



moral standard

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- In the video, Mr. Prager points out that the Second Commandment is still relevant because, “...today we have as many false gods as the ancients did.” What are some examples of modern false gods? In what ways do people still ‘worship’ false gods? Why is worshipping false gods a problem?
- In pointing out the importance of having one God to be worshipped, Mr. Prager also points out that, “...Only if we all have the same Creator, or Father, as it were, are we all brothers and sisters... having the same parent also means that no person or group is intrinsically more valuable than any other.” Why is this such a profound and significant truth? What is the relationship, then, between worshipping false gods and contributing to treating others poorly?
- Mr. Prager shares with us further meaning in the Second Commandment in that, “...one God means one moral standard for all people. If God declares murder wrong, it is wrong for everyone, and you can’t go to another god for another moral standard.” What does Mr. Prager mean by a ‘moral standard?’ Why is it so important to have a sole source for a moral standard?
- Later in the video, Mr. Prager explains that, “When anything else is worshipped, bad things result,” then goes on to challenge us to a moral dilemma, “Imagine that the pet you love and a stranger – a person you don’t know and therefore could not possibly love – are drowning. Do you first try to save your pet or the stranger? Well, if love is an end in itself, you save your pet. But if you hold human life as a higher value than love, you won’t follow love.” How does this scenario relate to worshipping a false god? What would you do in the scenario? Explain.
- Mr. Prager ends the video by summing up, “Worship the God of the Ten Commandments and you will make a good world. Worship a false god – no matter how noble sounding – and you will end up with a world of cruelty.” How exactly does worshipping the God of the Ten Commandments lead to a good world? How does worshipping false gods lead to a world of cruelty? Do you think that there is a proportion commensurate with the number of people worshipping the God of the Ten Commandments and the world being good (or conversely the number of people worshipping false gods and the world being bad)? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Saloth Sar

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Pol Pot, Butcher of Cambodia,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Who was Saloth Sar, and what did he do? How and why did he become Pol Pot?
- What were Pol Pot’s false gods? What was the outcome of his worshipping his false gods?
- Which part of the Second Commandment did Pol Pot’s actions most egregiously violate? Explain.



QUIZ

NO OTHER GODS

1. The Second Commandment only prohibits the worship of idols and ancient pagan gods.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. What number is this commandment according to Christian tradition?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four

3. One God means_____.
 - a. One human race.
 - b. No person or group is intrinsically more valuable than any other.
 - c. One moral standard for all people.
 - d. All of the above.

4. Why is this commandment so relevant today?
 - a. It isn't relevant.
 - b. Today we have as many false gods as the ancients did.
 - c. Today we have exponentially more false gods than the ancients did.
 - d. We worship the same idols now that the ancients did.

5. A person that has a PhD. guarantees what?
 - a. They are wiser than a person with a high school education.
 - b. They are kinder than a person with a high school education.
 - c. They are more ethical than a person with a high school education.
 - d. It doesn't guarantee anything.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://asianhistory.about.com/od/cambodia/p/Pol-Pot-Biography.htm>

Pol Pot, Butcher of Cambodia



ONLINE USA 1/4/98 Anlong Veng, Cambodia. NO SYNDICATION FRANCE OR GERMANY. A WTN cameraman videotaped an interview with former Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot in the rebels' Cambodian stronghold of Anlong Veng on Sunday. Photo © WTN Pictures/Online USA, Inc.
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Pol Pot, former Khmer Rouge leader of Cambodia responsible for the Killing Fields, shortly before his death in 1998. Getty Images



[By Kallie Szczepanski](#)
[Asian History Expert](#)

Pol Pot. The name is synonymous with horror.

Even in the blood-drenched annals of [twentieth-century history](#), Pol Pot's [Khmer Rouge](#) regime in Cambodia stands out for the sheer scale and senselessness of its atrocities. In the name of creating an agrarian communist revolution, Pol Pot and his underlings killed at least 1.5 million of their own people in the infamous Killing Fields. They wiped out between 1/4 and 1/5 of the country's entire population.

Who would do this to their own nation? What kind of monster kills millions in the name of erasing a century of "modernization"? Who *was* Pol Pot?

Early Life:

A child named Saloth Sar was born in March of 1925, in the little fishing village of Prek Svay, [French Indochina](#). His family was ethnically mixed, Chinese and Khmer, and comfortably middle-class. They owned fifty acres of rice-paddies, which was ten times as much as most of their neighbors, and a large house that stood on stilts in case the river flooded. Saloth Sar was the eighth of their nine children.

Saloth Sar's family had connections with the Cambodian royal family.

His aunt had a post in the future King Norodom's household, and his first cousin Meak as well as his sister Roeung served as royal concubines. Saloth Sar's elder brother Suong was also an officer at the palace.

