

Khmer Rouge: Recruitment and Selection & Training and Development



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Khmer Rouge – Recruitment and Selection

Recruiting: Pre-Revolution

Pol Pot and others made one pivotal error; they failed to realize that some areas were poorer than others, for example, before 1975, peasants in the village of Sobay were much poorer than the average village. This according to Hinton was “a fundamental error in the DK party line which was likely an important reason the Khmer Rouge initially had trouble recruiting peasants to their movement”.¹ The Khmer Rouge would start to see a substantial increase in their potential recruitment pool, shortly after the devastation that the Vietnam War and the American bombardment of bordering Vietnamese - Cambodian villages brought. Many Cambodian farmers incurred much economic difficulty after having massive damage done to their farms. Re-constructing efforts were just too costly. Many were left with heavy financial debts, having to sell off their property to pay their debts off.² The deteriorating economic conditions of the peasantry alone were not widespread enough to generate nationwide support of the Khmer Rouge.³ Although the exact size of this recruitment pool and it’s correlation with the landlessness of the peasantry, has been widely debated by scholars. But Kiernan’s assessment on the matter most likely sums up the argument best, that the majority of the peasants in the country side were not widely drawn to the Khmer Rouge’s proposal, although the number of recruits were substantial “enough to build a viable recruitment strategy targeting poor peasants, and particularly their teenage children”.⁴ A handful of the recruits who registered in the party in the early 70’s were driven by malice and anger towards the Lon Nol government. Khmer Rouge early propaganda campaigns suggested that Lon Nol and his lackeys were responsible for the B-52 American bombardments of the Cambodian countryside. These Cambodian recruits were angered over this mass destruction of their homes and the death of their loved ones, inciting anger and resentment to those responsible. Khel, a survivor, discussed in an interview, “the American B-52’s dropped too many bombs. The people became seized with painful anger and wanted to fight against the Lon Nol regime”.⁵ The Lon Nol government had made a deal with the United States to bombard certain Vietnamese elements who were residing in bordering Vietnam villages to drive out the North Vietnamese communists. Those aforementioned recruits,

¹ Hinton, 2005, pg57

² Ibid

³ Hinton, 2005, pg58

⁴ Kiernan, 1996, pg7

⁵ Hinton, 2005, pg58

who were economically impacted by the American bombings, which directly led to some 150,000 Cambodians alone perishing, and the displacement of thousands of others, were angered at these imperialist dogs, America and the Lon Nol regime. Khmer Rouge propaganda efforts played on their desire for revenge. A report compiled by the CIA's (Central Intelligence Agency) Directorate of Operations on May 2 1973, outlined how the Khmer Rouge had launched a new recruitment strategy in the Kandal province (Southwest) in which they exploited the damage done by the American bombings, as the main theme of their new propaganda campaigns. Party cadres would go around informing the people that the Lon Nol government was to blame, that Lon Nol himself requested that the Americans bombard the Cambodian country side, responsible for the devastation and suffering of innocent agrarian villagers. They would entice people to join the revolutionary army, as the only way to stop this destruction. They need desperately to unite a revolutionary force large enough to defeat Lon Nol.⁶ An ample amount of recruits were "disaffected intellectuals or members of the middle class who were drawn to Khmer Rouge ideals".⁷ These recruits joined pre-revolution, and in most probability secured the highest positions within Democratic Kampuchea. Some recruits wanted to see King Norodom Sihanouk restored to power, after he was ousted by Lon Nol in 1970, in which Lon Nol created the Khmer Republic of Kampuchea. Sihanouk had aligned himself with the Khmer Rouge, in which he later called upon the rural children to fight the illegitimate Khmer Republic.⁸ His support of the Khmer Rouge enticed large numbers of peasants to follow the Khmer Rouge movement. Khel further recalls that, he and others had joined as youths, because they wished to see the King (Sihanouk) restored to power, "in general the people loved the King and he was the head of the Khmer Rouge military front".⁹ If it were not for Sihanouk being on the Khmer Rouge's side, the Khmer Rouge would have never recruited enough help to overthrow the Lon Nol regime. An exorbitant amount of recruits naturally despised the wealth and status of the city people, the perceived rich. They resented those of the wealthy class, who exploited the poor, through low wages, and those responsible for diminishing the status and respect of the peasant class. These recruits were those who were in opposition to the wide class division of Cambodia, who were somewhat already class conscious. They were appalled by their debts, landlessness and poverty.¹⁰ The Khmer Rouge's propaganda had promised a new utopian, an egalitarian Cambodia. They were part of something much larger than themselves.

⁶ Keirnan, 1993, pg16

⁷ Hinton, 2005, pg58

⁸ Hinton, 2005, pg7

⁹ Hinton, 2005, pg58

¹⁰ Ibid

The earlier propaganda campaigns created to entice peasants to join by local Khmer Rouge cadres were non-complex. Often a local KR cadre would persuade members of the peasantry to join, often through registering through their district, sub-district and village chiefs. Recruitment was not forced in certain areas, Sokha, in her interview with Bunsou Sour, stated that, “No one forced us; they just launched a simple campaign as it was normally done, and we believed that it was good, so we joined.”¹¹ Cadres promised rewards to those recruits who joined, promising a higher standard of living in general for all peasants, only once capitalism and imperialism within the nation was vanquished. For many of the peasants their incentive to join, and lend their support, was derived from the Khmer Rouge promise that rewards will follow once the war ended.¹² Most peasants were poor naturally, and all desired a better life. Part C (in Part Three) of the Four Year Plan, suggests the need to build upon, expand and strengthen the ranks of educational cadres; “We must choose (people with) backgrounds that adhere to the revolutionary movement and have the quality to grasp the Party's educational line and are able to apply it concretely and continuously strengthen and expand their own capacity in the concrete movement.” The same admonition is repeated in the next section of the document: “Be careful in building, strengthening and expanding the ranks by choosing (people of) backgrounds close to the revolutionary movement (who) can apply the Party's policy to instruct the people and disseminate propaganda and information.”¹³

Hinton's Disproportionate revenge theory

In Khmer, kum means “to wish to do bad or harm someone, to have a heart that is tied in malice (pyabat) with someone, to be tied in a grudge (chang kumnum),” which leads one “to prepare to take vengeance (sangsoek) in return”.¹⁴ The Khmer Rouge built up class resentment in the Khmer population, encouraging them to outrage and to seek out revenge against the rich. According to Alexander Hinton, Cambodians who have a big grudge are sometimes said to want to “eat the flesh and sip the blood” of their enemy.¹⁵ The Khmer translation of revenge is “karsangsoek” which literally means to “pay back”. Much like how a person in Khmer culture would be expected to return a good favor to someone, it is equally as expected to repay back bad deeds. To Hinton, this would be carried out in a “disproportionate manner that defeats the offender and elevates one's honor”, honor

¹¹ Sour 1999-2009

¹² Kiernan, 1993, pg4

¹³ Chandler et. al, 1988, pg114

¹⁴ Headley et al, 1977, pg133

¹⁵ Hinton, 2005, pg65

that was devalued by the inflicting party.¹⁶ The Khmer Rouge cadres responsible for the unjustifiable killing of “new people” were restoring their previously diminished honor, but in a more extreme case. They sought out revenge on those directly responsible for making them lose face, and any who seemed evidently similar, in many respects the Khmer Rouge cadres, saw all capitalists as the same, greedy, and exploitive. For the Khmer Rouge cadre they wanted to deter further retaliation, to completely crush and annihilate these aforementioned target groups, in a way where the accused would not by any means be able to retaliate. By killing the enemy and their entire family lines, they thought, would accomplish this. These new recruits had their opportunity and the means available provided by the party to justify their revengeful actions as correct.

Recruiting: During the Revolution

Young Children

In DK, parents were no longer allowed authority over grown children, and family connections were of no value in securing favorable living conditions. Khmer Rouge cadres responsible for local recruitment efforts, solicited the youngest members in Cambodia’s poor class, who would be willing to destroy the old society, out of resentment for having little stake in it. Much like Mao Zedong turned to youthful cadres and red guards for implementing the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, Pol Pot followed the same method. The recruiting of young cadres and soldiers were instrumental in the revolution becoming as cruel as it had. Sihanouk suggests that once these children were enlisted in the revolutionary army, they were separated from their parents and families, taken from their home villages, and placed immediately into indoctrination camps. Many began their military careers at the age of 12. The party bestowed upon them what they thought was the greatest honor, and that was the title of “Oppakar phdach kar robas pak”, which translates to, “the dictatorial instrument of the party”.¹⁷ Dith Pran suggests that these young Khmer Rouge children turned cadres were the most brutal, often falling between the ages of 12-15 years of age. They appeared completely indoctrinated; they were taken young and taught nothing but discipline and hatred.¹⁸ These young cadres often identified their families as the enemy, in one instance Dith Pran, remembers one Khmer Rouge cadre, young in age, who was told to execute his father, the

¹⁶ Hinton, 2005, pg68

¹⁷ Sihanouk, 1980

¹⁸ Jackson, 1989, pg239

child had done so, but then turned the gun on himself. ¹⁹ They used terror, violence to carry out the most of extreme orders passed unto them by their superiors. ²⁰ The Khmer rouge hoped to use children as the basis of a new society without memory. ²¹

The Illiterate Poor

The first of King Sihanouk's three specific reasons why the Khmer Rouge was so successful in developing ferocious cadres was the method of recruitment employed. The other two reasons will be discussed in the next section. Sihanouk's description of those chosen candidates included those poor peasants, mountain people, inhabitants of the forested regions, and the most remote of villages. ²² These were the most "neglected" by the old regime, these were almost exclusively recruited. These were the ones who were more ignorant, and susceptible to believing the Khmer Rouge's clever propaganda schemes. This propaganda infiltrated the poor peasant's hearts and minds, with hatred for the upper echelons. Those who could afford clothes, housing, education for their children, those who were not required to work in the field's day in day out, and those who could easily pay taxes were despised by this target recruitment group. Pol Pot sought the recruitment of those considered to have formed "the bottom rung of society", who were spiteful of the wealthy rich, who would unflinchingly strike them down without care. Pot found that the ill people and the poor Khmer peoples living in Northeastern Cambodia would be ideal candidates to recruit as his new party cadres. The poor were less educated, less literate, more ignorant, perfect candidates to follow orders without questioning first the morality of their actions. Pot stated in a post-1975-78 interview that, "my backing base was in the regions of the national minorities that were situated in the Northeast regions, I know perfectly that these national minorities were very miserable". ²³ Pol Pot described them as "completely illiterate people who did not have even the slightest idea of cities, automobiles and parliaments, but who dared to fight under the guidance of the party". ²⁴ Peang Sophi, a surviving Cambodian refugee who managed escape to Thailand, said their ignorance extended to being terrified by basic technology, for instance certain Khmer cadres were scared of anything in bottles or cans, some even were caught eating toothpaste. ²⁵ Gerard Brisse in his

¹⁹ Schanberg 1980

²⁰ Jackson, 1989, pg239

²¹ Kiernan, 1997, Xvii

²² Sihanouk, 1980

²³ Democratic Kampuchea 1978, pg22-3

²⁴ FBIS IV, September 27th 1977:H14

²⁵ Chandler, Kiernan, and Lim, undated, pg3]

introduction to Prince Sihanouk's book "War and Hope" suggests that "the people of the high plateaus were much sought after, much worked on by special services of every variety; they formed the pool from which the Khmer Rouge found its future cadres. They were uneducated cadres, used to moving around. Instructed in hatred, they behaved like brutes"²⁶

