

BOOK REVIEWS

The Murderous Revolution: Life and Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea. By Martin Stuart-Fox, with drawings by Bunheang Ung. Australia: New South Wales, Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited (APCOL), 1985; and Bangkok: Tamarind Press, 1986.

Massacres are as old as mankind and there is no bestiality on an organized scale to which history does not bear witness. The geography of mass murder and starvation, of political incarceration and torture, from South Africa to the USSR, has today become routine and yet quite unreal. So readers may well be forgiven for being too weary to contemplate yet another book on the neverending sufferings of the Cambodian race, but where this volume is concerned, the recoil might profitably be resisted. Martin Stuart-Fox's book, based on the personal experience of a young Cambodian cartoonist (Bunheang Ung) who lived through the nightmare, is well worth a look.

At the time when the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, "Bun" was a student at the University of Fine Arts. Earlier, at the Fine Arts High School, also in Phnom Penh, a Russian teacher and cartoonist, Dimitri, had made a particular impression on him and did more than anyone else to shape his subsequent career as a cartoonist and animator. While at university, Bun worked part-time as a cartoonist for an independent newspaper, *Nokor Thom*, which had criticized both Lon Nol's policies and the Khmer Rouge. Martin Stuart-Fox's book provides a very readable, descriptive account of the horror that was to follow in the life of Bun and his family over the next five years, as Kampuchea under Pol Pot closed all its doors and descended into the jaws of hell. The author has also included a number of chapters summarily accounting for the rise of the Khmer Rouge, the power struggles and purges which tore the CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) apart as well as a perceptive and intelligent explanation of the thinking of that small group of ideologues who wielded such absolute power in Democratic Kampuchea. But he does not provide any new insights.

What really brought on the Cambodian apocalypse? Quite simply, the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime fought a civil war with the agrarian-Maoist forces of Pol Pot. To escape this war and U.S. bombings, Cambodia's rural populace fled into the urban centres. Then along came Pol Pot and his murderous cohorts who proceeded to reverse this process by an insanely logical evacuation of Phnom Penh, just as the Greeks emptied Troy, or the Romans, Carthage. The prime motivation for the evacuation, the author notes, was "the regime's ideological commitment to the creation of a one-class state. Evacuation of the capital was designed to remould the Kampuchean urban population". Finally, the Vietnamese army entered, driving all before them.

The superpowers played a major part in the equation. U.S. bombing led to the disintegration of an ancient and fragile society whilst the People's Republic of China propelled the Khmer Rouge on their road to madness and the USSR-backed Vietnam. This, at least, is what the chain of guilt looks like, though future historians may rule otherwise.

One thing is hideously clear, however — the legacy of despair and desolation, the murdered, starving millions, the psychological and physical scars which will cripple even the survivors. How many millions were butchered, we will never know. But Bunheang Ung

captures it all in his marvellous, surreal, sometimes comical, drawings of the macabre years of Pol Pot. What remained etched on his mind was a series of indelible images — of the stunned disoriented mass of people evacuating the capital of Phnom Penh, the brutal nastiness of Khmer Rouge cadres; the district prison; propaganda classes; the toothy, bloated and grinning face of Pol Pot; the consciousness-building seminars and the bodies of the dead. His drawings are a vivid glimpse of the irrational dimensions of man's inhumanity to man. This collection of Bunheang Ung's drawings is, as Martin Stuart-Fox notes, a unique record of the suffering of the Kampuchean people and a memorial to the dead. For that alone, this book is surely a valuable addition to the literature of a painful subject.

K.U. Menon

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Indonesia and Malaysia: Scandinavian Studies in Contemporary Society. Edited by Thommy Svensson and Per Sørensen. London and Malmö: Curzon Press, 1983. 282pp.

As co-editor Svensson says, the publication of this book is indeed "a remarkable event" in Scandinavian academic life, which traditionally has had its regional focus elsewhere than Southeast Asia. In the past, scholarly activities and direct commercial or practical contacts in the area have been small compared to those of the larger, colonial powers. However, upon the independence of the new regional states and the setting up of formal diplomatic links, scholarly interest in the region was co-ordinated by the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, a research body set up in 1967 in Copenhagen. Social anthropology, followed by the other social sciences, history and linguistic studies are the major fields of research at the Institute.

Several of the essays in this book were presented at a symposium held in 1977 in Sweden. The long incubation has resulted in a collection of nine essays, six of them written by academics attached to social anthropology departments at various Scandinavian universities. The geographical focus is mainly on Indonesia but Malaysia and the New Guinea Highlands also provide material for a few essays. The book has been broadly divided to represent three different lines of research in an attempt to organize the selection. A superficial glance at the essays does not give one the impression that this is justified. The book seems to contain detailed studies of a wide range of topics with possibly as wide a range of theoretical implications. However, a more thorough reading reveals that the book does indeed hold together.

Let us examine the individual contributions in this mosaic more closely. Elisabeth Lind demonstrates how the rhetoric used by Soekarno fits important traditional concepts of the Javanese people. The structural and rhetorical similarities between the two are clear and easily recognizable. This worked to Soekarno's advantage because it validated his position and popularity. The analysis, showing the apparent parallelism between two systems of ideas is interesting and difficult to ignore. But an awareness of its explanatory limitations reminds us of complementary approaches necessary for a fuller understanding of the charisma of Soekarno.

In the second essay, Lars Vikør charts the history of language policy planning aimed at integrating the population of new states like Indonesia and Malaysia. Focusing mainly on Indonesia, Vikør suggests that the social and the political implications be taken into account