhaps into Cambodia, and between tribal areas of Laos and South China.

Thousands of Christians are now newly included behind the walls of Communism. As in the days of the first churches there may be persecution and imprisonment, even martyrdom for some, but as in the days of the first Christians God will show Himself strong. Latter-day apostles may be witnessing in chains as Paul did — perhaps with opportunity to speak before high officialdom. God may break prison bars for some cast into jail as Peter was. Some will follow in the footsteps of Stephen. But, praise God, there will be new Macedonias; there will be other centurions and sellers of purple and Ethiopian eunuchs.

For the time being giving and going to Viet Nam and Laos and Cambodia on our part has stopped, but no barrier can stop the work of God's Spirit in answer to the prayers of God's people for these nations."

*Acknowledgement To: ('The Alliance Witness' Sept. 24 1975)
By Don Durling (Former Laos Missionary)*

PRAYER SUMMARY

- 1) The people of Cambodia under Communist rule.
- 2) The family who escaped from Cambodia, plus others who are separated from loved ones.
- 3) Freedom of religion and worship under the new constitution.
- 4) The Government and leaders of Cambodia.
- 5) Andrew Way, Alice Compain, John Ellison, Andrew Bishop and others working amongst refugees in Thailand.
- 6) Mr. Lee. New Christians amongst refugees.
- 7) Literature and Bibles for refugees.
- 8) Rose Ellen Chancey. Khmer people in the USA. Mr. Mau Phat and Miss Eng Sui Huoy.
- 9) Cambodians in France. Rev. J.J. Piaget. Ung Davy at Bible College. Don Cormack's visit in March.
- 10) The Christians in N. Korea, Vietnam and Laos.
- 11) That Christians worldwide will pray for Indo-China and the Church there.

Please remember too the radio broadcasts to Indo-China from Manila.

Pray for Lem Chheong, his wife and three young children. — for Paul and Eunice Ellison and Mrs. Celso Sumida preparing broadcasts in the Khmer Language.

"Peter, do you really love me?"

"Lord, you know I love you."

"Then feed my lambs. Care for my sheep." 5

THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIA

On January 5th a new Constitution was announced.

Chapter XV: **Rights of Worship and Religion.** Article 20. "Every Cambodian has the right to worship according to any religion, and the right not to worship according to any religion. Reactionary religion which is detrimental to Democratic Cambodia and the Cambodian people is absolutely forbidden."

Chapter III on Culture says that it "opposes all corrupt reactionary culture of various oppressive classes and that of colonialism and imperialism in Cambodia."

Khieu Samphan, the real power in Cambodia, speaking on radio Phnom Penh about the new constitution, referred to Chapter XV, Article 20 and said that "our stand is not to allow any foreign imperialists to use religion to subvert us." He said that the imperialists even use a religious cloak to infiltrate, and "we should thus oppose them at all costs."

This does not bode well for Christianity.

Conspicuously absent from the radio broadcasts is reference to individuals. Personalities are not given much emphasis, but rather "the people lead by the organisation."

Cambodia seems determined to work out its own form of socialism, clearly based on communist ideology, strongly influenced by China, but unique and Cambodian nevertheless.

Please pray for these Government Ministers:

Norodom Sihanouk; Samdech Penh Nouth; Khieu Samphan; Ieng Sary, Hou Nim; Sarin Chhak; Hou Youn; Norodom Phurissara; Mrs. Ieng Thirith; Thiounn Thioeunn; Toch Phoeun; Chou Chet; Koy Thuon; Men San; Ly Kvan Pan.

For God to soften their hearts and speak to them.

OTHER REPORTS: (From The Bangkok Post)

Thai government visitors to Poipet (once a flourishing market town near the border with Thailand) spoke of it as showing "no sign of civilians, only men and women Khmer soldiers."

A close aide of Prince Sihanouk, after a visit to Cambodia reported that "all Cambodians except senior leaders of the new administration have been forced to abandon their old names and adopt new ones chosen by the authorities." "In addition to changing everyone's name, the new leaders had decreed that only unconditional supporters of the new regime can live close to Cambodia's borders. 'Doubtful' people are forced to live in the centre of the country."

Phnom Penh was described as a "dead city", "all traffic had disappeared from the streets, all shops were closed." "Committees were responsible for distributing food because there were no shops and no money was in circulation." (The Riel has been suspended and a barter system now operates).

MORAL CODE

A 12 point moral-code for youth has been announced, and all radio programmes on Saturdays are dedicated to youth. All Tuesday's programmes are dedicated to the peasants.

Border Camps

"There is a spiritual ministry going on in all the five main camps. Literature has been taken there and a fellowship of Christians has been built up. OMF has taken responsibility for ARUN. It is here and across the border at POIPET that diplomatic channels are to be opened between Thailand and Cambodia. At the end of October Mr. Ieng Sary, deputy prime minister of Cambodia, paid an official visit to Thailand. This country is to be the first to have an ambassador in Phnom Penh from a country outside the communist block.

