

30 MAY 1995

Letters to the Editor

The Cambodian Holocaust—III

It is a simple matter to outline my 17-year record of documenting the crimes of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime. This record was recognized as early as 1981 by Barry Wain, editor of *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, who described my estimate of more than 1.5 million dead as "the most authoritative independent assessment of the toll under Pol Pot" (*The Refused: The Agency of the Indochina Refugees*, p. 272). Yet Stephen Morris and Gerard Henderson (Letters, May 15) continue seriously to misrepresent my work.

Even after being challenged by me, Mr. Morris again fails to offer any citation for a quotation he repeatedly and falsely attributes to me, that the Eastern Zone Cambodian Communists were "good Khmer Rouge" (the quotation marks are his). Many Cambodians have made such a point, but not all, and I have preferred to note that it is usually a relative judgment. In fact, I am the only scholar who has documented atrocities in the Eastern Zone. I analyzed in detail the range of evidence not only in "Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea" (New Haven, Yale Southeast Asian Studies, 1983), but also in "Cambodia: The Eastern Zone Massacres" (Columbia University, Center for the Study of Human Rights, 1986).

Then, in "Kampuchea's Ethnic Chinese Under Pol Pot: A Case of Systematic Discrimination" (*Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1986), I again detailed repression and hardship in the East, including Cambodian testimony that the Eastern Zone Khmer Rouge were "no good." I returned to this theme in "Orphans of Genocide: The Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot" (*Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, October 1988), in which I studied the 1975 massacres of Chams, stating that "the troops involved in the various incidents of repression have not been identified. They would have been Eastern Zone troops." I then outlined and weighed the evidence for different Eastern units. My translation of a Pol Pot central document authorizing political murder in the Zones can be found in "Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977" (*Yale Southeast Asia Studies*, 1988).

Further evidence of Eastern Zone massacres is in my chapter, "Genocidal Targeting: Two Groups of Victims in Pol Pot's Cambodia," in "State Organized Terror" (Westview, 1991). Mr. Morris owes me an apology for his outlandish claim that "Since 1979, Mr. Kiernan has worked tirelessly as the academic world's defense lawyer for what he considers the good Khmer Rouge of the Eastern Zone" (editorial page, April 17).

Interestingly, Mr. Morris himself spent most of the 1980s supporting allies of Pol Pot in what he acknowledged was a Khmer Rouge-dominated coalition (*New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1982). In 1990, he argued for the inclusion and appeasement of the Khmer Rouge in the peace process, blindly predicting: "The real Khmer Rouge military aim . . . is to force Phnom Penh to accept a comprehensive political settlement such as the U.N. peace plan," which he asserted "will end the war" in Cambodia (February 16, 1990, and Boston

positions are now held by the Pol Pot-Ing Sary group, their wives, or people unknown to outsiders" (*Nation Review*, Melbourne, Nov. 17, 1978). I corrected Mr. Henderson's errors (*Sydney Morning Herald*, Feb. 19, 1990) but instead of apologizing he now asserts (with Mr. Morris) that I "did not come out explicitly against Pol Pot until 1979."

BEN KIERNAN
Associate Professor of History
Director, Cambodian Genocide Program
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

We, as scholars who are very familiar with the work of Ben Kiernan, are deeply disturbed by the attacks made on him by Stephen Morris. Among those of us signing this letter is one who has drawn extensively on Prof. Kiernan's work for his own research on politics and religion in Cambodia, another who has looked to Prof. Kiernan's work for documentation of the abuse of human rights in Cambodia, two who have been involved in a joint project with Prof. Kiernan on the culture of violence, and a librarian-scholar whose own historical work has focused on Indochina.

Prof. Kiernan has established himself as an internationally recognized authority (some would say the leading authority) on the regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. His numerous books and edited volumes and his many articles have all been based on meticulous research. His work has been reviewed prior to publication in peer review processes and after publication in many journals. His proposal that won him the grant from the State Department was awarded after an extensive review process involving 14 evaluators. Even those who disagree with him have acknowledged the authoritativeness of his scholarship.

Mr. Morris's attacks on Prof. Kiernan are not based on an assessment of Prof. Kiernan's scholarship; rather, Mr. Morris seeks to discredit him because of his politics as an undergraduate student 18 years ago. We who are very familiar with Prof. Kiernan's scholarship have no question that his record has clearly established him as well qualified to carry out the project on genocide in Cambodia.