Recruitment was practically at a stand still for the first few years under the DK government, but firmly resumed in July 1977, and had done so rather exponentially. New members to the party were required to have "good class qualifications, experience in revolutionary movements and a good personal history that could be fully verified".²⁷ Having a higher education earned you no extra consideration into the party's higher ranks, post April 17, 1975. Most of the low-mid leadership positions in Cambodia post April 1975 were largely demobilized soldiers, those wounded or disabled as a result of revolutionary activity. Surviving refugees have noted that often the Committee Chairman of many of the cooperatives across the nation, were ex-soldiers.²⁸ Recruiters were to ensure that the party candidate had the proper class background.²⁹ The sneaky nature of the DK party exacerbated the difficulty of selection. Party members were advised to be on the lookout for hard working people with the right spirit, to be recommended for promotion from worker to cadre.³⁰ This is an area where Pol Pot tended to deviate from emulating Mao's policy on recruitment. In the People's Republic of China, following their victory in 1949, the CCP had changed its recruitment policy from emphasis on peasant to workers to intellectuals and city people, launching a program of urban industrial development, noted by Schurmann, "was the exact opposite of what happened in the DK".³¹

²⁶ Sihanouk, 1980

²⁷ Jackson, 1989, pg81

²⁸ Ibid, pg86

²⁹ Ibid, pg97

³⁰ Democratic Kampuchea, 1978, pg79

³¹ Schurmann, 1968, pg121

Khmer Rouge: Training and Development

Initial pre-revolution cadres had received their army training from the North Vietnamese, and were given both Chinese and Soviet weaponry, to become such as strong force in the countryside.³² National broadcasts were widely received throughout all regions in DK presenting reasons on the need to train, improve and build future, potential cadres.³³ The curriculum for educating and constructing potential cadres consisted of regular meetings, criticism from others and self-criticism sessions, and formal schooling. During pre-revolutionary times, top party cadres “put heavy emphasis on training for “front” cadre and on clandestine training for the party members”.³⁴ Party members themselves underwent continuous ideological and practical training to keep them well educated throughout their leadership. Cadres had to be models in every field they led, that is why the Khmer Rouge government placed a lot of emphasis on the training and development of their low level cadres, the ones that were actually out their leading transformational change. After April 1975 the Party’s Central Political School under Deputy Secretary Nuon Chea moved to the old Soviet Technical Institute. Each separate Ministry in Phnom Penh had its own school as well.³⁵

Education under the Khmer Rouge

The country had seen major advancements in educational restructuring and expansion following their year of independence in 1953.³⁶ Sihanouk’s government often set aside 20% of the national budget to extensively develop their educational offering to the everyday Cambodian. By 1969, there was an establishment of nine universities, 3200 primary schools, and 161 secondary schools, often accredited with expanding as much as it did from their year of independence. According to David Ayres, this was a “collective increase of over 130% on the number inherited from the French 16 years before”.³⁷ A substantial decrease in the schools offered began almost immediately after the Lon Nol government overthrow the Sihanouk government in 1970. In 1971, a year after the replacement of power, the government only controlled 1064 primary schools, and almost half of the country’s 148 colleges had been closed.³⁸ Pol Pot had perceived the educational system of both Sihanouk and Lon Nol as a feudal establishment. Between 1975 and 1979, the

³² Kiernan in Jackson, 1989, pg ix

³³ Jackson, 1989, pg81

³⁴ Heder 1980: Interview No 17

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Royaume de Cambodge, 1967

³⁷ Ayers, 2000, pg207

³⁸ Whitaker, 1973, pg144

Khmer Rouge destroyed 90 percent of all school buildings, libraries and equipment.³⁹ Seven of the nine higher education institutions were completely demolished.⁴⁰ It has been estimated that some 75 percent of the primary and secondary school teachers, 91 percent of university faculty, and 67 percent of primary and secondary students were summarily executed during Pot's leadership.⁴¹ Many of the schools were turned to barracks, or as prisons, for both the armies of the Communist Kampuchean Armed Forces and Lon Nol's Republican Forces. The only education provided by either the Republicans or Communists, was rudimentary if that, largely taken place in buffalo stables, under trees or in rarer instances in community halls. When the Khmer Rouge completely took control in April 1975, they ousted any remaining form of an old regime type of education for fear of its supposedly imperialist curriculum, along with any western produced textbooks, books and materials. These books were taken out of libraries, schools and just piled up in front of trees exposed to the tropical weather conditions, and Khmer mistreatment, i.e. starting fires to cook with, or used for rolling cigarettes. They provided equal mistreatment to those who taught in schools, or possessed a higher education. Estimates suggest that some 96% post-secondary students and 75% of teachers were executed, further we must consider the exorbitant amount of teachers who fled the country successfully before the transition of power to the DK.⁴² David Ayers has gone so far as to suggest that the Khmer Rouge is responsible for destroying education in Cambodia all together, but there are many who disagree. Schools still existed, a teacher/mentor relationship was still constructed between teacher and student, the only reason why people disregard this education is because of first, its does not resemble a western education, and the methods of instruction albeit were primitive, i.e. school of cruelty. Khmer Rouge attempts at education were still effective forms of educating the Cambodian citizenry in what the Khmer Rouge government and the Ministry of Education saw fit that the students should be learning.

Very little is actually known to the international community about what was actually taught under the Khmer Rouge, or the activities of the Ministry of Education, all what is known that their was an unsubstantial amount of textbook production and eventual distribution to some teachers. Most of what we know is documented testimony from Khmer Rouge survivors, and from policy speeches and records completed by the top party cadres. Most Ministry of Education documents

³⁹ Barron and Paul, 1977; Ek Sam Ol, 1991

⁴⁰ Ek Sam Ol, 1991

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ministry of Education, 1984 & [Ayers, 1997

were either destroyed or lost, when the Khmer Rouge lost power to the invading Socialist Republic of Vietnamese, further no statistics were ever assembled.⁴³

Despite what many believe, the Khmer Rouge did not abolish reading and writing. The Khmer Rouge published three monthly magazines, children were taught how to read and write, and Khmer Rouge cadres kept detailed notebooks from indoctrination sessions. Although there was a significant amount of illiterate rural cooperative leaders, an illiterate person was not approved to join the central party structure, one senior cadre would need to know how to read and write.⁴⁴ In order for the party line to be consistent and adhere to proper Marxist socialist theory, cultural and educational revolutions were needed to build the new society. Mosyakov and Chigas, suggest that, “Thus, it is clear that the Khmer Rouge were not, in principle, afraid of the ability of common people to read and write. It was, therefore, what and how one read, rather than the ability to read and write, that made certain kinds of people suspect. As with every other aspect of daily life, the Party Center wanted to be in complete control of how, when and what people wrote, read, and thought”.⁴⁵

Education was provided for in the Party Center’s Four Year Plan. The plan was drawn up in a party meeting attended by all of the party’s top cadres from July 21 – August 2 of 1976. Dedicated in the last twenty pages of this 110 page document, was the new policy on educational reform, titled, “The Fields of Culture, Literature, Art, Technology, Science, Education of the People, Propaganda, and Information”, which would overtly suggests that the party was aligning propaganda and education into one comprehensive effort, to build both socialist and revolutionary consciousness in the masses, mainly young and poor persons. It was two tiered process which first provided for the party to effectively “abolish, uproot, and disperse the cultural, literary, and artistic remnants of the imperialists, colonialists, and all of the other oppressor classes”.⁴⁶ The second step was "to strengthen and expand the building of revolutionary culture, literature and art of the worker-peasant class in accordance with the Party's proletarian standpoint".⁴⁷ The party’s intention was to replace the old regimes intellectuals with a new socialist educated intellectual, cultivating a new generation using, revolutionary songs and poems, which promoted the exploitation endured by the poor.⁴⁸

⁴³ Chandler, 1996, pg256

⁴⁴ Mosyakov & Chigas, 2009

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Chandler et. al, 1988, pg113

⁴⁷ Ibid, pg 113-114

⁴⁸ Chandler et. al, 1988

Below is an excerpt from Chandler et al, "Pol Pot Plans the Future. Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977, which is a copy of the aforementioned Four Year Plan drafted in 1976:

Part Three

The Fields of Culture, Literature, Art, Technology, Science, Education of the People, Propaganda, and Information

I. The Fields of Revolutionary Culture, Literature, and Art of the Worker-Peasant Class in Accordance with the Party's Proletarian Standpoint.

A. Continue the struggle to abolish, uproot, and disperse the cultural, literary, and artistic remnants of the imperialists, colonialists, and all of the other oppressor classes. This will be implemented strongly, deeply and continuously one after the other from 1977 onwards.

B. Continue to strengthen and expand the building of revolutionary culture, literature and art of the worker-peasant class in accordance with the Party's proletarian standpoint. Organise work towards continuously and progressively strengthening and expanding them as assigned annually, from 1977 to 1980 to meet the requests of worker-peasant masses for the nurturing of culture, political awareness, and consciousness. Especially the strengthening and expanding of songs and poems that reflect good models in the period of political/armed struggle and in the revolutionary war for national and people's liberation, in the period of national-democratic revolution, and songs that describe good models in the period of socialist revolution and the building of socialism.

II. Field of Education, Instruction of the People, Propaganda and Information

1. Education System

- Primary education--general subjects -- three years
- Secondary education

i. General subjects -- three years

ii. Technical subjects -- three years

- Tertiary education in technical subjects -- three years

A. Daily Education Methods

- Half study, half work for material production
- In primary education it is important to give attention to abolishing illiteracy among the population.

Set Plan for the Educational System

- Primary education: from 1977 onwards
- Secondary education especially in the technical part, must simultaneously begin to some extent from 1977.

In our education system there are no examinations and no certificates; it is a system of learning through the collective and in the concrete movement of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism in specific bases, especially in the co-operatives, factories, and military units.

B. General Subjects

- reading and writing
- arithmetic
- geography (importantly that of the nation)

- history of the revolutionary struggle of the people, the revolutionary struggle for the nation, the revolutionary struggle for democracy, the revolutionary struggle for socialist revolution, and the struggle to build socialism.
- natural sciences, physics, chemistry (as base)
- the Partys politics, consciousness, and organisation

C. Build, strengthen and expand the ranks of educational cadres

We must choose (people with) backgrounds that adhere to the revolutionary movement and have the quality to grasp the Party's [sic] educational line and are able to apply it concretely, and continuously strengthen and expand their own capacity in the concrete movement.

2. Instruction of the People, Propaganda, and Information

A) Radio Broadcasting: organise general listening sessions using loud speakers in all important places and mobile work brigades.

B) Films: of the revolutionary movement's present and past, especially the present. Organise many groups to produce many films to show to the people in general.

C) Art: Step-by step (a little is enough) in order not to disturb the productive forces raising production.

D) Newspapers: pictorial magazines, political magazines and general knowledge.

Procedures:

- Be careful in building, strengthening and expanding the ranks by choosing (people of) backgrounds close the revolutionary movement (who) can apply the Party's policy to instruct the people and disseminate propaganda and information.
- Organize printing in foreign languages, especially English, starting from mid-1977 onwards.

3. Scientific Technology

A. Workshop or place for experimentation in co-operatives and important factories.

B. Technical schools at primary and secondary level in important traders such as

- rice and other cereals
- rubber and other industrial crops
- forestry and fruit trees
- animal breeding
- fresh and salt-water fish
- river and sea water
- energy
- medical knowledge, etc.

C. Poly-technical School with practical primary and secondary levels.

Procedure: Organize these simultaneously from 1977 onwards, according to the Plan and it's annual program.

