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Cambodia for Christ

MAR 6 1975

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FILE

27th February 1975

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body." (Hebrews 13v3)

This letter comes to you with a plea for your continued and urgent prayers. As communist rockets pound Phnom Penh and the general situation there worsens please stand with us in prayer for our Christian brethren in Cambodia.

No doubt you will have heard through the media of the critical state of the capital, Phnom Penh. Swelling with refugees, hundreds arriving each day, the already crowded city now contains nearly three million people. The Mekong river has been closed to shipping (underwater mines having also been laid by insurgents), and without ships bringing in food supplies the city could starve. The government only holds about twenty percent of the river banks on the 142 miles between South Vietnam and Phnom Penh. Already children are suffering from extreme malnutrition, and though this has been happening since the war began it has worsened because of the food crisis. The world is no place for children when a war is in progress, they are the first to suffer especially if they have lost parents or relatives in the fighting. Wives and children often accompany their menfolk onto the battlefield, and young girls and boys barely out of school are taking up arms at 13 or 14 years of age. Cambodia is fighting for her existence.

Over 800 rockets have landed in Phnom Penh since the January offensive began, many well aimed, and yet no one knows where they will fall. Observers and diplomats express pessimism about Cambodia's chances of survival. The siege is taking its toll and reports say that unless a massive increase of rice and other supplies are airlifted in, then the essentials will completely run out in less than three weeks. The Americans are giving substantial aid and an increase may be forthcoming, this could be crucial if the city is to survive. Battambang in the East has had its railway link severed and this will cause hardships there.

An awful fact of Cambodia's war is that it has been forced upon them. An extract from an open letter from the Congress of Cambodian Intellectuals (12 May 1970) reads, "Cambodia wants to survive. We are a people more capable of love than hate. We are loyal. We are hospitable. These traditions have been challenged and we are compelled to fight for our existence!... We want Cambodians living within our cultural patterns, obeisant to none, proud of our heritage and respected by our neighbours and friends. We are fighting enemies who respect neither law nor religion; who, to succeed in their aim show no respect for life. ... We ask you to remember that this is not a civil war. Cambodia has been invaded by foreign enemies, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese.....Our country must be free." (Since this time the Khmer Rouge (Red Khmers) have increased in strength and now form the bulk of troops opposing the government.)

However, this is just one side of the picture-- but it needs to be painted in order to show us the need to pray. The other side of the picture is God's sovereign purposes.

In South Korea, Brazil and Indonesia a deliverance from communism came about just when a complete takeover seemed inevitable. In Cambodia in 1970 (when the war began), and in 1973 (when American bombing support ceased) it was predicted by observers and other experts that Cambodia would collapse. The Khmer Church fell on its knees before God in prayer for the preservation of their country - Cambodia survived. Only since 1970 was freedom of worship restored to Cambodia. Since then as you know, the Church has grown in a

Prayer and support for God's work and His Church in the Khmer Republic.

wonderful way and today many thousands have found Christ as Saviour. Over 25 congregations now exist in Phnom Penh alone, many in refugee camps and refugee areas. Hundreds are won to Christ each week and the response and openness to the gospel is unparalleled in the history of this country. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord."

Prayer can be the turning point yet again. The Khmer people need the chance to hear the Good News - they have had little opportunity compared to many other countries. If the communists take over, it is certain that the leaders of the Church would suffer imprisonment or death. Dear men of God who have been raised up for a time such as this would have no escape as the only way out of Phnom Penh is by air, and few flights now operate. (Bombing of the International airport has increased.) We ask you to pray for peace and the survival of Cambodia as a free nation not for any political motive, but that the gospel might continue to be preached and Jesus Christ worshipped openly there. If the worst should happen, then we recognise the Biblical principle that God can take up systems and governments alien to His rule to work out His purposes. We can trust in Him. The world sees the human elements yet does not account for the power of God.

The latest news sent from Asia on 26th February was that non-medical missionaries of the Christian & Missionary Alliance and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship withdrew on the 26th to Bangkok, Thailand. (Alice Compain flew out on the 27th). They have come out for a month initially, and some will use this time for Khmer language study.

They have left behind them many young Christians who will probably be demoralised because of this. Please pray for the national Christians, that God may strengthen them in the inner man and give them His peace. Many missionaries did not want to leave because of their commitments and calling, yet they have had to withdraw temporarily, possibly due to diplomatic pressure. Please pray for the medical missionaries who are still there at the time of writing. - Penelope Key of World Vision; Dr. Dean Kroh and wife; Carol Weston, Lynn Walsh, Mary Lou Rorabaugh and Barbara Neath of the C & MA. It is probable that these will be leaving shortly.

Remember their parents and loved ones too, may they know the assurance of the Lord.

We have no news yet of the Wycliffe workers, some of whom are working in the provinces.

We are asked to pray especially that God will make it possible for the Mekong river to be opened up. Without ships bringing in rice, fuel and stores the city (which needs some 500 tons of rice a day) could starve. Pray that the city of Phnom Penh will be set free and that many will find Life and Hope through Christ at this time."

Pray for faith, joy and peace for the Khmer Christians. May their trust be in God alone. Pray for protection, safety and courage to be given.

When the people of Israel fought the Amalekites Moses held up his hands and the Israelites prevailed. When he grew weary, Aaron and Hur stood one on each side of him and held up his hands for him, - "so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Israel won that battle. May we stand in prayer, and support the hands of the Khmer Church by our prayers and steadfastness, united with them in their time of need. We are all one Body.

If anyone wishes further news when it is available please write to our address or phone : 0962 68525 and we will give you any up to date information that we may have received.

If you wish to write to the Khmer Church to encourage them, (please do not write about the political situation as mail is censored), the address is; The Executive Secretary, The Khmer Evangelical Church, P.O. Box 568, Phnom Penh, Khmer Republic.

Thank you for praying.