When Saloth Sar was ten years old, his family sent him 100 mile south to the capital city of [Phnom Penh](#) to attend the Ecole Miche, a French Catholic school. He was not a good student. Later, the boy transferred to a technical school in Kompong Cham, where he studied carpentry.

His academic struggles during his youth would actually stand him in good stead in decades to come, given the Khmer Rouge's anti-intellectual policies.

French Technical College:

Probably because of his connections rather than his scholastic record, the government gave him a scholarship to travel to [Paris](#), and pursue higher education in the field of electronics and radio technology at the Ecole Francaise d'Electronique et d'Informatique (EFRIE). Saloth Sar was in France from 1949 to 1953; he spent most of his time learning about Communism rather than electronics.

Inspired by [Ho Chi Minh's](#) declaration of Vietnamese independence from France, Saloth joined the Marxist Circle, which dominated the Khmer Students' Association in Paris.

He also joined the French Communist Party (PCF), which lionized the uneducated rural peasantry as the true proletariat, in opposition to [Karl Marx's](#) designation of the urban factory-workers as the proletariat.

Return to Cambodia:

Saloth Sar flunked out of college in 1953. Upon his return to [Cambodia](#), he scouted out the various anti-government rebel groups for the PCF, and reported that the Khmer Viet Minh was the most effective.

Cambodia became independent in 1954 along with [Vietnam](#) and [Laos](#), as part of the Geneva Agreement which France used to extract itself from the [Vietnam War](#). Prince Sihanouk played the different political parties in Cambodia off against one another and fixed elections; nonetheless, the leftist opposition was too weak to seriously challenge him either at the ballot box or through guerrilla war. Saloth Sar became a go-between for the officially recognized left-wing parties and the communist underground.

On July 14, 1956, Saloth Sar married teacher Khieu Ponnary. Somewhat incredibly, he got work as a lecturer in French history and literature at a college called Chamraon Vichea. By all reports, his students loved the soft-spoken and friendly teacher. He would soon move up within the communist sphere, as well.

Pol Pot Assumes Control of Communists:

Throughout 1962, the Cambodian government cracked down on communist and other left-wing parties. It arrested party members, shut down their newspapers, and even killed important communist leaders while they were in custody. As a result, Saloth Sar moved up the ranks of surviving party members.

In early 1963, a small group of survivors elected Saloth as Secretary of the Communist Central Committee of Cambodia. By March, he had to go into hiding when his name appeared on a list of people wanted for questioning in connection with leftist activities. Saloth Sar escaped to North Vietnam, where he made contact with a [Viet Minh](#) unit.

With support and cooperation from the much better-organized Vietnamese Communists, Saloth Sar arranged for a Cambodian Central Committee meeting early in 1964. The Central Committee called for armed struggle against the Cambodian government, (rather ironically) for self-reliance in the sense of independence from the Vietnamese Communists, and for a revolution based on the agrarian proletariat, or peasantry, rather than the "working class" as Marx envisioned it.

When Prince Sihanouk unleashed another crack-down against leftists in 1965, a number of elites such as teachers and college students fled the cities and joined the nascent Communist guerrilla movement taking shape in the countryside. In order to become revolutionaries, however, they had to give up their books and drop out. They would become the first members of the Khmer Rouge.

Khmer Rouge Take-Over of Cambodia:

In 1966, Saloth Sar returned to Cambodia and renamed the party the CPK - Communist Party of Kampuchea. The party began to plan for a revolution, but was caught off-guard when peasants across the country rose up in anger over the high price of food in 1966; the CPK was left standing.

It wasn't until January 18, 1968 that the CPK started its uprising, with an attack on an army base near Battambang. Although the Khmer Rouge did not overrun the base entirely, they were able to seize a weapons cache which they turned against the police in villages across Cambodia.

As violence escalated, Prince Sihanouk went to Paris, then ordered protesters to picket the Vietnamese embassies in Phnom Penh. When the protests got out of hand, between March 8 and 11, he then denounced the protesters for destroying the embassies as well as ethnic Vietnamese churches and homes. The National Assembly learned of this capricious chain of events, and voted Sihanouk out of power on March 18, 1970.

Although the Khmer Rouge had consistently railed against Sihanouk in its propaganda, the Chinese and Vietnamese communist leaders convinced him to support the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk went on the radio and called for the Cambodian people to take up arms against the government, and fight for the Khmer Rouge. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese army also was invading Cambodia, pressing the Cambodian army back to less than 25 kilometers from Phnom Penh.