Mosyakov & Chigas evaluation of this part of the Four Year Plan, suggests that this plan does not clearly stipulate what objectives are needed to be accomplished in order for this new educational system to be fully implemented. The plan neglects to mention the necessary processes involved with selecting those teachers and their subsequent level of training in order to indoctrinate the youth, nor curricula and educational materials are not discussed. The plan calls for dividing the

student's day up with half being allotted to education and personal study, and the remaining half would be dedicated to work production, survivor testimony supports this conclusion.⁴⁹ Mosyakov & Chigas infer that these new schools were destined to teach the population the correct way to write and read which was to read and write as a peasant:

That is, one should read in an uncritical and passive way, taking things at face value and not questioning the meaning or source of the text. Many base people had received traditional Buddhist educations in a pagoda, or, in the case of women, at home, where they would have been taught through rote learning. This kind of reader would take the rhetoric of the revolution at face value without questioning underlying motives. The most dangerous kind of reader, on the other hand, was the person who critically examined the Party line and its goals.⁵⁰

Khieu Samphan stated in 1977, "Our goal is to keep schooling close to production work ... We learn technological skills and implement them while working".⁵¹ The motto was, that you should learn while working the fields; that the more you work, the more you will learn competent revolutionary relevant skills.⁵² These revolutionaries were to study and personal see to further contributing to the production of agrarian foodstuffs for the cooperative. To accommodate this, the schools were placed within the cooperative and factories.⁵³ The Khmer Rouge party line promoted that by placing children and the uneducated into new roles, would inadvertently be a good way for the trainee to acquire requisite skills. Khieu Samphan assumes:

In the past here in Phnom Penh did you ever see any Cambodian operate a lathe? Very rarely. No Cambodian would touch anything that had to do with machinery. Only foreigners were mechanics. Look now! Cambodian children are everywhere. They can do it. We are pleased with this new trend. This therefore is a new stage in the building of our nation's technical ranks. Our worker peasant class, under the leadership of our revolutionary organization, immediately grasped technical expertise after it seized political power. Our ports are much more efficient, better maintained than ever before. Efficiently they are not far behind many of the worlds larger ports.... This shows that technical skill is not the determining factor. The determining factor is in fact the political and ideological stand of our fraternal dock workers. Their stand is lofty, their revolutionary ideology firm, their sense of responsibility high, their patriotism unquestionable. All this more than compensates for any lack of technical skills.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Mosyakov & Chigas, 2009

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ FBIS IV, April 18, 1977:H7

⁵² FBIS IV, October 1977:H26

⁵³ FBIS IV, October 4 1977:H34

⁵⁴ FBIS April 18 1977:H7-8

Khmer Rouge: Training

In all reality education in DK was at a point of no progress. And where the DK central policy may have been suggested, “most local cadres considered higher education as useless and people who had obtained it less reliable than the uneducated”.⁵⁵ The teachers were largely selected from the base population, further there were Khmer Rouge approved textbooks that were distributed to these base teachers, none were given to the children. Course curriculum largely covered reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. It is true that the Khmer policy was to abolish all post-secondary schooling, as well most grades above the lowest primary grades, and did not even begin to discuss its reorganization outside the innermost circles of top cadres until late in 1978. It has been noted that this latter attempt was to attract the loyalty of intellectuals in the anti-Vietnamese resistance, and oncoming expected war.⁵⁶ The Khmer Rouge policy as clearly defined in the Four Year Plan, they were to eradicate illiteracy, with an attempt at incorporating basic education within factories and cooperatives, and were to be consistent in agrarian curriculum. In October 1978 there was a seminar of the development of a new education system including a university, in which “new” intellectuals would be employed. Pol Pot himself spoke and made a good impression on some of his audience participants.⁵⁷ In this speech he stated that within 10 years, students with no previous schooling should arise out of being illiterate to becoming trained graduate level engineers, through the study of “the important things and plenty of practical work”.⁵⁸

To be selected to undergo this education, were to be considered first, the children of poor peasants, with a coinciding positive life history, and revolutionary work within the party. Further, it has been claimed that those children of the DK central leadership, had attended a special school near the Boeung Trabek center, it was even noted that both Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan both had children attending this school.⁵⁹ Through the countries restructuring over course, and indoctrination sessions, what the Khmer Rouge called “seepage” (karchreap), the populace would gradually learn party ideology, like good passionate revolutionaries, eventually be guided by proper political consciousness.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Vickery, 1984, pg173

⁵⁶ Ibid, pg171

⁵⁷ FBIS, October 2, 1978

⁵⁸ Vickery, 1984, pg173

⁵⁹ Ibid, pg172

⁶⁰ .Hinton, 2005, pg51

Indoctrination Camps for Poor Adults

The uneducated adult peasants were sent to indoctrination camps to compliment what the ignorant poor were attracted to in the nation wide propaganda with an education which would reinforce initially what these poor and undereducated were attracted to. In these types of camps, represented were the most violent and ignorant people, and the Khmer Rouge taught them to lead, manage, control, and destroy. These people took orders without question. The Khmer rouge would build “animosity and jealousy into them so the killings could be justified”.⁶¹ They were taught to be dispassionate and resolute. Lor a survivor, recalls when he was in the army, he was taught how to effectively cut off his heart from feeling passionate towards enemy traitors. At Tuol Sleng, (S-21) he says, “they reinforced this training even more, telling us that we had to become resolute and kill whoever was at fault....This meant that we had to renounce our sentiment toward others”.⁶²

Upon joining the Khmer Rouge in March 1975, Vaen Kheuan, said upon being inducted into the party unofficially he had to undergo more than ten days of political education at a local office in Region 25. Shortly after, he was sent to Division 12, (later renamed Division 703) to further undergo a month of military training at a Division 12 technical school. December 1975, Vaen was sent to a technical school for five months to partake in more training in Ta Khmau, where many of the Tuol Sleng cadres were trained. Here he was further exposed to more political and military education and training, mandatory attendance at both criticism sessions and political seminars. To supplement this indoctrination, Vaen had to undergo demanding physical training as well, such as manual labor tasks, endure exhaustion, hunger and being forced to sleep deprivation. Hinton suggest that the Khmer Rouge were doing this to produce recruits “who would have proper revolutionary consciousness and be completely loyal to the DK regime”.⁶³ For the cadres working in Tuol Sleng, they underwent stress induced situations, and political education. They were continuously being indoctrinated on party policy, simultaneously working in environments of fear, isolation, and anxiety. One former Tuol Sleng guard recounts, “I think we became crazy at the time, because of the Khmer Rouge indoctrination. We believed what they said. We did what they ordered us to do. We tried to forget what they told us to forget. We did not think about our families; instead we only tried to work hard to serve the Khmer Rouge revolution”.⁶⁴ A common lesson taught to those cadres who

⁶¹ Jackson, 1989

⁶² Hinton, 2005, pg263

⁶³ Ibid, pg230

⁶⁴ Meng-Try Ea and Sorya Sim, 2001, pg24

worked as interrogators, executioners or local cadres, was to make the prisoner/tortured/new person/traitor, uncertain whether or not they will live or die, the purpose is to let them continue to hope that they may survive.⁶⁵ Interrogators and cadres who worked in Tuol Sleng underwent, what Hinton describes as “broader political training and indoctrination, which was frequent and intensive.”⁶⁶ These Tuol Sleng cadres as a result of this more intense training, according to Hinton had “lost their moral inhibitions and became desensitized as a result of living in this highly structured institution of violence, being exposed to intense political indoctrination and training, and regularly observing or participating in the abuse of prisoners...they were highly desensitized to his victim’s pain”. [Hinton, 2005, pg238]

Indoctrination Camps for Educated Adults

It has been noted that in some areas, DK efforts encouraged, to institute “a reeducation program for highly qualified intellectuals in order to convert them to the new regime and eventually make use of their education and training”.⁶⁷ Non Suon, a survivor, who endured lots under the Khmer Rouge, noted that after serving out a prison sentence imposed on him from being an authority under Lon Nol, he had to attend an oberom, literally translating to “education”, which appeared as a reeducation center for intellectuals whom the CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) at the time thought they would be able to use his skills after being indoctrinated in helping the CPK in the future. According to Non Suon, this oberom was a holding center for intellectuals of uncertain reliability. Non Suon was a veteran Communist and head of the Agricultural Committee under the Minister of Economy, whom was arrested on November 1, 1976, and killed months later in the Tuol Sleng prison. This engineer noted that political education was of the utmost importance, as 2-3 hours were allocated each day to this training.⁶⁸

There were two major reeducation centers in particular where these “new people”, (intellectuals, people who joined the revolution after April 1975) seen as threatening would be sent to, either, Khmero-Soviet Technical or Boeung Trabek.⁶⁹ The latter was a higher level center for intellectual Cambodian returnees, those who have studied in either a socialist country, served as GRUNK diplomats between 1970-75, or for those who held leftists credentials, that returned to

⁶⁵ Hinton, 2005, pg232

⁶⁶ Ibid, pg237

⁶⁷ Vickery, 1984, pg101

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid, pg163

Cambodia after April 17th, 1975. It was a reeducation center largely for intellectuals, wanting and willing to undergo any necessary training voluntarily to become leaders in this new revolution. These returnees from abroad, leftist intellectuals, who expected to be welcomed and employed in the new socialist administration, were often told only that they would be used according to their revolutionary competence and leadership possibilities.⁷⁰ At Boeung Trabek, the residents were considered to be better informed politically. According to two men who spent their entire time in Boeung Trabek during DK, “the main danger came from those returnees who had been appointed as group leaders and who tried to curry favor with the higher cadres by reporting, or inciting, faults of the other inmates”.⁷¹ It was noted that even those returnee intellectuals from around the world, were encouraged while in Boeung Trabek, not to allude to any special knowledge. Vickery provides us with a good example, “if an electric fixture needed repair, it was very dangerous to say, “I can fix it; I’m an engineer”, it was also dangerous to do nothing, for then one was concealing knowledge and withholding aid from the organization”.⁷² Recommended as survival strategy here was “to tread a very fine line between ignorance and reluctant admission of a very small amount of skill, preferably acquired through practical work, and just sufficient for the task”.⁷³ Boeung Trabek was established in 1976 to oversee the re-education of government officials of the both the Sihanouk and Lon Nol regimes. This center was divided into a youth section, comprised of 150 people and a section that could accommodate 50 Cambodian returnees, i.e. diplomats, former government officials. In contrast to those other intellectuals within worse reeducation centers, these Boeung Trabek residents were allowed pencil and paper and were expected to take notes on the political lectures, but until 1978 were allowed no other reading material.⁷⁴ It is estimated that here some twenty inmates including Princess Nanette, were executed at the near by execution center, Tuol Sleng. Hor Namhong was the director of the prison, his wife was the director of the women’s prison, and his son was made chief over the youth prisoners. Hor Namhong was known to hold and personally partake in daily criticism/self-criticism sessions, where he welcomed others to criticize him. When Kyne Pheilim was asked what was life like at Boeung Trabek the reply was not far from expected, “we worked hard and didn’t eat well”.⁷⁵ Ong Thong Hoeung, a surviving refugee who managed to flee Boeung Trabek to a Thai refugee camp in 1980, says that this re-education center near Phnom Penh, would appoint Cambodian returnees to help manage the camps activities. At Boeung Trabek,

⁷⁰ Vickery, 1984, pg163

⁷¹ Ibid, pg164

⁷² Ibid., pg173

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Vickery, 1984, pg163

⁷⁵ Pheilim, 2001

he said, "I discovered that during [Khmer Rouge camp leader] Savan's time, Angkar had ordered a dozen or so important figures, including Chau Seng, [Prince] Norodom Phurissara and his wife [Princess Norodom Phlus], to leave the camp."⁷⁶ Princess Sisowath Nanette, older sister to Queen-Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk, arrived at Boeung Trabek in October 1977. She came from France to be with her husband who was being held here, Prince Sisowath Metheavy. While here it was noted that the Khmer Rouge cadres running the camp, claimed Nanette would attempt to steal the limelight while foreign delegations visited. It was a Boeung Trabek policy that all Cambodian returnees were to hide their identities to any foreign visitor, despite being member to the Sihanouk royal family. When she was caught speaking French by Nam Hong's wife, Mit Ry, she found herself being reprimanded. Sokha, informs us through her testimony that the internal party regulation stipulated that someone was only allowed to make five moral mistakes, if they had used up all of their mistakes, and did not improve, they would be imprisoned, or perhaps, terminated.⁷⁷ Less than a year had went by, and the Princess completely realizing that she was powerless here, began to demonstrate submission to Hor Nam Hong, on one occasion offering him flowers, he turned his back, leaving Princess Sihanouk crying. Her diplomatic attempts of leaving this imprisonment were useless. Nanette lived in Boeung Trabek for six months before she and her husband were taken away to be executed in April 1978.⁷⁸

For those who did not qualify to attend Boeung Trabek would be sent to the Khmero-Soviet Technical Institute. Here they were taught political education (Marxism-Leninism) usually for about two months, and then were sent to various work sites. In both places they were put to work on unpleasant manual tasks – planting food, clearing swamps, preparing natural fertilizer – all while subject to part/full-time political reeducation. At the Khmero-Soviet technical Institute the political work was often performed and monitored by Khieu Samphan himself, indicating the importance the regime, at least in the beginning attached to these potential Khmer Rouge leaders. After the two months of political orientation course work was completed there was a graduation ceremony welcoming these new members into the party. There were other little reeducation centers for educated “new” people to be indoctrinated at, this included Prek Kralanh. Vannak Huy recalls when arriving at Prek Kralanh prison, the Prison chief, said that “we come here to get conditioned. So, try

⁷⁶ Vachon, 2006

⁷⁷ Sour, 1999-2009

⁷⁸ Soy, 2008

hard to rebuild yourself from today on.” Huy and others alike were conditioned on all aspects of their lives, concerning sleep, walking and eating. ⁷⁹

Indoctrination Camps for Children

Pol Pot in a 1977 speech aggrandized the revolutionary plausibility of the young: “youth is period of life in which there are very rapid changes. It is a time when consciousness is most receptive to revolution and when we are in full possession of our strengths. This then, is a general directive of our party. It is the youth of today who will take up the revolutionary tasks of tomorrow”.

