



## Collection Information:

**Folder:** Writings and research on Vietnam and the Montagnard people: Book reviews: Book review of *Cambodia 1975-1982* by Michael Vickery, January 1986.

**Series:** Vietnam War Service.

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Dear Michael  
~~Ben~~,

I have just finished your very well  
researched book Cambodia 1975-1982.

- Up till now the various factions  
involved:
- ① Khmer - "Hanoi" - Pracheachon  
- 1954 - who later survived the  
1978 Eastern Zone massacre <sup>by joining the V.P.</sup>
  - ② 1963 defectors - Pol Pot (Saloth Sar)  
Deng Sary and all their  
buddies
  - ③ 1967 defectors - the 3 who  
disappeared - Khieu Samphan  
Hu Nim  
plus their buddies <sup>Hou Yvon</sup>
  - ④ the Sihanoukists  
- Penn Nouth his Prime  
Minister in Peking  
plus his alliance with  
the Khmer Rouge
  - ⑤ Sam Ngoc Thantists  
- Khmer Seri  
- Khmer Issarak  
- Khmer Krom
  - ⑥ leaders of sectional forces  
from Issarak  
- Mok in South West - previous Issarak  
- Pak - northern-Central Warlord

⑦ Finally: the Combination  
of ① Pol Pot's DK  
② Sihanoukist  
③ KPNLF led by Son Sann  
and backed by CIA/USA/UN

⑧ the PRK led by Vietnamese  
and governed by the  
remnant of the 1954-  
~~West~~ Nam Hanoi Khmer

I worked through your very well  
developed expose of Marxist vs populist  
revolutions and the need for an  
industrial/urban/  
intellectual base  
for successful  
Marxist revolution

More Utopia p 281  
Populism  
Poor peasant Utopianism  
Romantic peasantism

I read with interest your discussion  
about the origins of the DK philosophy  
being ~~that~~ the ideas of Son Ngoc Thanh  
before they were those of Khieu Samphan + Pol Pot's.  
You begin by saying he was honest and  
a true patriot but became corrupt and  
forsook the true Khmer aspirations when  
he went in with the CIA, eventually the

Pol Pot regime, and ~~then~~ you don't discuss the eventual fate of Son Ngoc Thanh after 1975. Shawcross & Shaplen talk about him as a real hero and the principle threat to leadership of the Cambodians <sup>in</sup> ~~to~~ Sihanouk's eyes.

I noted that, on page 72, you out of hand reject any role for the Montagnards in the Khmer Rouge and say that Tacoutux's affirmation was "based on God only knows what wild stories." I also note that you entirely ignored the North East zone Dambam 102, 101, 107, 105 and 104 — the former provinces of Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri and part of Stung Treng. As you must know this is the home of the Montagnards — both Khade, Jarai and Mnong — they were, collectively called the Khmer Loeu. (The Vietnamese called them "moi" — the Laotians called them Katu)

Sihanouk regarded the area as essentially "empty" and allowed the NVA and the US to use it as a battleground. It was part of the land that was used as the



No Chi Minh Trail

- see p 58-59 of The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle by W. Barrett

I have ~~to~~ reason to believe that Y. Bhaum had at least 10,000, perhaps 60,000 well trained (by the Special Forces) short-garbed soldiers living in Ratanakiri under the FOLRO banner and spoiling for a fight against the Lon Nol government, minimal to the Vietnamese, who became the core troops of Lon Nol regime & the Khmer Rouge. in April '75. I have further reason to believe that the strike against Ban Me Thout in Mar 10 1975 was led by some of these same troops who had cast their lot with the NVA, under and acted as Gen'l Dung.

You ignore entirely in your otherwise very well researched book the problem of the Highland people. I ask why? Your otherwise very well informed book entirely ignore this crucial subject as do most of the books about the Vietnam / Cambodia / Laotian wars. almost a conspiracy of silence or ignorance.

You should know more ~~so~~ about the Cambodian my of ~~the~~ Moslem Chams, the ~~ancient~~ Montagnards along with the Chinese and Vietnamese minorities. Why don't you? Or, if you do, why don't you include it in your otherwise lengthy, well reasoned but difficult historical narrative. You are obviously not writing for the general public. ~~For~~ Your work, even for someone like me who plans to read all the material on Vietnam/Cambodia, was a labor of reading and underlining and cross checking other references. Are you unaware of the FURRO and the Montagnard forces?

