



Pol Pot: Anatomy of a Nightmare (John MacRae Books)

Philip Short

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A gripping and definitive portrait of the man who headed one of the most enigmatic and terrifying regimes of modern times

In the three and a half years of Pol Pot's rule, more than a million Cambodians, a fifth of the country's population, were executed or died from hunger. An idealistic and reclusive figure, Pol Pot sought to instill in his people values of moral purity and self-abnegation through a revolution of radical egalitarianism. In the process his country descended into madness, becoming a concentration camp of the mind, a slave state in which obedience was enforced on the killing fields.

How did a utopian dream of shared prosperity mutate into one of the worst nightmares humanity has ever known? To understand this almost inconceivable mystery, Philip Short explores Pol Pot's life from his early years to his death. Short spent four years traveling throughout Cambodia interviewing the surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge movement, many of whom have never spoken before, including Pol Pot's brother-in-law and the former Khmer Rouge head of state. He also sifted through the previously closed archives of China, Russia, Vietnam, and Cambodia itself to trace the fate of one man and the nation that he led into ruin.

This powerful biography reveals that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were not a one-off aberration but instead grew out of a darkness of the soul common to all peoples. Cambodian history and culture combined with intervention from the United States and other nations to set the stage for a disaster whose horrors echo loudly in the troubling events of our world today.

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