⁸⁰ In the Southwest region, Van a survivor from Damban 35, noted that there were schools to train the young, but they were of the revolutionary nature. The schools personnel he believed were poor peasants, with minimal education. It was required in the region that all children over five years of age were to acquire basic literacy along with work education. ⁸¹ A surviving teenage girl, who was assigned the task of being a leader of a local mobile youth brigade stated that schools for children 6-7 did exist in Damban 3, practically in every cooperative, further noting those bad areas, although they were set up for basic literacy training, there was still little learning, due to life being too difficult in these bad areas. ⁸² Where living conditions were very bad, or where local cadres distorted the policy, such school may never have been organized. Some have noted that in Damban 4 there had been indoctrination centers largely for the indoctrination of primary school age children, but they refused to qualify them as schools, and claimed the children learned nothing. ⁸³ Although it has been noted that the achievements of these children were minimal, they were still treated better than the majority of the enslaved population, being issued extra food and drink rations, and favored treatment by the Khmer Rouge cadres. ⁸⁴ The Khmer Rouge cadres were most kind to those younger persons, as they believed that their minds were still blank, free for Khmer Rouge ideology to be imprinted upon. These children were to be the strength that would transform the once imperialist society into one promoting egalitarianism and selflessness. One survivor, Ke Munthit, remembers one child cadre beating his own mother, because she had stole a potato from the collective garden, proudly proclaiming that he was not beating his mother, but simply a thief. ⁸⁵ Children were central to the

⁷⁹ Huy, 1999-2009

⁸⁰ Pol Pot 1977:48-9

⁸¹ Vickery, 1984, pg96

⁸² Ibid, pg171

⁸³ Ibid, pg172

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Chuong, 1997-2007

new regime because they can be easily molded, indoctrinated and conditioned in Khmer Rouge policy.

Pupils were to study two-three hours daily and gain hands on experience at manual work while undergoing their studies roughly full-time.⁸⁶ More often in the better run areas; the children would be in basic school for the mornings, and then working the fields in the



afternoon. Refugee survivors have attributed this policy, and its adherence more specifically within those better run areas. These children were taught the basic tenets of communist theory, probably to serve as a base of their intelligence. Intimidation was widely used in these schools, as a way to scare the young underdeveloped minds into believing hate and murder was right as long as they are used to further the cause of the organization (Angkar) and the revolution. When Seath Teng attended a children's indoctrination camp, she was taught not to love or respect anybody besides the Khmer Rouge Government. If you were caught hugging or talking intimately with parents or friends, you would get a beating. For those who didn't see their parents did not have to worry as much. During their time in these camps they would rarely think of their family. Teng states, "At the reeducation meetings, I believed the Khmer rouge soldiers when they told us that our families did not love us".⁸⁷ For those who could see their parents were only allowed to see their parents once a month. Visitations were definitely supervised, no child, no mother could cry, show emotions of happiness.

These children were to believe that from the beginning of their lives, throughout their life in DK, that this totalitarian government is the right form of government. Pol Pot and others wanted to breed the ultimate loyal class. In Southwestern Cambodia, for example, teenagers who returning from two-to-three week political training sessions supposedly "were fierce in their condemnation of

⁸⁶ FBIS, April 18, 1977 & FBIS, May, 5, 1977

⁸⁷ Teng, 1997, pg158

old ways; rejected parental authority, were passionate in their loyalty to the state and party; were critical and contemptuous of customs; and had a militant attitude”⁸⁸ Dany Long, a young student in primary school under the Khmer Rouge, remembers, “that on the 17th of April, they would let us rest for one day so that we would remember this was the day we achieved victory over the Americans. This was also the day in which the Khmer Rouge entered and gained power and forced the people of Cambodia to suffer and nearly 2 million people to die”.⁸⁹ Sidney Liang recounts having been forced into adulthood at the young age of nine, “was extremely difficult”.⁹⁰ Every day the children’s work camp leader, would bring them to the work fields, supervise the children while they worked, i.e. collecting cow manure, watering plants and vegetables, from 6:30 am to 7 pm, bring these children back to their camps, to afterwards attend regularly scheduled meetings, which would carry on to 9 pm or so.⁹¹ Teeda Butt Mam remembers succinctly being told that her life was worth less than a grain of rice in a large pile, that the revolution could be successful with only two people, so in away, their lives had no incredible significance to the achievement of the goals as set out by the DK. They were consistently reminded that to keep them is no benefit; to destroy them is no lose.⁹²

The reception to these indoctrination camps depended on the teachers, regions, and the rewards for attending. In the Southwest propaganda meetings were usually happily attended by the participants that the peasant youth returned from these short training sessions bounteous of enthusiasm and optimism.⁹³ These children were imbued with the philosophy that a human workers sole function in a society is an “interchangeable part of a large collective entity”. Once this had been realized the new socialist individual would pass this new system onto their children, thus the new society would be institutionalized.⁹⁴ Children with moderate to high amounts of indoctrination education would be promoted to the position of cadre in their immediate locality. According to Shawcross, “the fanaticism and intolerance of the young were thus exploited in building a new society. Supervision of the collective farms was in their hands and often also an absolute power which could lead to random executions for the merest show of insubordination”.⁹⁵ At times it

⁸⁸ Quinn 1976, pg13

⁸⁹ Long, 1999-2009

⁹⁰ Liang, 1999-2009

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Mam, 1997, pg13

⁹³ Vickery, 1984, pg84

⁹⁴ Jackson, 1989, pg194

⁹⁵ Shawcross, 1979, pg17

appeared that no adults were running the camps, as there was an exorbitant amount of adolescent children working as cadres.

General Indoctrination Curricula

In the October 1976 edition of “Revolutionary Young Men and Women”, one of the leading Khmer Rouge propaganda magazines explained that “from the very beginning, the Party determined to take the work of political consciousness (satiaramma) as the most important work of all”.⁹⁶ Political consciousness, taken from Leninist voluntarism and the Maoist thought, was undertaken as the most important aspect of the DK party line.⁹⁷ To the Khmer Rouge, political consciousness was simply reached by the potential recruit when they could fully comprehend and understand the DK party line, as well that of the basic teachings of both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. If these revolutionary recruits were to familiarize themselves with the basic tenets relating to class struggle, traits, and contradictions, they then would be capable of, “mindfully scrutinize[ing] the thoughts and actions of themselves and others”.⁹⁸ The party’s intentions were to pinpoint certain individual characteristics, eliminate them, and build upon the remains: “we must rid in each party member, each cadre, everything that is of the oppressor class, of private property, of stance, view, sentiment, custom, literature, art which exists in ourselves, no matter how much or how little. As for construction, it is just the same: we must build a proletarian class worldview, proletarian class life; build a proletarian class stand regarding thinking in living habits, in morality, in sentiment, etc”.⁹⁹ Each recruit was to actively pursue their own development of their political consciousness; this involved personally ridding oneself of private property. There were five predominant learning points for each recruit to learn through indoctrination sessions, these were: abolishing individuality; new revolutionary language; the exploitation of the peasant by the oppressing wealthy class and imperialist; being self-reliant; and being loyal to Angkar.

Abolishing Individualism

Recruits were to be educated on Pol Pot’s and the top party cadre’s policies, which included abolishing all forms of individualism. Both Pot and Mao shared a similar stance on this impediment, and that was for full communism to preserve, individualism needs to be eliminated from the

⁹⁶ Revolutionary Young Men and Women, October 1976, pg I

⁹⁷ Hinton, 2005, pg194

⁹⁸ Ibid, pg196

⁹⁹ Jackson , 1989, pg273-74

collective Cambodian psyche.¹⁰⁰ A new socialist, revolutionary conscious appropriate individual would no longer think in lines of how to individually profit, but rather focus the brunt of their efforts on selflessness, demonstrated by dedicating their efforts to the collective well being. Selfish acts were seen as a major deviation from party line policy, which would result in severe punishment being inflicted or in worst instances, execution. The Four Year Plan demonstrates the party's intention to eradicate any possible opportunities for individual achievement. Abolishing individualism, and subsequent rewards, was needed in effectively creating an egalitarian cooperative. The Four Year Plan documents states, "In our educational system there are no examinations and no certificates; it is a system of learning through the collective and in the concrete movement of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism in the specific contexts, especially the co-operatives, factories, and military units."¹⁰¹ Having students do examinations, and being awarded certificates and diplomas, would have provided individuals with status of achievement, which inadvertently would promote competition. All efforts of the individual were to be to the benefit of the cooperative, and Angkar, there was no room for personal gain or achievements.

New Revolutionary Language

Khmer Rouge to accommodate their revolutionary ideology and knowledge transfer to the mass public naturally came with new words and jargon. This left largely those uneducated confused, struggling to define what these new words meant. Hoeung Yat, from Kompong Thom recalled that the new political vocabulary introduced by the Khmer Rouge seemed almost alien and confusing: "they would come and not do much but talk about feudalism and capitalism. I had never heard those words before and did not know what they meant. I asked the Red Khmers what the words meant but they did not tell me. Only that I was a capitalist because I sold goods in the market. And I asked my husband, "Hey what does this feudalism mean? And he said he didn't know. We didn't know what they were talking about".¹⁰²

The Oppressive Class

Khmer Rouge top party officials employed one common strategy to making this new revolution a success and that was to "make the masses "hot and angry" feelings that would

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Chandler et. al, 1988, pg114

¹⁰² Kiernan, 1993, pg42

ultimately be transformed into “class hatred” and “class fury”.¹⁰³ The Khmer Rouge would instill in their recruitment pool “anger and resentment a common ideological focus (class struggle) and target (the oppressor classes)”.¹⁰⁴ This was largely done through propaganda sessions. The political education each recruit was exposed to, coupled with this class hatred, “lead the revolution to victory over this enemy”.¹⁰⁵ First off, the recruits were heavily exposed to a mixture of Marxist-Leninist theories, which suggestively states that the poor (workers) were being exploited by the oppressing class, that which the Khmer Rouge considers, imperialists, feudalists, and capitalists, in Kampuchea particularly would be that of the Lon Nol regime, the city people, and Lon Nol’s.¹⁰⁶ Many Cambodians felt as if they were stepped on and dominated by the rich and powerful further proving submission under the oppressors aforementioned. They used the universal language of exploitation to build up the recruit’s revolutionary consciousness. Before indoctrination sessions, more in the pre-revolution phases, the Khmer Rouge party would use simple sayings, refrains, and leaflets to provide a “rudimentary class explanation for this sense of oppression; thus one pre-DK propaganda leaflet explained that capitalists “live in affluence at the expense of the working class and the masses, “ who live in misery, bled by them”.¹⁰⁷

An August 1973 copy of the Revolutionary Young Men and Women claimed that “human society is divided into the oppressor class and the oppressed”.¹⁰⁸ These early indoctrination sessions were relatively effective, as the Khmer youth upon receipt of this information began to brew rage and hatred for those Imperialist and class oppressors. The Khmer Rouge regime was successful in their attempts at turning the ignorant, untainted Khmer youth, into individuals filled with burning moral hate, looking for the opportunity to avenge, and recover their loss of face. At political education seminars Khmer youth recruits would “study a number of documents, including ones on “Class struggle” and “Revolutionary hate”.¹⁰⁹ This instruction would be complimented with criticism and self-criticism sessions where Khmer recruits answers and self-criticisms were monitored, cadres were assessing these recruits on their “state of morale and feeling”.¹¹⁰ Hinton states that in addition to explicit discussions, “revolutionary meetings included artistic performances and even the attending of funerals that were designed to foment “revolutionary violence” so that the

¹⁰³ Hinton, 2005, pg52

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pg59

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Carney, 1977, pg30

¹⁰⁷ Kiernan, 1985, pg231-2

¹⁰⁸ Carney, 1977, pg30

¹⁰⁹ Hinton, 2005, pg73

¹¹⁰ Ibid

attendees “burned” with hatred toward the enemy”.¹¹¹ These artistic performances usually consisted of dances and songs which were heavily saturated with “violent, harsh and militaristic demeanor and violent imagery”.¹¹² Haing Ngor, recalls that at the conclusion of one propaganda performance, these costumed cadres, wore red headbands and red karma sashes around their waists, eventually forming a line shouting this: “blood avenges blood!”