Killing Fields - Cambodian Genocide:

In the name of agrarian communism, the Khmer Rouge decided to completely and immediately remake Cambodian society as a utopian farming nation, free of all foreign influence and the trappings of modernity. They immediately abolished all private property, and seized all products of field or factory. The people who lived in cities and towns - some 3.3 million - were driven out to work in the countryside. They were labeled "depositees," and were given very short rations with the intention of starving them to death. When party leader Hou Youn objected to the emptying of Phnom Penh, Pol Pot labeled him a traitor; Hou Youn disappeared.

Pol Pot's regime targeted intellectuals - including anyone with an education, or with foreign contacts - as well as anyone from the middle or upper classes. Such people were tortured horrifically, including by electrocution, pulling out of finger and toenails, and being skinned alive, before they were killed. All of the doctors, the teachers, the Buddhist monks and nuns, and the engineers died. All of the national army's officers were executed.

Love, sex and romance were outlawed, and the state had to approve marriages. Anyone caught being in love or having sex without official permission was executed. Children were not allowed to go to school or to play - they were expected to work, and would be summarily killed if they balked.

Incredibly, the people of Cambodia did not really know who was doing this to them. Saloth Sar, now known to his associates as Pol Pot, never revealed his identity or that of his party to the ordinary people. Intensely paranoid, Pol Pot reportedly refused to sleep in the same bed two nights in a row for fear of assassination.

The Angka included only 14,000 members, but through secrecy and terror tactics, they ruled a country of 8 million citizens absolutely. Those people who were not killed immediately worked in the fields from sun-up to sun-down, seven days a week. They were separated from their families, ate in communal dining messes, and slept in military-style barracks.

The government confiscated all consumer goods, piling vehicles, refrigerators, radios and air conditioners up in the streets and burning them. Among the activities utterly banned were music-making, prayer, using money and reading. Anyone who disobeyed these restrictions ended up in an extermination center, or got a swift axe-blow to the head in one of the [Killing Fields](#).

Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge sought nothing less than the reversal of hundreds of years of progress. They were willing and able to erase not only the symbols of modernization, but also the people associated with it. Initially the elites bore the brunt of Khmer Rouge excesses, but by 1977 even peasants ("base people") were being massacred for offenses such as "using happy words."

Nobody knows exactly how many Cambodians were murdered during Pol Pot's reign of terror, but the lower estimates tend to cluster around 1.5 million, while others estimate 3 million, out of a total population of just over 8 million.

Vietnam Invades:

Throughout Pol Pot's reign, border skirmishes flared from time to time with the Vietnamese. A May 1978 uprising by non-Khmer Rouge communists in eastern Cambodia prompted Pol Pot to call for the extermination of all Vietnamese (50 million people), as well as of the 1.5 million Cambodians in the eastern sector. He made a start on this plan, massacring more than 100,000 of the eastern Cambodians by the end of the year.

However, Pol Pot's rhetoric and actions gave the Vietnamese government a reasonable pretext for war. [Vietnam](#) launched an all-out invasion of Cambodia, and overthrew Pol Pot. He fled to the Thai borderlands, while the Vietnamese installed a new, more moderate communist government in Phnom Penh.

Continued Revolutionary Activity:

Pol Pot was put on trial in absentia in 1980, and sentenced to death. Nonetheless, from his hideout in the Malai district of Banteay Meanchey Province, near the Cambodia/Thailand border, he continued to direct [Khmer Rouge](#) actions against the Vietnamese-controlled government for years. He announced his "retirement" in 1985, supposedly due to problems with [asthma](#), but continued to direct the Khmer Rouge

behind the scenes. Frustrated, the Vietnamese attacked the western provinces and drove the [Khmer](#) guerrillas into [Thailand](#); Pol Pot would live in Trat, Thailand for several years.

In 1989, the Vietnamese withdrew their troops from Cambodia. Pol Pot had been living in [China](#), where he underwent treatment for facial [cancer](#). He soon returned to western Cambodia, but refused to take part in negotiations for a coalition government. A hard core of Khmer Rouge loyalists continued to terrorize the western regions of the country, and waged guerrilla war on the government.

In June of 1997, Pol Pot was arrested and put on trial only for the murder of his friend Son Sen. He was sentenced to house arrest for the remainder of his life.

Pol Pot's Death and Legacy:

On April 15, 1998, Pol Pot heard the news on a [Voice of America](#) radio program that he was going to be turned over to an international tribunal for trial. He died that night; the official cause of death was heart failure, but his hasty cremation raised suspicions that it might have been suicide.

In the end, it is difficult to assess Pol Pot's legacy. Certainly, he was one of the bloodiest tyrants in history. His delusional plan for reforming Cambodia did set the country back, but it hardly created an agrarian utopia. Indeed, it is only after four decades that Cambodia's wounds are beginning to heal, and some sort of normalcy is returning to this utterly ravaged nation. But a visitor does not even have to scratch the surface to find the scars of Cambodia's [Orwellian](#) nightmare under the rule of Pol Pot.