

PRODUCED BY BELGRADE TV

KAMPUCHEA 1978

TIME CODE 00:40 – 03:18

VOICE-OVER: Kampuchea, 1978.

The country has between 8 and 9 million inhabitants.

The cities are empty.

Kampuchea lives on its fields and large construction sites.

According to official estimates, at least 2.5 million inhabitants of Kampuchea are now at construction sites, building dams and canals of the country's huge irrigation system.

The motto of the country is: If you have rice, you can have everything you need.

Kampuchea is not hungry, but in many respects it is an unusual country.

Unusual in the way it is organized, in its way of life, in its economic relations.

First of all, those who carried the heavy burden of the revolution and spilled a lot of their own blood have primacy in this country.

Those are poor workers and peasants. Everything else is subordinated to them.

According to official statistics offered by the government, before the revolution 85 percent of peasants in Kampuchea lived on the brink of poverty and destitution, either farming the land for big landowners or living up to their ears in debt.

These poor peasants were the main force of the revolution initiated by the communists, a revolution that lasted for years, occasionally flaring up, until it erupted with full force when Lon Nol and the American intervention kindly opened the door for it.

Once the triumphant banners of the revolution started flying above Phnom Penh and other cities, and the Khmer Rouge took power in Kampuchea, the country changed its appearance.

Kampuchea changed both physically and mentally.

It became a mystery even for those who had once known it well.

In essence, Kampuchea set out to build a new society.

But what kind of society, we asked the Prime Minister and Communist Party Secretary Pol Pot?

TIME CODE 03:30 – 04:32

POL POT: In building our society, we do not use a blueprint. Workers and peasants gave the biggest contribution to the revolution. They are the most numerous in our country and they should reap most benefits from the revolution. It is our wish to build a society that will provide happiness,

progress and equality for all. Where no one is exploiting anyone else, or being exploited. Where everyone takes part in production and the national defence. This is our starting point and these are the goals guiding us in our creation of a new society.

If the people accept this, we can achieve anything. If the people do not accept it, we cannot do anything in their place. That is why I say that we do not have a predetermined blueprint for a new society.

TIME CODE 04:38 – 07:55

VOICE-OVER: Although a blueprint officially does not exist, its contours are clear.

A citizen of Kampuchea – whether he was born and once lived in a city or was a peasant – today lives in rice-field co-operatives.

Their main task is to produce as much rice as possible, not only to meet the needs of the country – and after all, they have been met very soon – but also to export much more than Kampuchea did before the revolution, when it was one of the leading rice exporting countries in the world.

Rice is a hard currency used for buying necessary industrial commodities, oil, and, more than anything else, agricultural machinery.

Every grain of rice is worth gold in a country that does not recognize the role of money.

The latest official figures say that every citizen of Kampuchea receives 312 kg of rice per year.

The rest is exported, and the list of buyers includes Mogadishu and other African countries.

Co-operatives are mostly organized within the boundaries of former municipalities.

Each one is a home to between 10,000 and 2,000 people.

In some of them, the inhabitants were given new houses of the traditional type, built on high supports for protection against water during the rainy season.

The land, the cattle, everything is owned by the co-operative.

Peasants are free to raise a pig or some poultry in their own homes.

The co-operatives are not limited to agricultural production alone.

Small workshops are set up and local raw materials used.

In the smithies, one can still see jackets of unexploded American air-bombs that used to fall on Kampuchea in large numbers.

They are being turned into farming tools.

While men are in the fields or in the army, women perform other work, but one cannot say that the division of labour between men and women is very strict.

Except for those who are working in outlying fields, far away from the centre of the co-operative, everyone else eats in the common mess hall.

These are inhabitants of the Leaibo co-operative in the Takeo province.

They receive one kilogram of rice per day per family member, salt, and one suit of clothes per year.

In a society of equals, for a Kampuchean the co-operative is everything.

That is where he lives and works, where he is born and where he dies.

There are no wedding ceremonies.

If a young man and a young woman like each other, they turn to the co-operative committee to get them married.

The committee, headed by this peasant who we were told is an old revolutionary, will assess whether the young man and woman are mature enough to form a family relationship.

And that is all; there is no priest, no registrar.

Marriage approval is never withheld.

Kampuchea can feed 20 million inhabitants.

Why, then, hinder the population growth, when having more inhabitants means being stronger.

That is the military-strategic objective.

And that is why there are more children every day.

Parents give them names without any ceremony.