“Blood avenges blood” at the top of their lungs. Both times when they said the word “blood” they pounded their chests with clenched fists, and when they shouted “avenges” they brought their arms straight out like a Nazi salute, except with a closed fist instead of an open hand. “Blood avenges blood!” the cadres repeated with fierce, determined faces, thumping their fists on their hearts and raising their fists. They shouted other revolutionary slogans and gave the salutes and finally ended with “long live the Cambodian Revolution!”. It was a dramatic performance and it left us scared. In our language, “blood” has its ordinary meaning, the red liquid in the body, and another meaning of kinship or family. Blood avenges blood. You kill us, we kill you. We “new” people had been on the other side of the Khmer Rouge in the civil war. Soldiers of the Lon Nol regime, with the help of American weapons and planes, had killed many tens of thousands of Khmer Rouge in battle. Symbolically, the Khmer Rouge had just announced that they were going to take revenge.¹¹³

Loudspeakers would be set up in the camps which would continuously play revolutionary songs and music at the loudest of volumes. Shortly after the war, the Khmer Rouge had made numerous of early attempts to turn this revolutionary hatred of the newly transformed recruit into wanting to enact brutality on the enemy, which is evident through this children’s song:

Baribo village sheds it tears;
The enemy dropped bombs and staged a coup.
The screams of a combatant; friend, where are you?
The hated enemy killed my friend.
When you died away, friend, you were still naked,
Chest and stomach asunder, liver and spleen gone,
You floated them away like a rivers current,
Removal of liver and spleen is cause for sadness.
The rice lands of my mother are far in the distance.
The sun slants over the green hills.
When you died away, friend, you remind me
That the hated enemy had swallow Cambodia.¹¹⁴

It was even noted as the ninth of the fifteen Khmer Rouge revolutionary precepts, that revolutionary conscious Khmers “must maintain a burning rage toward the enemy”.¹¹⁵ Khel said

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Ibid, pg83

¹¹³ Haing Ngor, 1987, pg140

¹¹⁴ Kiernan, 1996, pg422

that Khmer political education sessions, “consisted of telling us to be seized with painful anger against the oppressor class. They spoke about this all the time”.¹¹⁶ The Khmer Rouge were successful at inflaming this class resentment into turning the indoctrinated individual into feeling a tendency to hate, and want to “eat the flesh and sip the blood” of their enemy. Another survivor, Lor, stated that during these sessions they were informed that, “poor were poor because of the rich and the rich were rich because of the poor, they wanted us to become seized with painful anger, about this exploitation, to hate and fight bravely against the capitalist, feudal, and landlord class, the rich big people who harmed the poor”.¹¹⁷ Some cadres and indoctrination teachers would use this saying to inflame anger in the peasants, “trees in the country, fruit in the town”. In a July 1977 issue of Revolutionary Flags, it is stated that Khmer recruits and cadres were to have political consciousness that encompassed these three elements which constitutes the basis of the daily fighting spirit:

1. A constantly burning rage for the enemy.
2. An extremely deep revolutionary sentiment toward the oppressed classes.
3. A strong spirit of love for the nation, revolution, collective, and Party.¹¹⁸

Cadres were expected by higher party members to consistently emphasize in their own political instruction to recruits and trainees the concept of “oppression”. Further, on March 1976, the Party leaders had given authorization to those Khmer Rouge cadres to use violence in smashing people both inside and outside the revolutionary ranks.¹¹⁹ Thach Diem who joined the Khmer Rouge in 1970, said “they also spoke in depth about one political aspect concerning exploitation. They said, I have anger against the capitalists and American imperialists, for example, they said that the capitalist and imperialist method was to oppress the people to mistreat the people, to draw blood from the people. That was what they talked about first of all”.¹²⁰ These relentless pursuits to instill hatred and fear through their propaganda certainly helped in ensuring that child soldiers were desensitized to violence. Children were lead to believe that the city people were imperialists who were reluctant to join the revolution, thus they deserved to get smashed.

¹¹⁵ Ith Sarin, 1973, pg63

¹¹⁶ Hinton, 2005, pg74

¹¹⁷ Hinton, 2005, pg75

¹¹⁸ Revolutionary Flags, July 1977, pg21-22

¹¹⁹ Hinton, 2005, pg87

¹²⁰ Kiernan, 1993, pg22

Self-Reliance

Becoming self-reliant and self-sufficient was a central notion of the Khmer Rouge ideology being taught to the general populace, greater emphasis to the poor and the young. The idea here was that the ideal Khmer should do everything on their own, so speak, building this new society without a model, Pot later claimed, “We are building socialism without a model. We do not wish to copy anyone”.¹²¹ To rid them of western influenced education, and develop their own curriculum, self reliant, in this respect the Khmer Rouge were in fact on course of achieving their policy. In 1978, Pol Pot had said, “There are no schools, faculties or universities in the traditional sense ... because we wish to do away with all vestiges of the past”.¹²² Khieu Samphan had asserted in the past, that the old regime (Sihaonuk’s Government) was inefficient in properly educating the students at all levels because they were not in receipt of education about ‘true natural sciences’. These students, Samphan would suggest, knew nothing about how rice was to be sown or transplanted, thus resulting in the student being completely out of touch with reality. Samphan states, “Everything was done according to foreign books and foreign standards. Therefore, it was useless and could not serve the needs of our people, nor could it be of any help in building our nation”.¹²³ This ideology resulted in the overall rejection of all former education, culminating in a new system of education, with communist roots.

Haing Ngor, considered as a “new” person under the Khmer Rouge, says that indoctrination sessions were largely promoting reasons why the new regime should avoid foreign dependency, resorting in the need for all to follow the DK policy of independence-mastery, “the key concept for the new society, as we were told all the time in propaganda sessions, was “independence-mastery. One word made out of two, independence-mastery. For Democratic Kampuchea, this meant being absolutely free of other countries-free of their aid and even of their cultural influence. We Khmers would make it on our own. By reorganizing and harnessing the energy of our people and by eliminating everything that distracted from our work, we would become an advanced, developed, nation almost overnight”.¹²⁴

A circulated party document in September 1975, suggests that the Khmer Rouge’s intention was not to reject education all together. This document had outlined that regions were establishing

¹²¹ Stanic, 1978, pg67

¹²² Stanic, 1978, pg67

¹²³ Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Reports, 18 April 1977, H6.

¹²⁴ Haing Ngor, 1987, pg197

new schools gradually. Further this document suggested for students to attend part-time schooling, a school day ending at noon, produces great results. Ayers believes that in this document the party proposes, “that the state must organize to have exercise books and pencils for schools' and that 'later on' expert teachers would be needed, but they would have 'to educate themselves among the people's movement first’”.¹²⁵ The documents allude to the fact that a new education system was in some respects being successfully created in the new nation. Being self-reliant also extended to replace machines and technical devices with the strength and device of the human worker. Khieu Samphan said, “Have these achievements been made possible by machines? No we have no machines. We do everything by mainly relying on the strength of our people. We work completely self reliantly. This shows the overwhelming heroism of our people. Through barehanded they can do everything’”.¹²⁶

Loyal to the party (Angkar)

Angkar was the key symbol of the new regime, which according to Hinton, “constitutes a Khmer Rouge ideology palimpsest linking high-modernist thought, communist ideology, and local understandings to idealize a new potent center’”.¹²⁷ Throughout several of the radio broadcasts, everyday discourses, and speeches, Angkar was created as an imageless entity, which people were encouraged to believe in, ultimately love. In ideology training sessions, recruits were told that Angkar had provided for the people and was master of the land and earth.¹²⁸ This constant reminder of Angkar being an entity to be looked up to made Angkar as if it were an omniscient and omnipotent impact on everyone’s minds.¹²⁹ Angkar was portrayed through propaganda as the “unassailable deity” responsible for bringing food and clothing to the people, satisfying every individuals needs.¹³⁰ Recruits and revolutionary trainees were told that “Angkar has the eyes of a pineapple”, thus Angkar knew everyone’s actions, always watching, as a way to constantly remind the recruits that they were always being watched so they had to be careful of how they behave. If Angkar was known as the revolutionaries itself, then Angkar was in fact always watching, as all revolutionaries were required to spy on their peers to ensure their actions are proper and obediently aligned with party policies. Commitment to maintaining family, and religious relationships were to be redirected to Angkar. Both family and religion were seen by the Khmer Rouge as alternative sources to loyalty, and potentially influential to those Khmer youth the Khmer Rouge were

¹²⁵ Kiernan, 1996, pg 56

¹²⁶ FBIS, IV, April 18, 1977:H5

¹²⁷ Hinton, 2005, pg 127

¹²⁸ Ibid, pg128

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Ibid

attempting to indoctrinate. Children and youth were taught that they should be loyal to the party, not their families. A teacher who had taught the children of party cadres in Phnom Penh had reported that these children underwent intensive ideological training. That their teaching in particular was provided by Angkar and they should show appreciation to Angkar by adhering to the party's policies. Luong Ung, a child at the time, had unwillingly attended a children's camp and training camp, recalling that the Khmer Rouge cadres/ teachers, would "incessantly lecture children about their duty to Angkar and their preeminent role in the revolution:

"Your number one duty is to Angkar... You are the children of the Angkar! In you lies our future. The Angkar knows you are pure in the heart, uncorrupted by evil influences, still able to learn the ways of the Angkar! That is why the Angkar loves you above all else. That is why the Angkar gives you so much power. You are our survivors".¹³¹

Children were expected as a result of being indoctrinated to be loyal to their new parent, Angkar, by following orders with no hesitation, spy on others, and report on those traitorous actions of anyone including family members.¹³² For those recently indoctrinated cadres and soldiers, the Khmer Rouge attempted to gear their education sessions around the importance of becoming dependent upon Angkar. Angkar was responsible for providing rank, prestige, guns and food to those revolutionary competent cadres who were well deserving of promotion of status in this new regime. Since many Khmer Rouge cadres were not well rewarded in pre-revolution years, as many were poor, they appreciated the opportunity for social approval and being rewarded, which was a solemn promise conveyed throughout the party lines and propaganda. Khel, previously mentioned, speaks of his past relationship with a fellow "old" person during Democratic Kampuchea, who had told Khel of his new commitment to Angkar: "Angkar was the one who had done the greatest kindness for them, not their parents....so they should do anything for the revolutionary party. If Angkar pointed out a traitor, they should dare to destroy that person without hesitation, even if the traitor was their mother or father."¹³³ Being loyal, and demonstrating this, would suggest one had a progressive revolutionary consciousness further according them greater honor and status in the DK.

