

Local Reds Militant

'Hanoi Khmer' Tells Of Fear

BY ROBERT KAYLOR

PHNOM PENH (UPI)—Hem Hoeung, 40 years old: a shy little man who illustrates one reason it has been impossible to even make a start at negotiating an end to the war in Cambodia:

Just a shade over five feet tall, with curly black hair and two gold teeth, he was until two weeks ago one of the Hanoi-trained cadres that for the past four years have operated the Communist fighting machine here.

Then he and a comrade defected to the U.S. supported regime of Marshal Lon Nol—not for overriding ideological reasons but because they feared for their lives at the hands of local-grown Khmer Communists they say are moving to take control.

«They accuse those of us who went to Hanoi of turning our backs on our people, and they say we are revisionists,» said Hem, former Commander of the 302nd Battalion of the Khmer Liberation Army, speaking through an interpreter.

«Some of us have been killed already. I felt we were going to be eliminated,»

Observers here see several problems standing in the way of peace talks, among them are efforts of the ailing Lon Nol to take any real steps toward negotiations. The

case of Hem, one of about 20 of the so-called «Hanoi Khmers» who have started to quit fighting in the last few months, illustrates another.

North Vietnam, which formerly provided many of the troops in this sector of Indochina, has dropped into the background of the war here. But a mixed bag estimated at between 40,000 and 50,000 Khmer Communists and nationalists of various stripe fights.

It has by far been impossible to locate through diplomatic initiatives anyone who speaks for the entire movement.

For the U.S. government it has meant well over one billion dollars in aid and a new controversy over whether American military advisers are operating against the orders of Congress. For the Cambodian people, it means that the suffering and privation of war continue.

Communist radio broadcast say that the ousted former Chief of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, heads the exile government from his base in China but Hem dismisses them as propaganda.

«Sihanouk is purely a mouthpiece for the Khmer Communists,» he said, «I know what Sihanouk is doing in Peking is only a facade to get

more support from the peasants. I don't think the Khmer Communists will ever let Sihanouk come back.»

Hem said that his own instructions, constantly repeated in 16 long years of training in North Vietnam, were to return to Cambodia to promote a revolution to overthrow the royalist regime.

The son of a farmer in a southern province was a Viet-Minh soldier in the fighting against the French. When it ended in 1954 he boarded a Polish ship with about 1,000 other and was taken to North Vietnam. Analysts believe about double that number of «Hanoi Khmers» eventually went North.

They were Originally told they would return home in two years, but the order to start the march back to Cambodia did not come until April 1970.

Within one month of the ouster of Sihanouk by Lon Nol.

Hem and his fellow defector, Khun Savuthi 41, also a former battalion commander, both believe that most of the peasantry does not like the Communist system and that only a handful of the insurgent troops are volunteers. But they see little change of organized resistance to the Communists among the peasants at this stage.