TIME CODE 08:12 – 09:15

VOICE-OVER: The co-operative is the basic cell of the Kampuchean society, bartering goods with the state.

There is no network of shops, there are no markets.

Here in Kampot, just like in other cities, the shops and the market have been closed for three years now.

The vaults of the National Bank, destroyed two days after the fall of Phnom Penh in an explosion that remains unexplained, have not been touched for three years.

This is perhaps an expression of contempt for money.

Money will be reintroduced if the people find it necessary, says the Prime Minister Pol Pot.

Travelling to the South of the country, we reached Kep, located on the coast of the Gulf of Siam, once a holiday resort that was razed to the ground during the fighting or the American bombings.

Where pleasant hotels and villas once stood, there are now ruins overgrown with weeds.

TIME CODE 09:28 – 13:04

VOICE-OVER: These are the famous sea salt works between Kep and Kampot, where we saw another co-operative.

Five thousand women work in a salt co-operative with a revolutionary tradition.

In jungles, far from the seacoast, without access to cities, the soldiers of the liberation army used to carry a bag with rice and a little salt around their waist.

Peasants gave them the rice.

The salt was brought by young women and girls who carried it on their backs, risking their lives while they travelled hundreds of kilometres through jungle and flatlands via roads known only to them.

Most of them are not married.

Even the married ones are separated from their husbands who are carrying out other tasks and duties.

They see each other only occasionally.

The 28-year-old Cheun was 19 when she joined the revolution.

She is now one of the managers in the co-operative and the mother of a child who rarely has a chance to see its father.

A year's production of salt can satisfy the country's needs for three years, even leaving some for export.

Five thousand women, many of whom used to be soldiers, work nine hours a day, with three days of rest per month which are devoted to political education.

They live in old shacks and take their meals in the common kitchen.

The sea here is not a romantic setting, it is the source of livelihood, a place of work.

Cool evening breeze is the only refreshment after a hard day's work.

Even for these barefooted boys in Kompong Som, whose age is difficult to determine, but who are certainly not older than 12, the sea is their workplace.

They work as a crew on one of the boats of the fishing fleet anchored in Kampuchea's only maritime port of, the former Sihanoukville, which has been on the maps for only 15 years or so.

The commander of the fishing fleet operating in the abundant waters of the Gulf of Siam is not from the seaside area.

His biography resembles many others: he was a poor peasant who joined the Communists and the revolution early on.

He had nothing to lose in the war but his poverty.

The revolution sent him to Kompong Som to organise a fishing fleet.

And the crews – kids like these who are learning how to live and work on these boats – they are, with the help of several older members, the sailors, the fishermen, the telegraph operators, the bosuns.

Kompong Som is, actually, the only Kampuchean link to the world.

Ships do not come to this port often.

Seven per month, mostly from China, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Yugoslavia.

Rice and natural rubber are shipped to the rest of the world from here.

From the world – which is at the moment limited to only ten states friendly to Kampuchea – arrive industrial goods and oil.

The man in charge of the port, Kri, a fighter and a member of the underground, again a man not originating from the seaside area, but who nevertheless accepted the task of running the port, is telling us what is in store for Kompong Som.

A new, large warehouse with slender supports is being built next to the old ones, which were reconstructed after American bombings.

We ask him who made the plans for the new warehouse, who is the engineer?

The answer: we learn from practice, this is the work of labourers and peasants.

What payment do the workers get?

Answer: there are no wages, the state provides us with everything we need.

TIME CODE 13:14 – 15:34

VOICE-OVER: This mechanical design factory, one of the few that had already existed in the suburbs of Phnom Penh, was reconstructed and expanded with machinery from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan.

Its main product is water-pumps.

The motto of Kampuchea is to produce as much rice as possible, and rice needs water.

In many areas it is necessary to have pumps for the water, in order to replace primitive human-powered wheels.

Who are these boys and girls barely tall enough to operate these machines?

The answer is, they are the children of the revolution.

These boys and girls were brought here from different parts of the country.

Some among them held rifles in their hands or acted as couriers only months ago.

Others are children of poor peasants, former soldiers.

Officially, their average age is 17; unofficially, much less.

They are the new workers of Kampuchea, its new working class. Together with poor peasants, they are the mainstay of the new Kampuchean society, a society not being built according to any blueprint, but according to the needs of those who emerged as victors after the revolution.

At the other end of the city, in vicinity of the Pochentong airport, is a school for electricians.

The picture is the same, the answers are the same, only there are no girls here.