CHARLES F. KEYES
Professor and Director
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for Southeast Asian Studies
University of Washington
Seattle

(The letter was also signed by Daniel Lev, professor of political science; Hillel Kievit, associate professor of history and international studies; Laurie Sears, assistant professor of Southeast Asian history; and Judith Henchy, head, Southeast Asian Section, University of Washington Libraries. All are at the University of Washington.)

Government Diddling
Hurts Pension Plans

Three cheers for your May 9 editorial, "The Ultimate Raid," about the dire consequences that would result from ending

Superm

Consumerist flacks fired a blank this month with release of data showing supermarkets avoid the inner city. The Washington Post devoted 23 paragraphs to the subject, but elsewhere coverage was slight. "Red-lining" reports normally grab media attention, but the no-grocery store is so stale and the federal budget battle so preoccupies the left that this item generally met the newsroom spike.

As it happens, the talk for the last couple of years has been about retailer movement into urban core areas. Convention now holds that suburban markets are saturated and opportunity lies inward. Evidence of reverse migration is still anecdotal, however, and often subsidies are involved. So, it's still worth exploring why stores should be spread so unevenly in a nation that seeks through food stamps to balance consumption across income groups.

The advocacy group Public Voice played on a study done by the Food Marketing Policy Center at the University of Connecticut. It crunched numbers from nearly 6,000 supermarkets in 21 metropolitan areas and found more than what the simplified political spin suggested. Yes, there were fewer stores in low-income neighborhoods, and they were smaller (the role of land prices wasn't addressed). But some poor areas do better than others—apparently those with fewer welfare recipients.

For example, in cities where the researchers found about half the poor were not on public assistance—for instance, in Houston, San Antonio and New Orleans—the disadvantage of low-income zip codes

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An old computer can still teach a thing or two. Our Oakland center has been salvaging computers and sending them to a computer recycling company. They're refurbished for use in local schools or dismantled for further recycling.



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In both the Melbourne Age (Oct. 11, 1994) and Brisbane Courier-Mail (April 21, 1995), Gerard Henderson has alleged that in 1975, I "suggested that 'worthy Khmers' was a more appropriate title than 'Khmer Rouge.'" But I actually wrote: "A leftist I spoke to recently in Phnom Penh rejected the terms 'Khmer Viet Minh,' 'Khmer Communiste,' and even 'Khmer Rouge' as descriptions of Khieu Samphan and his associates. He suggested I refer to them as 'Khmers dignes' or 'worthy Khmers.'" In the same paragraph I had called Khieu Samphan "almost xenophobic" (Dyason House Papers, June 1975, emphasis added).

It is always reassuring when one's critics need to rewrite evidence to make their case. I recall Mr. Henderson's invention of my alleged "visit" to Pol Pot's closed regime (Sidney Morning Herald, Feb. 13, 1990). And his poor memory: "I am not aware of one Cambodian specialist . . . who opposed Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge before Vietnam's conquest of Phnom Penh," in 1979.

The fact is that I did. In a 1978 article "Why's Kampuchea Gone to Pot?" I stated that "refugees report widespread purges" and executions, and that the strength of "domestic opposition" had led to "more wide-ranging purges." I added that "Pol Pot is after unchallenged authority," pursuing "a chauvinism that demands big continuing sacrifices from the people to build a powerful state," while many peasants and peasant cadres have been repressed." I also noted: "Nearly all public

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Government Diddling Hurts Pension Plans

Three cheers for your May 9 editorial, "The Ultimate Raid," about the dire consequences that would result from ending the favorable tax treatment of qualified pension and 401(k) plans.

Through arcane maneuvering in the 1993 tax act, the government has already significantly cut back the amount of money that many employees can expect to receive from these plans. Beginning in January 1994, the maximum amount of compensation that could be considered in determining benefits from a qualified plan (the considered compensation limit) was reduced from \$235,840 to \$150,000—a 36% cut. Compounding this, the limit is indexed, but at a rate lower than inflation.

While "rich" executives—i.e., those now making more than \$150,000—are first to be affected by this change, a large number of younger and less affluent employees will be affected. Take the case of a 40-year-old middle manager earning \$75,000. If this person, each year on average, has salary increases a few points above the rate of inflation, then his/her salary will significantly exceed the considered compensation limit at retirement. The resulting pension shortfall by age 65 will be very significant.

Because of the complex interplay between the considered compensation limit—and Treasury Department rules on 401(k) plans—many executives earning between \$66,000-\$90,000 have had to make significant cutbacks on their 401(k) contributions.

Any further cutbacks in the qualified pension and 401(k) area, especially given the dim outlook for the Social Security system, are very ill-advised, particularly if we want to strengthen savings and ensure adequate retirement income.

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