I have started visiting the camp at Arun and plan to do this twice a month for 3 or 4 days at a time for teaching and helping in any way possible. It is about 190 miles from Bangkok. There are trains, buses or taxis (shared with 4 others). In the camp are:

men	1173
women	537
children under 12	650
	2360

Alice Compain and others have been visiting Arun and last week fifteen men and three women were baptised in the local river. Afterwards we had a single Communion Service. I hope I may be able to be there for Christmas the first one for all these people except one or two who were in contact with churches in Cambodia. 85 NTs have been given out mostly to those who complete a basic Bible course called 'Living Waters' (in Khmer). Twenty-two of these NTs are now with their owners in France. We are trying to arrange for 3,000 whole Khmer Bibles to be printed in Hong Kong."

Andrew asks us to pray for Arun:

1) the new Christians 2) up to 30 more who want to be baptised 3) diplomatic channels at Arun and Poipet 4) his visits to Arun 5) printing 3,000 Khmer Bibles.

TEAR FUND

After visiting Thailand TEAR Fund have given a grant of £5,000 to be channelled through the O.M.F. for use amongst refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. This is an answer to prayer and we praise the Lord for supplying the needs of the refugees, most of whom are totally dependent on outside help.

NUTRITION CENTRE

At Aranya Prathet, Project Vietnam Orphans plan to rent a house near the refugee camp and run a Nutrition/Day-care Centre for children and to treat minor ailments. There are said to be about 600 children under 12 years of age in the camp.

Andrew Bishop (previously in Phnom Penh) is now directing a large Christian relief organisation in Thailand known as CAMA S.E. Asia. They are involved in 24 camps with over 67,000 people, — 9,000 Cambodians, 58,000 has including Meo tribespeople. Their assistance has gone further than supplying medicine and supplies and has included Bibles, literature and finance for evangelistic outreach.

Andrew Way writes from Thailand: *'While / was at Arun last week / saw a handful of new refugees come in including an old woman and young children. They had walked for fifteen days.*

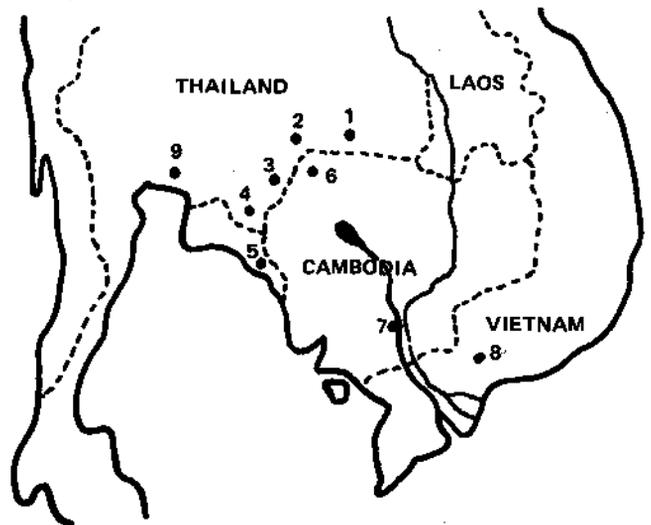
In September I met Mr. Lee from the Chinese Church in Phnom Penh. He had helped me buy equipment for the Youth Centre. He had escaped from Cambodia early in September, after walking for seven days. He told me he had gone on business near the

border leaving his family in Phnom Penh. After the take-over he was forced to work in the fields. He lived with 5,000 people, rising at 4 a.m. to cook rice which the soldiers gave along with salt. Only 20 soldiers were needed to guard so many people. Food was what could be scrounged even selling possessions to buy local dogs.

At 6 a.m. everyone walked to the fields for an hour. Work 7 — 11 a.m.; rest 11 — 1 p.m.; work 1 — 5 p.m.; walk 'home' 5 — 6; cook rice. Twice a week meetings were called and the people told a) obey the government. b) work hard — eat little c) maintain good relationships. Work was seven days a week. In this group there were about ten Christians, all Chinese. There were some Bibles. About five people met together for prayer. I asked Mr. Lee what particular lesson he had learnt. He said, 'We had no fear of death even though some were taken away and shot and many were scared.' "

Map showing Refugee Camps in Thailand.

1. Surin
2. Arun
3. Hot Springs
4. Chaman
5. Klong Yai
6. Poipet
7. Phnom Penh
8. Ho Chi Minh City
9. Bangkok



CAMBODIANS IN FRANCE

Most of the Cambodians converted in Thailand have been going to France. They have had trouble finding evangelical fellowships so they have begun forming a number of small informal fellowships of two or three families for prayer and worship. Rev. Jean Jacques Piaget, a Swiss missionary of the C.&M.A. has settled near Paris and has been very involved in helping Khmer refugees coming to France. Remember him and the many young Christians who so need encouragement and building up in the faith. Don Cormack hopes to visit refugees in France next month.