Earlier, before the war, in order to be accepted into a technical school, one first had to complete high school, which was only attended by the few who could pay the tuition.

The new pupils and the new schools are the children of the revolution.

There are few textbooks, theory and practice are merged into one.

These boys are expected to replace old workers who were, as the official line goes, trained under the Americans, and who, allegedly, often engaged in sabotage.

The country will need increasingly more electricity, it will need electricians, and that is why new generations of electricians are being trained.

Who are the teachers?

Old workers and revolutionaries who will transfer the maximum of what they have learned to their pupils, without hiding anything from them.

This is how the revolution educates its children and raises the new working class of Kampuchea.

The industry, the new working class, the new technicians, all this is just a small part of the Kampuchean efforts.

The main thrust is aimed at increasing the agricultural production.

TIME CODE 15:40 – 17:34

VOICE-OVER: If we have rice, if the people are not hungry, we can have everything: that is the official policy of the Party and the Government.

Kampuchea is already producing 312 tons of rice per year per capita, and it is expected that in the near future some areas will be yielding three harvests per year.

The agricultural production depends on a network of dams and irrigation canals.

Dams and canals are a kind of obsession in modern Kampuchea.

Water, water, as much water as possible for the thirsty soil during the dry season.

Because without water, there can be no endless green rice fields, no singing, no green harvest of the revolution, no hustle and bustle during the threshing.

Dams and reservoirs capable of holding up to 200 million cubic meters of water needed for the soil are not at all uncommon.

This dam in the province of Battambang – named *30 September* after the date when the founding congress of the Kampuchean Communist Party was held – employs 20,000 workers.

Who are all these thousands of young people at the dam and canal construction site, where are they from, how and where do they live, how do they spend their free time?

Answer: they are mostly members of co-operatives from two neighbouring counties that are jointly building the dam.

Once the work at the construction site is done, they will return to their villages or co-operatives.

One third of the workers are members of mobile brigades.

For them there is no rest, once they are done with this job, there will be a new construction site, a new dam waiting for them.

And will you recognize city children among these workers, young men and women from the cities who were relocated after the triumph of the revolution?

Hardly, or but a few.

We got the official explanation too: differences between city dwellers and villagers have disappeared during the last three years.

TIME CODE: 17:51 – 18:05

VOICE-OVER: Phnom Penh, in 1970 a city with 600,000 inhabitants.

There were two million of them just before the end of the war, when the city was completely surrounded, and the people in it were dying from the shelling or of hunger.

TIME CODE: 18:18 – 18:40

VOICE-OVER: Phnom Penh today, in 1978.

Where are the people of Phnom Penh, Takeo, Battambang, Kompong Cham?

Where are the people from other cities and towns?

They are all over Kampuchea, in co-operatives, at the construction sites, only not in cities anymore.

TIME CODE: 18:50 – 20:10

POL POT: There were many reasons that forced us to evacuate the population of Phnom Penh and other cities. These were primarily economic. Having thought about it well, we realized that we could not have solved the problem of food if the population had remained in the cities. We had the co-operatives that could accommodate them, feed them, and engage them in agricultural production.

There was also the problem of defence and security of the country. We were aware of plans to create political, economic, military and other difficulties after the liberation, aimed at destroying our revolution. With that situation in mind, we moved the population into the villages. In this way, we could simultaneously solve the problem of food and thwart the plans forged by American imperialists. We did not have a predetermined plan to evacuate the cities, we were forced to take such measures because of the situation at the time.

TIME CODE: 20:11 – 21:06

VOICE-OVER: Three years after the triumph of the revolution and after the food problem has been solved, the cities of Kampuchea remain empty.

The suburbs are slowly getting populated, though.

According to official figures, Phnom Penh has 200,000 inhabitants.

Our estimate suggests a considerably smaller figure.

And the city – at least the streets where there is no prohibition on movement – the city is clean, the trees in the parks are trimmed, the grass mowed and watered, but it is sadly vacant, one can only entertain an idle hope that this is Phnom Penh during the afternoon siesta, when everyone leaves the streets to hide in the shade.

How long will cities and villages continue to be without post offices, how long will streets be mere strips of asphalt without a name?

There is still no official answer to the question whether the empty and deserted cities are just a temporary development or a lasting orientation of a country in which a peasant revolution that never looked for models or precedents has triumphed.

TIME CODE: 21:11 – 21:48

REPORTER: Kampuchea strongly wishes to stress the atypical character of its society, its choice of a separate path and direction in all areas of life. The leaders of Kampuchea say that the break-up with the old society, culture and customs is irreversible, that a heavy curtain has been drawn over the past events, never to be opened again.