I find that the mention of the Montagnard - the Khmer-Joleu - the FURRO - Khmer Krom - Jonathan "Dad" Ladd (see Shawcross "Side show") - and Son Ngoc Thanh's involvement ends in dead ends. Very interesting in that Jon. Ladd was the Commander of Special Forces in Vietnam 1967-69 - involved in Salem House, Daniel Boone - Delta - SOG missions into Cambodia and had contact with Y Bhaum forces in Cambodia. He was the one who was brought back to

Cambodia in 1970 to make contact  
and help the Khmer Issak / Khmer Seren  
~~separation~~ and integration into the Schanbursko troops  
~~infestation~~ on Son Ngoc Thanh — of  
the troops behind of Lon Nol takeover  
Camp 18 March 1970.

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Dear Michael Vickery,

Congratulations! You have done a wonderful job of unraveling much of the mystery and misinformation regarding the years 1975 - 1982 in Cambodia. I have recently finished your book, Cambodia 1975-1982. I don't know if it will ever be a "best-seller" only because it is so carefully researched and reasoned. Perhaps your audience is the historical community interested in events of Southeast Asia. In any event, I found it most interesting.

In particular I found your explanations of the various factions involved most helpful. In general I feel you have divided them roughly as follows:

1. Khmer - "Hanoi" - Pracheochon 1954. They later survived the 1977-78 Eastern Zone massacre and joined the Vietnamese under Heng Samrin (those who survived.)

2. 1963 defectors from Sihanouk - Pol Pot (Saloth Sar), Ieng Sary and all their buddies.

3. 1967 defectors - the 3 who "disappeared" Khieu Samphan, Hu Nim and Hou Yuon, plus others. (? Tiv Ol, Thiounn Mum, Thiounn Chhum, Nhiek Tioulong?)

4. The Sihanoukists - Penn Nouth, his Prime Minister in Peking - eventually making their alliance with the Khmer Rouge.

5. Son Ngoc Thanhists:

Khmer Serei, Khmer Issarek, Khmer Krom (CIA financed and Special Forces trained before 1970 and later). After 1970, financed by Kissinger/Haig with Jonathan "Fred" Ladd's help. (see Shawcross'



Sideshow for his references. Also Wil Burchett's My War with the CIA p 56.).

6. Local sectional leaders and forces:

Mok, former Issarek, leader of the Southwest

Pok, former Issarek, leader of the Northern/ Center

sections. You referred to the Pol Pot-Mok-Pok regimes in one place - a rather hilarious name.

7. The KPNLF Combination led by Son Sann:

a. Pol Pot's DK.

b. Sihanoukists

c. Son Sann KPNLF

All backed by the CIA/USA/UN at present.

I worked through your very enlightening and well developed expose of Marxist vs. populist revolutions and the need for an industrial/urban intellectual base for successful Marxist revolutions. This agrees well with Ho Chi Minh's ideas (Robert Shaplen Lost REvolution, pp48-49 and elsewhere.)

I found very interesting your description of Pol Pot's regime as more like More's Utopia, "poor peasant utopianism", Romantic peasantism, and Populism than Marxist communism. Your comparison to Tito's Yugoslavian solution was very well worked out.

I read with interest your discussion about the origins of the DK philosophy being the ideas of Son Ngoc Thanh before they were those of Khieu Samphan and Pol Pot's. You begin by saying he was honest and a true patriot but became corrupt later and forsook the true Khmer aspirations when he went in with the CIA, etc. You don't discuss the eventual fate of Son Ngoc Thanh after 1975. Shawcross says he disappeared in Vietnam. Both Shawcross and Shaplen talk about him as a real hero and the principle threat to leadership of

Cambodia in Sihanouk's eyes. Did he not have a brother in the South Vietnam legislature?

What prompted me to write you - other than to congratulate you - was a reference you made on page 72. There you, out of hand, reject any role for the Montagnards in the Khmer Rouge. You say that Lacouture's affirmation was "based on God only knows what wild stories." I also note that you entirely ignored the Northeast zone - Danban 102, 101, 107, 105, and 104. These were the former provinces of Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, and part of Stung Treng. As you must know, this is the home of the Montagnards - Rhade, Jarai, and Mnong<sup>h</sup> along with their other lands in the former South Vietnamese Highlands. They were, collectively called the Khmer Loeu (by Cambodians), "moi" by the Vietnamese, and Katu by the Laotians. The Special Forces valued them for their fighting ability, trained them as CIDG "Mike" Forces, and, along with the French, organized them into a political force under the banner of the FULRO around 1964. After 2 abortive rebellions against the South Vietnamese in 1964 and 1965, Y-Bham (who spent 5 years in jail in Hue for his actions in 1958) left the South Vietnam highlands for his lands in Cambodia to wait out the war. With him he took at least 10,000 fully armed men (by Special Forces) and perhaps the 60,000 he hoped to have. His land was the Northeast (Montagnard) land of Cambodia which you have ignored in your book. Sihanouk, too, regarded the Northwest as essentially "empty" and allowed the NVA/VC to use it as a battleground. It was the land that was used for the southern exit of the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was part of the same area that Nixon/Kissinger bombed so extensively in 1970-1973. Y-Bham had no love for the Khmer, Laotians or Vietnamese but could be persuaded to help anyone who would guarantee autonomy for his ancestral lands.