An article in the May 1977 issue of Revolutionary Young Men and Women, had a section titled, "But what does being truly loyal mean?" The article outlines four instrumental qualities of a loyal recruit:

¹³¹ Marston 1994, pg110 & Shapiro, 1996, pg2

¹³² Hinton, 2005, pg131

¹³³ Ibid

1. One must be completely loyal to every aspect of the party's political line, consciousness line, and organizational line, all the time....
2. One must always execute every aspect of the party line accurately...
3. One must struggle to defend the party line so that it is always accurate and pure. Thus, the Revolutionary Young Men and Women must not only work hard to execute the line accurately, but also to always observe and obey the application of the party line at every place.....
4. One must struggle to clean up hidden enemies burrowing from within and to purify various bad compositions so that they are completely gone, cleansed from inside the ranks of our revolution, Party, and revolutionary youth. Any place in which there are hidden enemies burrowing or various bad compositions in the ranks of the party.....Thus it is necessary for our revolutionary young men and women to join together to struggle to clean up hidden enemies burrowing from within the and various groups whose composition isn't good order to completely cleanse them from inside the ranks of our party, our Revolutionary young men and women, our revolution, our people.¹³⁴

Khmer Rouge: Development

To assist the recruits, and active cadres, the party employed a variable of mediums to reach and inadvertently build their political consciousness by subjecting them to mandatory meetings, radio broadcasts, studying short documents, word of mouth (discourse between two or more individuals) and from vigorously studying both regional and sector documents. These studies could be a half a day, one day or even a couple of days, it all depended on the situation, and environment i.e. regions.¹³⁵ Personal development of the recruit was of the most essential importance to the Khmer Rouge. This was largely done through these five development programs: hands on work experience; autobiographies; school of cruelty; public meetings, and self-criticism/criticism sessions.

Practical Work Experience

Training was largely undertaken in the form of hands on practical work experience. A DK broadcast in April 1978, set out the formal structure as approved by top DK cadres on party building. First was to identify those eligible recruits. Second, was to give them minor responsibilities in their respective cooperative as a way for the recruit to develop both work and leadership experience. This also acted as a selection tool in a way, because this preparation would be closely monitored much like a test, failing the test would result in the candidate no longer being eligible for party comradeship. One way the Khmer Rouge cadres would filter out the weak workers,

¹³⁴ Revolutionary Young Men and Women, May, 1977

¹³⁵ Revolutionary Flags, March 1978

was that they would move large groups of workers around in the fields and woods, according to Mam, to purposely disorient them in a way to gather complete control.¹³⁶

They did this to get rid of the useless people, those especially who were too weak to work. This was an important part of their training cycle for potential cadre candidates. They were filtering out the right candidates to be part of their organization; to the Khmer Rouge this is nothing but an intense training exercise. For the ones who demonstrated hard work, the Khmer cadres would note this and recommend these selected few to mid-cadre level leaders that certain workers should be considered for promotion to the party leadership ranks. When it came to work, the informal rule was of course, that repeated criticism led to execution. New people and other suspect groups were given the



opportunity to prove themselves worthy of a position in the new regime by “performing types of manual labor associated with the “worker-peasant” class.¹³⁷ According to Hinton, “The virtue of education through hard work was extolled through slogans, many adapted from Maoist discourse, such as “our school is our farm. The land is our paper. The plow is our pen”.¹³⁸ Under the Khmer Rouge, “the way one performed ones duty was particularly salient, since one was displaying signs of a proper revolutionary consciousness. One of the best ways to demonstrate the right attitude was to perform ones duties in an enthusiastic, wholehearted, and unquestioning manner”.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Mam, 1997, pg13

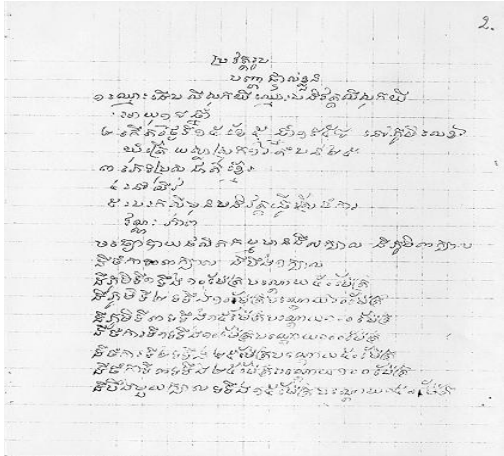
¹³⁷ Hinton, 2005, pg198

¹³⁸ Ngor, 1987, pg139

¹³⁹ Hinton, 2005, pg268

Autobiographies

Much like criticism sessions, autobiographies were to be compiled in recruit's respective cooperative. These were to be used to both help the recruit/cadre build their revolutionary/political consciousness, and to help the cadres responsible for reviewing these autobiographies to infer as



much as possible about the autobiographers class background.¹⁴⁰ For cadres themselves, completing autobiographies was a regular process, which was “more formal and crucial to one’s career”.¹⁴¹ It was mandatory for anyone new joining the party, to complete a dozen pages or so biographical questionnaire. This questionnaire was divided into seven sections, which required the individual to list information about their spouse, children, parents, siblings, close friends and social environment.¹⁴²

This questionnaire did provide space for the respondent to list names, occupations, class, and revolutionary background of these aforementioned peers of the respondent. The questions were to ascertain a candidate’s class status, history of associations, and the respondent’s state of consciousness. These questionnaires would ask the respondents previous work experience, as a way to determine prior class status. Other questions would attempt to determine the respondent’s current revolutionary status by asking about their length of revolutionary service, previous membership in other revolutionary organizations, educational background, positions and ranks and history of revolutionary activity, i.e. Where did they join, when, did anyone recommend the party to you?¹⁴³ In regards to self-scrutiny, the respondent was to answer questions about how they perceive their own character: “How clearly do you know your character? To what level? How well do you know your strengths and weaknesses? How have you changed your non-revolutionary character and weaknesses? These responses were typically organized to record the respondent’s pre-revolutionary and revolution strengths, weaknesses and intent to direct change in their lives to be in compliance with Khmer Rouge values.¹⁴⁴ Cadres would try to emulate those best practices suggested by the party line, by attempting to display those “verbal and behavioral cues” that signifies proper revolutionary consciousness, because this public display and ultimate personal evaluation would

¹⁴⁰ Ly Y, 2000, pg25-27

¹⁴¹ Hinton, 2005, pg198

¹⁴² Ibid, pg199]

¹⁴³ Hinton, 2005, pg199

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pg201

determine their social standing as well odds of survival in the new regime.¹⁴⁵ To ensure one's acceptance and survival in the DK, the respondent, according to Hinton had to "carefully balance ones strengths and weaknesses, while asserting the potential of ones revolutionary consciousness".¹⁴⁶ Much like criticism sessions, writing ones biography was a dangerous business, which required the participant to use undetectable deception when providing their answers.

School of Cruelty

The Khmer Rouge would subject the potential recruits, to witnessing acts of terror and extreme violence. Roem Sam, a surviving refugee, recalls having to watch the torture of two prisoners. She was told to sit directly in front of the prisoners and make eye contact. Angkar said, "If anyone cries or shows empathy or compassion for this person, they will be punished by receiving the same treatment".¹⁴⁷ One of the prisoners was asked to confess their crimes. The prisoner refuted the claims of his guilt. The prisoner screamed at them "you kill people without reason. This is injustice". One of the Khmer soldiers smashed him in the back of the head sending him face forward into the mud. Angkar, she remembers, cut the man from his breastbone to his stomach, and then removed his organs. Sam was shocked, as if she was struck herself, by the butt of the soldier's gun. The soldier that cut this man open, tied his organs with barbed wire, attached the opposite end of the wire to his bicycle's handle bars, got on his bike and rode away, leaving behind a bloody trail.¹⁴⁸ Angkar announced over his microphone "all girls and boys, you have seen with your own eyes, if someone feels compassion or sympathy for the enemy that has just died then you will be punished just like him". Roem felt as if she was now not only a prisoner in the physical form, but as well in her mind.

Both Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, rigorously believed that by training the countries young recruits in cruel games, they wouldn't end up becoming soldiers/cadres who would not be compassionate, and loving for their fellow man, but would love killing and participating in cruel warfare. King Sihanouk had recorded that the time spent with the Khmer Rouge while under KR guarded house arrest, "I saw those guarding my camp constantly take pleasure in tormenting animals. The Khmer Rouge loved to make their victims suffers as much as possible."¹⁴⁹ Torture games, were noted as being the cadres principle training tool, as it was believed that when young recruits were killing

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, pg203]

¹⁴⁷ Sam, 1997, pg76

¹⁴⁸ Sam, 1997, pg76

¹⁴⁹ Sihanouk 1980, 27-30

dogs, cats and other animals savagely with clubs and bayonets, they were in fact hardening their minds and hearts.¹⁵⁰ Little animals were only the start, it was now time for the recruits to prove themselves, by demonstrating their cruelty and disregard towards human subjects. Some Khmer recruits were to prove themselves by cutting the breasts off well endowed Vietnamese woman, others were to do other cruel acts such as cutting unborn babies from those pregnant Vietnamese enemies, and upon doing so they would slap the dead fetus across the mothers face. Much like an American medical student being trained in surgery by operating on human cadavers, Khmer cadets would practice their task of cruelty by dissecting the human form.¹⁵¹ Seath Teng revisits a specific moment that changed her childhood. The only time she claims, children would get time off from school or fieldwork practice is to watch someone get killed. Teng remembers a day where she was working in the cooperatives vegetable garden pulling weeds. She heard a whistle blow, which was to acquire the immediate attention of workers both young and old, and they were to return to the cooperative. They were to go to a meeting immediately to see the punishment of a traitor. The children were placed in front of the victim, so they could get a close look at what was going to happen. In the center of the gathering spot was one woman who had both of her hands tied behind her back. She was pregnant, and her stomach bulged out. Standing to the side of her was a little boy who was about six years old and holding an ax. In the child's shrilled voice, he yelled for all of the other children to watch what he was going to do. Teng said the boy threatened that if they did not look, they would get similar treatment next. Teng, a child still herself, says of this boy, "that the little boy was like a demon from hell. His eyes were red and he didn't look human at all".¹⁵² This boy used the back of the ax and smashed it hard into the poor pregnant woman's body until she dropped to the ground, and did so continuously until he was too tired to continue wielding the ax. This proves just how effective the Khmer Rouge indoctrination sessions were on those of the youngest age groups.

Public Meetings

Status was often displayed here, as all the revolutionary participants in the crowd were expected to praise the revolution, and their local cadres respectively. Here they would together, sing revolutionary songs, chant slogans. A Khmer Rouge song, called "The Motherland of Kampuchea", accomplished stirring up American Imperialist resentment amongst the populace, "The American

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pg 83-84

¹⁵¹ Jackson, 1989, pg238

¹⁵² Teng, 1997, pg158

imperialist and their lackeys. Their lackeys owe us blood as hot as fire. The hot and angry war ensured that Kampuchea will never forget the enmity. Will not forget the severe oppression. Seize hold of guns to kill the enemy quickly“.¹⁵³

**A Khmer Rouge Song:
“We the Youth are Committed to Following Revolutionary Kampuchea Forever”**

After one thousand years the mighty Kampuchea has now liberated the people held in darkness, men and women have been liberated completely. Because the revolutionary Kampuchean Angkar is robust, it has led us to persevere together to fight against the evil capitalist regime. To indoctrinate the ideology of the great revolution; the political consciousness of Angkar’s strategy; with sturdy hands in every respect. Revolutionary Angkar understands and knows clearly the friend and enemy; knows good and bad, knows wrong and right; revolution reveals the great prosperous road. Furthermore, Angkar has torched the blazing hot fire in which to battle, to fight the capitalists until it collapses; its servants big and small are to be destroyed completely. The successful fallen year is continued by Angkar; to indoctrinate and solidify; the revolution is prepared to fight. Be careful, do not be careless, you must be precise; support the working class; everyone must be committed forever. Angkar raise self reliance is good in every respect; self supporting self and the people; our high honor is above servant status. The economic road is developed successfully for double effectiveness; an agricultural foundation is thoroughly successful, abundant fish and fish products build a new Cambodia. The road of revolutionary Angkar has a glorious light; it liberated us to a bright road and sacrificed lives for. The youth are committed forever to following the people’s Angkar; in the successful direction of revolution. The great strategy is to collectively protect and build a peaceful Cambodia; abundance and prosperity forever.¹⁵⁴