As you have already heard and seen, Kampuchea is creating a new society of collectivist social organization. The same must hold true for education, culture, art and religion.

TIME CODE: 21:50 – 22:47

VOICE-OVER: It was certainly too ambitious, but before the revolution, there were several universities in Kampuchea.



That was a lot for a small country which was producing more highly educated cadres than it could employ.

Education was mostly for children of the rich, who could afford the high tuition.

Today, Kampuchea is at the other extreme.

All high schools and universities have been closed down.

In this school within a co-operative, boys and girls are studying separately.

Still, it seems that there are many more school-aged children in the fields than in these schoolrooms.

The teacher has had no schooling.

He says that he mastered the teaching skills during the revolution in which he actively participated.

Geography, writing and calculus are the main subjects on the school's curriculum.

TIME CODE: 22:54 – 25:09

VOICE-OVER: The official policy is for the culture to become purely national, because it had lost all its national features.

Remnants of the old colonial and imperialist culture and education must be erased.

Buddhism used to be the state religion of Kampuchea.

There were more than 100,000 *bonzas* spending their lives in monasteries, living only on offerings provided by the faithful.

One cannot see this in Kampuchea anymore.

The official view is that Buddhism is incompatible with the new collectivist regime.

It is said that only the poor believed in Buddhism, while the rich classes used it solely for propaganda.

As political awareness among the people grew stronger, the religious feelings disappeared.

Even the *bonzas* themselves joined the liberation movement during the war, taking off their cassocks and taking an active part in the fighting.

This man's name used to be the Honourable Tran Tach Tai, he was a high-ranking Buddhist monk who had studied in Phnom Penh before joining the Liberation Army.

He is now a manager at a dam construction site, he got married only at the age of 47, has three children and says that for him Buddhism is not incompatible with Communism because it is also on the side of the common man.

Only a few pagodas in the country have been spared, such as the Silver Pagoda in the former Royal Palace complex, or the famous shrine allegedly holding a tooth of Buddha.

The new culture is primarily devoted to material production.

Shows put up by the only state-run cultural ensemble very faithfully reflect political and national aspirations of the new Kampuchea.

One of those is to defend their independence.

Until recently, the enemy was unidentified.

Now the enemy is clearly and openly discussed.

It is the former war ally, Vietnam.

Estrangement between the two countries is at the moment absolute.

TIME CODE: 25:14 – 26:16

VOICE-OVER: These ships on the Mekong have been anchored here for months.

Access to the South China Sea, the shortest water route connecting Phnom Penh and the central part of the country with the rest of the world, leads down the big river's delta through Vietnam, and is closed for ships bearing the Khmer flag.

A friend from the war has become an enemy, and this external danger consolidates national pride, perhaps also helping the people to forget the current internal problems.

Phnom Penh has remained the country's capital.

This is where the Government is seated, as are the ministries, mostly located in old administration buildings which bear no signs and where one cannot see many employees.

The Assembly of People's Representatives, as the parliament is called, holds its sessions mostly once a year in what used to be a ceremonial hall called *The Four Hands*. It mostly ratifies the decisions reached by the Government headed by Pol Pot, a man who revealed his biography for the first time to our cameras.

TIME CODE: 26:19 – 27:33

POL POT: I am a farmer's son. Even as a child I shared my parents' peasant life. As was the custom, for six years I lived in a pagoda to learn to read and write. I was even a *bonza* for two years. You are the first to hear my biography. After completing elementary school I did not manage to enrol immediately in college, having failed the exam. I returned to the country, to my parents. Later I graduated from a technical education school.

I received a scholarship to study in France. I was a good student during my first year, but I later joined a progressive student movement, my scholarship was cancelled, and I returned to Kampuchea and joined the struggle against French colonialism. After 1954 I returned to Phnom Penh. I worked as a professor of history, geography and law in a private school, and in 1963 I had

to leave the city and join the partisans, where I stayed until 24 August 1975 when I returned to Phnom Penh.

TIME CODE: 27:35 – 27:48

VOICE-OVER: Pol Pot has been a member of the Communist Party Permanent Bureau since 1960, and the Central Committee Secretary since 1963.

TIME CODE: 27:55 – 28:05

VOICE-OVER: And this is where our story of Kampuchea in 1978 ends. Kampuchea, which has chosen its own course into the future.

AUTHORS

29:12 THE END