I have reason to believe that some of the Montagnards went with Dung on 10 March 1975 when he attacked Ban Me Thuot and started the sudden fall of the Highlands ending 55 days later in the fall of Saigon. I also have reason to believe that the "Trail of Tears" from Kontum and Pleiku to Tuy Hoa on lumber road 7B was the work of Montagnards getting revenge for years of oppression by their lowland Vietnamese tormentors. During my year in Vietnam, I became a close friend with Y-Bham's brother, Y-Djit, who is now the Province Chief of Phu Bhon province (capital Cheo Rheo) along this highway.

In Wil Burchett's book The China Cambodia Vietnam Triangle I find on pp58-59 a quote from your friend Ben Kiernan's Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-79:

' In 1963 (write Kiernan and Boua) Pol Pot and Ieng Sary had secretly fled Phnom Penh for the tribal northeast and probably spent much of the next five years there. As well as being National Secretary of the CPK, Pol Pot was also Party Secretary of the Northeast Zone from 1968 to 1970, during a period when some of the Zone's tribes rose up in rebellion against the Sihanouk regime. At least during May 1970, at a time when Pol Pot was abroad (in Peking) both Ieng Sary and Son Sen were "responsible for the Northeast Zone." In July 1975, Pol Pot said that his movement "came out of the jungle" and the "remote" rural areas. In 1978, he told Yugoslav journalists that he knew "perfectly well these national minorities" and regarded them as among his strongest supporters '

Wil Burchett then says:

"Obviously, there was nothing wrong with organizing the hill tribes (or "Montagnards" as they were commonly called). Ho Chi Minh did the same thing. But he organized them primarily for their own self-emancipation and not to be used as shock troops conditioned and indoctrinated to exterminate city-dwellers. The Vietnamese revolutionaries had confidence in the people - whether hill tribes in the border areas, peasants in the Mekong Delta or on the coastal plains, or workers and other city-dwellers - and built their activities upon this base

14. of support. An important element of the Kampuchean tragedy was that those who won out in the murderous power struggle at the top not only had never sought to sink organizational roots among the people but also had a profound contempt for them.

14. Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and Son Sen fled to the jungle of north-eastern Kampuchea to save their skins. When pursuit by Sihanouk's security forces became "too hot," they had the possibility - of which they often took advantage - of seeking sanctuary with the NLF guerrillas of South Vietnam...."

(It is well known where Wil Burchett's sympathies lie - with Sihanouk and the Vietnamese.) The important thing is that Pol Pot and his buddies apparently used the Montagnards as some of their shock troops. These would be the same Montagnards we knew as the CIDG "Mike" forces trained and armed by the Special Forces. Jonathan "Fred" Ladd was the commander of the Special Forces 1967-69 with headquarters in Nha Trang, replacing "Blackjack" Kelly. During this time many SOG missions went "over the hill" into Cambodia and Laos with the CIDG Montagnard soldiers. The Montagnards saw no problem with this, of course, because it was all their land to begin with. The artificial borders were not of their doing. No doubt many Jarai, Rhade and Mnong "Mike" troops were welcomed by their brothers in the FULRO. It would have been simple to bring arms and ammunition across this fictitious border to supply Y-Bham's troops "in exile." In effect, then, the Special Forces and the CIA trained, equipped and reinforced the shock troops not only of Dung's forces in 1975 but the shock troops of the Khmer Rouges under Pol Pot!

You have mentioned many times in your book that Pol Pot's power base was the Southwest. You never mention his support and involvement with the Montagnards in the Northeast. Why? In your otherwise very

well researched book, you never mention the problem of the Highland people - although you discuss the other minorities, such as the Chams, Vietnamese and Chinese. I find this strange. It seems the only ones who discuss the Montagnards are the Communists who used them to great advantage, 'promising them autonomy for the Highlands. Thus Ho Chi Minh, Giap used the Montagnards as equals, built elite divisions such as the 316th, 312nd, and others around them, and won many important battles with them. (Dien Bien Phu, Ban Me Thuot, Saigon, to name only a few.) There seems to be a conspiracy of silence in most of the books written by the "free" world regarding the Montagnards. Bernard Fall was most outspoken about the role of the Montagnards in the army of the NVA. Since his passing, the subject is largely ignored.

If I can be of help to you regarding this subject, drop me a line and I will do what I can. Meanwhile, thank you for your work regarding the Khmer Rouge.

Respectfully,

*Daniel C. Conlon*  
Daniel C. Conlon