S® to the NEWS

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LESSONS OF CAMBODIA

The bits and pieces of news that have percolated out of Cambodia since that country went behind the bamboo curtain last year are so horrible that it is almost as though we are hearing reports about a race of subhuman monsters on another planet. The human cost of Communism in that little country of s,000,000 people is staggering. Estimates range from 250,000 to 600,000 deaths since the Khmer Rouge came to power in April 1975 and drove the entire population of Phnom Penh out ivto the countryside. Those too sick or weak to walk fast enough were left on the ground to die.

The bloodbath in Cambodia clearly exceeds the most extreme pre dictions made prior to the fall of Southeast Asia. Cambodia now has no money, no markets, no telephones or telegraph, no shops, no private property, and no paid labor. Cambodia has banned the practice of religion and suspended marriage.

The people work like slaves from dawn to dusk under the tight military control of about 70,000 Khmer Rouge soldiers. Although there are relatively few of this new ruling class, the people do not challenge their power because of the savage threats to kill an entire village if one Red soldier is harmed.

The daily food ration is a cup of rice. Salt, sugar, meat, and fish are all rationed. The people scavenge for roots and edible insects, or try to trap fish with wicker baskets.

The 11>st frequent mistake of Americans in trying to anticipate what other governments will do is to make assumptions of what we think is rational, based on our scale of values. The trouble is, many other

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governments simply do not have our scale of values with its great reverence for life, liberty, and private property.

The lesson of Cambodia during the last year should cause us to reevaluate our assessment of the Soviet Union. The new relationship which Mr. Henry Kissinger has engineered between the United States and the Soviet Union is based on the assumption that the Soviets' desire to raise their standard of living through access to American methods of production and distribution will cause them to respond positively to our initiative, of grain, trade, technology, and long term credits.

As Cambodia makes clear, however, the principal objective of a Communist regime is not a higher standard of living, but total control over the minds and actions of everyone being. It matters not how many lives are sacrificed in the process.

A realistic review of Soviet behavior indicates that the men in the Kremlin are not motivated by any desire to give an automobile, a house, or a color television to every Russian family. The Kremlin bosses want total control regardless of the cost in human life. The British expert Robert Conquest estimates that the Soviet Communists have deliberately killed at least 30 million of their own people, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, with more first-hand sources, estimates 66 million. In the last ten years, the Soviet Union has diverted up to 40 percent of its Gross National Product into military weapons instead of improvements in the standard of living.

Since such a callous attitude toward human life and consumer wants is incomprehensible to most Americans, it would behoove us not to measure our own security in terms of what actions we think are rational for the Soviets to take, but rather on what they can do. Thus, when we calculate the level of military weapons we need for U.S. security, we should make sure that we have enough to defend our country against Soviet weapons capabilities -- rather than relying on assumptions about whether it is rational for the Soviets to start a war in which millions of their own people would die.

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