

During the first three months life was new, exciting and interesting. Everything we saw was different from what we were accustomed to and there was much to learn about the country: socially, politically, geographically and administratively. In the beginning we worked with the local Mixed Group, the representatives in our area of the Joint Commission, composed of an equal number of officers from both the Cambodian Army and the Communist forces. The job of the Mixed Group was to arrange the disbandment of the Khmer Resistance Forces (local communists), and the evacuation of the Viet Minh forces from Cambodia. Our task was to supervise these activities, and in many ways this was the most interesting part of our work in Kampot, working as we were with both Viet Minh and Cambodian officers.

Escort Duty

On one occasion the team, accompanied by a Cambodian and a Viet Minh officer, had to go by boat 90 miles, almost to the border of Thailand, to escort a few Viet Minh troops to the regrouping area at Chhuk, 25 miles north-east of Kampot. We took a small motor junk from Kampot and went down the river and out into the Gulf of Siam where we boarded a French Navy Patrol Craft (600 tons). This ship took us to Lem Dam where we picked up 26 Viet Minh (25 soldiers and one nurse). Each man carried a personal weapon, a bandolier of ammunition and a bandolier of rice. This latter was a tube of cloth about four inches in diameter and about four feet long. It was carried slung over the shoulder and contained about 6½ lbs. of rice, sufficient to feed one man for about 4 days. Besides this there were certain common stores: cooking utensils, dried fish, a mortar and ammunition, first aid kit, and similar items. The 26 were completely self contained and could move very quickly across the country. We escorted this group back to Chhuk without incident, and the Viet Minh seemed quite happy and in good spirits.

Several days later all the Viet Minh who had assembled at Chhuk (about 500; some with wives and children) were escorted to the Mekong River at Neak Luong where they embarked in French Navy craft bound for Viet Nam. The Cambodian Army provided the trucks and drivers and were responsible for the security of the convoy. We, in our white jeeps, escorted them; the Indians at the head of the column, the Canadians in the middle and the Poles in the rear. Due to excellent co-operation on both sides and the good security arrangements, the evacuation was carried out on schedule without any trouble. Troops of both sides carried loaded weapons.

Once all the Viet Minh were out of the country, our next job was to check on the re-integration of the disbanded Khmer Resistance Force personnel into the community, and to see that they were not subjected to reprisals. We received several complaints against the government but on investigation all were found to be groundless. During this period we visited nearly every district in the populated parts of the two provinces for which we were responsible, Kampot and Takeo. We visited the towns and numerous small villages, many accessible only on foot. One trip was made down the Takeo River in a small motor boat, another was made to Kompong Som Leou by boat, bicycle, foot and finally, elephant.

Many humorous incidents took place. In one village we were investigating a charge that the inhabitants were not allowed freedom of movement. We