Refugees generally described these regular cooperative meetings as “devoted to planning agricultural tasks or harping on themes related to security or the improved situation over the old society, a more systematic approach aimed for meetings every month”.¹⁵⁵ The assembled mass would listen to their local cadres promoting the Revolutionary successes and advancements of DK under an able and progressive leadership and party center. The masses were expected to fully participate, despite exhaustion brought on by the long work day; they were to enthusiastically applaud each cadre’s every sentence. This would symbolize to cadres keeping eye on the workers, who was being fully attentive, thus could prevent someone from being considered as an enemy.¹⁵⁶ Both new and old people were required to frequently attend these public meetings. Most often the theme would constitute the local cadres telling them that they “should love the party and obey its

¹⁵³ Kiernan, 1996, pg248

¹⁵⁴ Keo, undated

¹⁵⁵ Jackson, 1989, pg87

¹⁵⁶ Hinton, 2005

directive without question”.¹⁵⁷ Sometimes local cadres would discuss the Vietnamese and their intent to take over Cambodian soil. They would discuss enemies that are still amongst the populace, Vietnamese Hanoi-Communists, or ex -Lon Nol government officials. Village chiefs talked about the work that needed to be done in order to eliminate the party’s enemies. Certain regional cadres would use this time with their cooperative to ask the people whether or not they were getting enough food: no one would dare to complain. Cadres would further use this opportunity to increase intimidation, often widely announcing, ““to keep you is no profit, to destroy you is no loss”, that made everyone scared into complete submission to Angkar.¹⁵⁸ Some have recounted that most who attended these meetings were many who were just too terrified to even move an inch from their listening spot. When Kampuchians were not in the fields working, they were being lectured by Khmer Rouge cadres in frequent “livelihood meetings”. Corvin suggests that these meetings held a dual purpose, “First, they served as propaganda sessions where people could be indoctrinated into Angkar’s communist ideals. Second, the meetings were opportunities for people to confess their past political and ideological sins, as well as to rat out fellow Cambodians”.¹⁵⁹ Ong Thong Hoeung recalls, “Unfortunately, many Cambodians saw these livelihood meetings as opportunities to confess their pasts and be redeemed in the eyes of the Khmer Rouge, not unlike people confessing to a priest at a Christian church. If they confessed, they were rewarded by applause and praise, perhaps an embrace from the Khmer Rouge cadres in attendance.¹⁶⁰ Sokha informs Sour in her interview, that “after work, we met in a meeting to assess the progress of the jobs. Comrades who failed to achieve their tasks had to present their reasons. As a chief, I had to write a summary of the meeting's discussion. Say, for example, this comrade has done this much today and spoke in a polite way, so he or she was given a score. Furthermore, the meeting set new tasks for everyone—harvesting rice or other tasks informed to me to tell them. We did only that much everyday and nothing else”.¹⁶¹

Self-Criticism / Criticism Sessions

Before undergoing the processes involved in publicly criticizing oneself in ones cooperative, it was mandatory that each recruit, cadre, answer a biographical questionnaire that was supposed to provide one early insight on how to effectively, and regularly “enable a person to scrutinize his or

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, pg19

¹⁵⁸ Hinton, 2005, pg19

¹⁵⁹ Corvin. a. 1999

¹⁶⁰ Corvin .b. 1999

¹⁶¹ Sour, 1999-2009

her thoughts and behaviors”.¹⁶² A senior aide to Ieng Sary, the DK Foreign Minister, kept a notebook where he attempted to record the self-criticisms made by Comrade Dean, “who admitted to shortcomings in his consciousness”, such as still having feelings and a deep attachment to his family, and wishes to acquire more private property, believing that he still behaves in ways that are not in conformity with the DK party line, i.e. behaving impolite and badly towards others.¹⁶³ It was the responsibility of the on lookers to recognize and distinguish the self-criticizers wholesome and unwholesome thoughts and behaviors, and to effectively point them out, during the feedback sessions. Local cadres would be on the look out for any regressive consciousness traits, for example, when they are publicly self-criticizing themselves, if they were to simply dwell on the past (this would symbolize that the speaker still retains some capitalist (attitudes), or if they the used foreign words (listeners would be able to infer that the speaker was educated under an imperialist system). Laurence Picq further expands upon this argument by illustrating his experience in both criticism and self-criticism sessions acted which further acted as the arena for where revolutionary development and progress could be demonstrated to those top cadres:

Criticism sessions intensified at the rate of two nights per week. During these meetings, it seemed that each person’s past, far from being a tapestry of complex motives, could be reduced to a straight line pointing inevitably toward either service to the party of treason. The most harmless facts now assumed high political significance. A lack of speed in executing a task demonstrated a sabotage mentality. Zeal was an undeniable sign of longing for power. Thought has a much value as action. To be on the right track, one had to imbue oneself with the ideas of the party in such a way that the mind was perpetually mobilized to the party’s service, without hesitation and without wasting time, like a machine. In terms of discipline, I have some shortcomings”, one heard. “I didn’t listen to the radio transmissions with all the required concentration.” (Listening to the radio had become obligatory; each of us had to pay close attention to the broadcasts so as to be able to comment on them later). Or, “I urinated outside the manure bin...” Listening to these accounts of facts and signals, people search for signs of weakness. Language was analyzed and psychoanalyzed. Each of the mistaken actions underwent interpretation. One bulletin badly stapled, printed, or typed became an indicator – if not actual proof – of secret conspiracies”.¹⁶⁴

Vaen Kheuan recalls how it was simple to fashion ones life history, but it was much more difficult during criticism sessions, because most people did not know what was going to be said about them, or how they would receive this criticism.¹⁶⁵ These sessions were the ultimate performance area for those being watched to fully show Khmer Rouge ideology understanding and

¹⁶² Hinton, 2005, pg198

¹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁶⁴ Picq, 1989, pg107-8

¹⁶⁵ Yathay, 1987, pg114

to emulate those KR desired best practices. The conscientious practice of self-criticism acted as a ruthless exposure to the individual criticizers own shortcomings. Criticism and self-criticism is part of the Marxist-Leninist arsenal, which works to filter out the good of leadership and conduct, neglecting the bad styles. ¹⁶⁶ Self-criticism was established as a crucial military and political training and development tool to enable communist cadres to learn from their mishaps. On January 8th, 1967, Mao Zedong stated in the CCP party run newspaper, “The People’s Daily”, urging on all local government leaders to rise in self-criticism, and or criticize and purge others. ¹⁶⁷

If we have shortcomings, we are not afraid to have them pointed out and criticized, because we serve the people. Anyone, no matter who, may point out our shortcomings. If he is right, we will correct them. If what he proposes will benefit the people, we will act upon it”. ¹⁶⁸ As we say, dust will accumulate if a room is not cleaned regularly, our faces will get dirty if they are not washed regularly. Our comrades' minds and our Party's work may also collect dust, and also need sweeping and washing. The proverb "Running water is never stale and a door-hinge is never worm-eaten" means that constant motion prevents the inroads of germs and other organisms. To check up regularly on our work and in the process develop a democratic style of work. ¹⁶⁹

Under totalitarian communist regimes self-criticism acted as both a leadership development and accountability tool. For example, Mao Zedong after his failed Great Leap Forward, Mao had filed a self-criticism report in 1962 outlining his wrongs in the matter. ¹⁷⁰ “The chaos caused was on a grand scale and I take responsibility” ¹⁷¹ One of Mao’s major problems with seeing that the Great leap forward becomes a success was that, “Comrade Mao Zedong and many leading comrades, both at the center and in the localities, were impatient for quick results and overestimated the role of man’s subjective will and efforts” ¹⁷² In December 18th, 1978, Hua Guofeng, then Communist Party Chairman, Mao’s successor, also engaged in self criticism, ridiculing his own “Two Whatever’s” policy. This was largely just a statement made by Guofeng suggesting, “We will resolutely uphold whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made, and unswervingly follow whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”. ¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ Zedong, 1949, pg374

¹⁶⁷ Yan, 1996

¹⁶⁸ Zedong, 1941, pg227

¹⁶⁹ Zedong, 1945, pg316

¹⁷⁰ Harry, 1987

¹⁷¹ Schram, 1974, pg146

¹⁷² Womack, 1986, pg26

¹⁷³ Guofeng, 1977

Joseph Stalin believed that self-criticism was needed and required of those after they assume power. That some may fail to perceive their own flaws and weaknesses, which inadvertently make things easier for the enemy. Further that the purpose of self-criticizing is to “disclose and eliminate our errors and weaknesses”.¹⁷⁴ Lenin wrote in April-May 1920 in his pamphlet, “Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder”, that “there is only one conclusion: that without self-criticism there can be no proper education of the Party, the class, and the masses; and that without proper education of the Party, the class, and the masses, there can be no Bolshevism”.¹⁷⁵ Some alluded to the assumption that with self-criticism, there is no longer leadership needed, that we can just let things take their naturally destined course. Stalin suggests that self-criticism is “needed not in order to relax leadership, but to strengthen it, in order to convert it from leadership on paper and of little authority into vigorous and really authoritative leadership”.¹⁷⁶

Nor can it be denied that, as a result of self-criticism our business executives are beginning to smarten up, to become more vigilant, to approach questions of economic leadership more seriously, while our Party, Soviet, trade-union and all other personnel are becoming more sensitive and responsive to the requirements of the masses. [Stalin, 1954, pg141] Is it so hard to understand that we need self-criticism not for the sake of a witch-hunt against our economic cadres, but in order to improve and perfect them?¹⁷⁷

After being subject to having read documents about “Class struggle” and “Revolutionary hate”, new recruits were expected to afterwards partake in self-criticism sessions, “where they would be assessed in terms of their state of morale and feelings” and understanding of these aforementioned mandatory reading documents.¹⁷⁸ Phelim Kyne and Vong Sokheng in 2001 had interviewed a survivor of the infamous Cambodian Boeung Trabek Re-education camp, Senator Keo Bunthouk, about life and death in this rehabilitation center. When asked what life was like in Boeung Trabek, “we worked hard and didn’t eat well...there were daily sessions of criticism and self-criticism”.¹⁷⁹ Criticism was part of the formula of full recovery to those who were bourgeoisie, city people. New leaders and leaders who represented the old were trained to criticize others as well themselves.

Teeda Butt Mam, recalls, that she was once a talkative and free speaker. As a result of being subjugated to Khmer Rouge criticism sessions, “I had become wary and silent...I mentally reviewed everything before I spoke. It was best to play dumb. I tried never to stand out except by working

¹⁷⁴ Stalin, 1954

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, pg144

¹⁷⁸ Hinton, 2005, pg73

¹⁷⁹ Kyne & Sokheng, 2001

extra hard. Whenever I was asked a question, I answered, I don't know".¹⁸⁰ Everyone worked their hardest to identify others faults, which left most in a state of fear and anxiety. Social evaluations under the DK were almost a constant ebb and flow. Evaluations that were positive could result in the person procuring a better position/rank, extra food, and as well other beneficial advantages. Cadets could negotiate their status by partaken in criticism and self-criticism sessions. According to Hinton, "at the same time as Cadres illustrated their mindfulness and standing as progressive revolutionaries, they were also making a statement about their entitlement to a certain degree of face and honor. Not surprisingly, life histories and criticism and self-criticism sessions touched on topics such as carrying out ones duty and devotion to the Democratic Kampuchea party line".¹⁸¹ One could fabricate and alter ones life history, but the stakes were higher during criticism and self-criticism sessions, since the participant never knew what might be said about them or how their own words maybe manipulated and perceived by their peers. Here every facial twitch is monitored by gun holding Khmer Rouge. Although an alert individual recognizes their faults, strong criticism could result in shame and a loss of face.¹⁸²

Everyone was expected to attend these criticism and self-criticism sessions, including those in the higher ranks for example, the Chief Jailer, of S-21, Kaing Guek Eav (Duch). Duch admitted in March 2009, for being indirectly responsible for overseeing the execution of 15,000 Cambodians, who came through the Tuol Sleng prison. A former prison guard who worked under Duch informed the UN War Crimes Court, that he and others were forced to attend self-criticism sessions in order to improve their overall effectiveness while working for Duch. The guard, Chan Khorn said, he was so terrified of Duch that he "could not look him in the face" when he worked under him at the Communist movement's M-13 prison in the early 1970s.¹⁸³ Duch frequently warned his comrades if they did not regularly attend these sessions (a part of their job description) then they would be punished for not complying with their allocated job duties. Khorn further said to the UN War Crimes Tribunal that, "No one would dare criticize (Duch), because he was the most important chairperson of the place, who would risk criticizing him?"¹⁸⁴ Purges often came about after criticizing one leader's policy. Self-criticism is strongly correlated with a range of psychopathologies, such as depression, eating disorders and anxiety. This feeds low self esteems. According to Deborah Warner, Lead Faculty at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, "to

¹⁸⁰ Criddle and Mam, 1998, pg90-1

¹⁸¹ Hinton, 2005, pg270

¹⁸² Ibid

¹⁸³ Socheata, 2009

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

some extent, everybody has self-concept issues but negative thinking can begin to rule your behavior”.¹⁸⁵ Most often self-criticisms are false and self defeating. Manuel London suggests that leaders, who have high evaluation apprehension and partake in high self-criticism, become debilitated. Their performance output is significantly reduced. They are low in self-efficacy. These leaders, “set very high standards and expect too much of themselves. They need coaching and counseling especially when receiving feedback that is critical”.¹⁸⁶ Lastly, self-criticisms were used to help cadres reflect on their newly arranged marriages. The newly married would inform others about the relationship, if the mass disagreed with the relationship, it would be suggested by the whole that the cadre divorce.¹⁸⁷

Revolutionary Flag: A Propaganda Magazine

Tung Padewat was one of the three magazines that were published monthly and distributed throughout the DK. The magazine began publishing sometime before the Khmer Rouge overthrow of the Lon Nol government, on January 1975, roughly four months before taking power, on April 17th, 1975. The magazine titled, “Boys and Girls of the Revolution”, published its first issue in January 1974, ending publication about two months before the Vietnamese invaded. Revolutionary Flags, was never constrained by a maximum page distribution, as the length of each magazine varied, some were only 29 pages i.e. April 1977, and others were 133 pages (September 1977), on average issues were 75 pages. Revolutionary newspapers and other publications were effective tools used by the Khmer Rouge, to convince Cambodians the importance of uniting in a revolutionary manner to overcome class struggle, and what Marx would call, “brutal exploitation”.¹⁸⁸ Largely only Khmer Rouge cadres would be in receipt of receiving a copy of one of these publications, which besides party issued documents, were the only reading materials allowed to be read by Khmer cadres. Articles would recount the history of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), further reproducing excerpts from prior party speeches made by the top party cadres, and future plans to implement future policies.¹⁸⁹ Production quotas were also discussed in some detail in this magazine. These revolutionary literary productions would also show praise to those cadres, and their

¹⁸⁵ Warner, undated

¹⁸⁶ London, 2002, pg67

¹⁸⁷ Ly, 1999-2009

¹⁸⁸ Mosyakov & Chigas, 2009

¹⁸⁹ Ibid

respectable desirable leadership traits, for example, that of being fiercely determined and hard working which were to be fully utilized to see the revolution as successful one.¹⁹⁰

Leadership Development Schools

Hong A Chork remembers being one of those eligible candidates who was chosen from a selected few to attend the Phnom Penh Leadership School. He was very proud of this because being a leader was what the Khmer Rouge talked about all the time to the poorer persons through their propaganda campaigns. “The school was tough”, he recounts, and there was a lot of discipline training.¹⁹¹ These future leaders were required to wear student uniforms and endure and participate in extensive indoctrination sessions. The teachers taught them about Angkar and the wrongs associated with Capitalism. A reinforced theme was the importance of the revolution and how it is the peasant’s attempt of overthrowing the class system to create a nation resembling equality. As new leaders, they were going to be directly responsible for helping Angkar in its war against the evil, in this case, individualism, intellectualism, traitors, etc. During these indoctrination sessions they were asked to accuse themselves, their friends of doing things that were not consistent with Angkar values. During these criticism sessions, Chork, noted the best thing to do was to stand up right away, hang your head, and say to the Khmer Rouge soldiers, “I admit it”. You were required to do this even when you were in fact innocent of the accusations. They were not interested in the truth, Chork says, “they got satisfaction in submission”.¹⁹² Discipline was via re-education and self-criticism.¹⁹³ These initial cadres pre-revolution were believed to have no feelings about human life, because they would kill people like they kill mosquitoes. It was believed that they had no compassion for human life, because they were indoctrinated in discipline.¹⁹⁴ Schooling was to be intermingled with working, because the party line had thought that someone specializing in a certain educational subject, breeds intellectualism, elitism, which would result in “impractical, theoretical solutions to real work problems”.¹⁹⁵

Certain Elements that affected the quality of Education

It is clear that quite potentially the environment in which education was orchestrated may have impeded those learning. Some would record in later interviews that they enjoyed the education

¹⁹⁰ Ibid

¹⁹¹ Chork, 1997, pg125

¹⁹² Ibid

¹⁹³ Vickery, 1984, pg89

¹⁹⁴ Schanberg, 1980

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

they received under the Khmer Rouge, and not complained whatsoever about the environment in which they learned. Ung Bunheang a survivor under the regime that the school he attended at Phum Andong, in Prey Veng province, was of the utmost educational quality. The children at this school would attend school in the mornings, often in buffalo stables.¹⁹⁶ There was a certain level of congruency between the regional class environments, classes took place in houses, community halls, or in many cases were conducted outdoors as “with mother earth for a floor and an old tree for a roof”.¹⁹⁷ The Khmer Rouge teachers further impeded learning processes, as the common Khmer classroom educator selected to teach under the Khmer Rouge were selected from the “base” people, often ones who had little or no education, let alone teaching certifications, and came from rural communities.¹⁹⁸ Another, factor that impacted the quality of the schooling system, was the inadequacies associated with lack of school materials for the students. Ung Bunheang, remembers students resorting to writing on waste paper form used cement bags. The Ministry of Education did provide school textbooks, in limited supply to instructors, but the children attending classes, had no pencils, textbooks, and had to make chalk from clay.¹⁹⁹ These students in away had to make their own rudimentary learning instruments, which probably discouraged learning in the class. The party leaders were trying to keep the students in a position of being masters of their education, being self-reliant. Although students did receive extra food rations for attending school they still had suffered malnourishment coupled with being overworked half of the time, resulted in poor individual student development.²⁰⁰

Most of the schools curricula were similar in nature: revolutionary songs, using slogans to build revolutionary zest within each student, and of course the curricula aforementioned already, primitive literacy and numeracy. There were often four levels children were taught on, first they were to learn how to read and write, although painstakingly slower compared to those in a western education system. Second, they were to develop basic elementary arithmetic skills. Third, there educational training was supposed to consist largely of learning revolutionary songs, often songs about committing oneself to Angkar. And lastly, students were to be rigorously indoctrinated in socialist and egalitarian ideology. Part of this latter level, they were informed about both the need and importance of working hard, and how it benefits Angkar and all, and the dangers posed by the

¹⁹⁶ Stuart-Fox and Ung, 1985, pg66

¹⁹⁷ Heder Interview August 1996

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Fox & Ung 1985

²⁰⁰ Vickery, Cambodia, 171-2

neighboring country Vietnam. One geography textbook used under Sihanouk's education system, was similar to that of DK geography textbook, published in 1957, "Geographie du Cambodge et de l'Asie des moussons", which translates to Geography of Cambodia and Asia of the Monsoons, stated that rice is the base crop of the country and therefore should be used as the capital for building and defending Cambodia. DK text books did made effective use of revolutionary jargon throughout these textbooks body pages, i.e. that rice was essential for the effective building and defense of the country from outside enemies, which was largely guided towards the Vietnamese, and others including America. Khmer Rouge leaders aimed their efforts at convincing the student that the Vietnamese were the brutal and repressive ones, using those who have flown the country to either Vietnam or Thailand, as prime examples of exemplary party enemies.



Khmer Rouge: Cadre Promotion & Retention

Those who entered the military gained promotion through merit and entered party organizations as education awakened their political consciousness.²⁰¹ Job performance merited their selection for the core organization, the first step to eventual party candidacy.²⁰² Job promotion for those lower level cadres began through a system of merit during pre-revolution times. It was their overall loyalty to the party, and how the lower level cadre demonstrated their loyalty to the party was the main determinant in who was promoted during the 1975-78 period. The eligible candidate for promotion would have to provide a clean revolutionary background, which was a prerequisite. Further, in July 1977 the Party's top cadres discussed at a Western regional meeting that "increasing party strength first of all depended on reviewing biographies to separate the good cadres from the bad cadre candidates".²⁰³ Later the criteria had changed a little, as the top party cadres began to believe that "earlier biographies were undependable guides to building new party members. Everyone was included, the regions, the sectors, the ministries and offices, and army", in promotion to the party leadership ranks.²⁰⁴ There was absolutely no material reward for working more than your allotted share, hardly the way to get a dedicated workforce.²⁰⁵ In this forced labor system you did just what you had been told to do. One consistent reward was that if you demonstrated hard work over a long continuous period, you were either given the same status as the base people, who were promoted into the higher ranks. Being promoted equated to not only having been treated the same as base people but you were basically exempt from random executions, although on the other hand, a promotion in certain regions, would make you more susceptible to being purged. A leader who provides no reward or work incentive for work completed to their workers is not really retaining high worker morale. There was an elimination of individual incentives as suggested by higher party cadres. This was a shared similarity between Mao's and Pot's revolution which was the elimination of individual incentives and in some cases the use of money. Rewards were known to lead to vested interest-ism, which was not consistent with a fully socialized nation. Social mobilization was Mao's suggestion of which could best motivate the peasantry and new people to work, and do so most efficiently. With money being completely abolished, this led to an immediate destruction of the Cambodian economy. The establishment of a complete communal work

²⁰¹ Jackson, 1989, pg95

²⁰² Ibid, pg97

²⁰³ Revolutionary flags, 1977, pg 20

²⁰⁴ Jackson, 1989, pg 87-88

²⁰⁵ Ibid, pg131

environment would mean that the common Cambodian had no way to accrue any type of material wealth.²⁰⁶ One reward that was common between both cadres and the common person, was the right to life, the right to live in this new socialist system, an individually class abolished society.

Some were rewarded with the opportunity to attend technical training schools. Evidence through testimony suggests that the Khmer Rouge, allowed base people to request to attend special technical training. Ung Vuth, shortly after being forced to marry a Khmer Rouge cadre, requested to partake in “technical training on abortions at April 17 Hospital (Russian Hospital) for a year”.²⁰⁷ Nhem En was promoted and then sent to Phnom Penh. Here he proved himself further. He was then sent to study Political Science and military tactics at a technical school within the DK. En was again promoted to an elite youth unit and sent to China for training in late 1976, at the age of 15. After the group arrived in Peking, they were divided; some sent to train in military and naval affairs, others in industry or agriculture. Nhem En was selected to study photography. When he arrived back in Phnom Penh, En was assigned to Unit 870 at the Ministry of National Defense under Pol Pot,²⁰⁸ an honorable, survival securing position. In some regions throughout the DK, some were rewarded for hard work. Laborers in the Tapang zone were handsomely rewarded for their work, considering the Khmer Rouge policy on rewards and personal gain. The Mith Tmey people in particular were rewarded time off and extra food rations for completing hard, difficult work tasks on time. Yimsut says here he had put on some weight again, and appeared to be getting healthier again. Although time off wasn’t necessarily a full day, Yimsut, still found himself spending more time relaxing in his hut in Tapang, then anywhere else in the last two years.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Jackson, 1989, pg229

²⁰⁷ Ly, 1999-2009]

²⁰⁸ Maguire, 2002

²⁰⁹ Yimsut, 1999

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