



Cambodian Genocide

(1975-1979)

Essential Question: What are the causes and consequences of genocides?

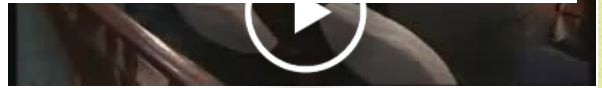
Pol Pot was born in 1925 to a farming family in central Cambodia. In 1949, at age 20, he traveled to Paris on a scholarship to study radio electronics but became interested in Marxism and neglected his studies. He lost his scholarship due to this and returned to Cambodia in 1953 and joined the underground Communist movement. By 1962, Pol Pot had become leader of the Cambodian Communist Party and was forced to flee into the jungle to escape the wrath of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, leader of Cambodia.



Pol Pot (1925-1998)

How This all Started- By 1962, Pol Pot had become leader of the Cambodian Communist Party. In 1970, the U.S. invaded Cambodia to expel the North Vietnamese from their border encampments, but instead drove them deeper into Cambodia where they allied themselves with the Khmer Rouge. For 4 years starting in 1969, the U.S. intermittently bombed North Vietnamese sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia, killing up to 150,000 Cambodian peasants. As a result, peasants fled the countryside and settled in Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh. All of these events resulted in economic and military destabilization in Cambodia and a surge of popular support for Pol Pot. Pol Pot began by declaring, "This is Year Zero," and that society was about to be "purified." Capitalism, Western culture, city life, religion, and all foreign influences were to be extinguished in favor of an extreme form of peasant Communism. All foreigners were thus expelled, embassies closed, and any foreign economic or medical assistance was refused. The use of foreign languages was banned. Newspapers and television stations were shut down, radios and bicycles confiscated, and mail and all businesses were shuttered, religion banned, and parental authority revoked. Thus Cambodia

1,700,000 Dead- All of Cambodia's cities were forcibly evacuated. At Phnom Penh, two million inhabitants were evacuated on foot into the countryside at gunpoint. As many as 20,000 died along the way. Millions of Cambodians accustomed to city life were now forced into slave labor in Pol Pot's "killing fields" where they quickly started dying from overwork, malnutrition and disease, on a diet of one tin of rice (180 grams) per person every two days. Every tenth day was a day of rest when they got the day off. Throughout Cambodia, deadly purges were conducted to get rid of remnants of the "old society". Their slogan became "What is rotten must be removed". Tens of thousands of people were tortured into giving false confessions and then shot. Ethnic groups were attacked, as many as 50% of the Japanese living in Cambodia were killed.



Aftermath: On January 7, 1979, The Vietnamese take Phnom Penh, beginning 11 years of Vietnamese occupation. The Khmer Rouge (the followers of the Communist Party of Kampuchea in Cambodia) moved west. Some Cambodians celebrate January 7 as a liberation day from the Khmer Rouge, while others marks it as the start of Vietnamese occupation. After discovery by the invading Vietnamese troops in 1979, the prison of S-21 was left as it was when the Khmer Rouge fled. Today it is a museum, bearing the mainly anonymous photographs taken of the prisoners during interrogation and the instruments of torture used still remain. The commander of S-21, Kaing Guek Eav (leader in the Khmer Rouge communist movement) went into hiding in 1979 but was located by journalists in 1999. On 31 July 2007, he was charged with Crimes Against Humanity. He claims that he was simply obeying higher orders when he supervised the prison and that he would have been killed had he disobeyed. Due to the actions of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, almost one-fourth of the country's population died while many more Cambodians became refugees. The refugees fled to other Asian countries at first, but many of them eventually journeyed to the United States and were "rescued" by the U.S. because they were still dying of starvation and had nowhere else to go. The refugees had lost family members and friends in the genocide. Many of the refugees were emotionally distraught by the actions involved in the mass killings. The distress poured onto the refugees during their time in Cambodia reflected many refugees' mental health as they continued their lives in the United States. Although the death count related to the Cambodian genocide is somewhere around two million, the genocide destroyed many more people's lives including the lives of many refugees who ended up in the United States.

...ing anything for me to get up from the mud. Go ahead and shoot me. I said to myself, I was ready to die. It was hopeless. I finally pushed my weak skinny body up from the mud and wearily walked into a direction where my group was being congregated. It was our time to go, at last.

They wanted us to move on quickly with the setting of the sun. They had first asked all the able men, both young and old, to come and gather in front of the group. The group disappeared shortly in the darkened sky. That was the last time I ever saw Sarey my brother, and the rest of the men again. I was beyond horrified when I heard the clobbering began. Somehow, I knew that was it. Oum's elderly father was next to me and his upper torso contracted several times before it fell on me. At that moment, I noticed a small boy whom I knew well got up and started to call for his mother. And then there was a warm splash on my face and body. I knew it was definitely not mud. It was the little boy's blood and perhaps brain tissues that got scattered from the impact. The rest only let out short but terrifying sputtered sounds and I could hear the breath stopped cold in its track. Everything seemed to happen in a slow motion and it was so unreal. It happened in a matter of seconds and very fast, but I could still vividly remember every trifling detail. I closed my eyes, but the terrifying sounds continued to penetrate my ear canals and piercing my ear drums. The first one that came was when I was lying face down to the ground with a body partially covered my lower body. It hits me just below my right shoulder blade. I remembered that one very well. The next one hit me just above my neck on the right side of my head. I believed it was the one that put me to sleep that night. The rest, which was at least 15 blows, landed everywhere on my skinny body.

I woke up to the sound of mosquitoes which were still buzzing like bees over my body. Only this time, there were tons and tons of them feasting on mine and other people's blood. I was unable to move a muscle, not one. My eyes were opened, but they were blurry. I thought I was blinded. I was disoriented. I could not remember where I was. I thought I was sleeping at home on my own bed. I was wondering why there were so

<http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/pol-pot.htm>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc8Cb2wi8eM>

<http://www.cybercambodia.com/dachs/stories/ronnie.html>

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/07/25/cambodia.khmer.rouge.timeline/>

<http://wearecambodia.weebly.com/the-aftermath.html>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/cambodian-refugees-effects-surviving-genocide-30694.html?cat=37>

... questions over and over again, but only came to the same conclusion. I am still alive. I am alive! Why? I could not understand why I was still alive and suffering. I should have been dead. I wished then that I was dead like the rest of people lying there.

To read the full story: