

KAP Danish delegation to Democratic Kampuchea 1978:

There were things we thought were politically strange

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It was not only Swedes who travelled to Cambodia. There was a Danish delegation from the Communist [Workers Party of Denmark](#) (KAP) (sometimes translated as the Communist Labor Party of Denmark) in the country shortly before the Swedish delegation. In the afterword to the Danish edition of the book, Fröberg Idling, notes that they were somewhat more critical in their view of the state of the country, which led to the KAP later revising their support for the DK regime.

The Danish delegation led by Peter Bischoff had in the spring of 1978 been invited to China by the People's Daily, and it was during his stay in Beijing, the delegation suddenly received an invitation from Phnom Penh to visit. The Delegation of Peter Bischoff and Svend Aage Madsen, both in their mid-twenties, visit to Cambodia lasted one week, from 29 July to 5 August 1978 during the visit the Danes met with "brother number two", Nuon Chea. There was a record of his talk published later [1978-07 CPK Nuon Chea statement](#) and its significance was discussed by Cambodian scholar, Dr Laura Summers [WPS2 2 Summers-Comment0001](#).

The series of reports in the party press upon their return to Denmark reflected, after initial enthusiasm, some scepticism to the development in Cambodia: "The original articles were characterized by a biased determination to believe in it all and be impressed" Peter Bischoff would later explain, "There were things we thought were politically strange" There were some reservations about the abolition of the money economy and the depreciation of the old working class, but the main reservations about the Communist Party policy was the relationship of the Kampuchean population, which could not assess because of the secrecy. In the descriptions of agricultural collectives in the internal report, the delegation wrote that they had been initiated in a war situation, and therefore it was *"hard to distinguish between what is a result of the situation, the necessity of the people could understand, and what is the result of some element of compulsion ... They [the Khmer Rouge] speaks of the population through participating in agricultural and see the concrete results understand the line and ends up on the – that they have not made it just enthusiastic from the start."*

During a visit to a pharmaceutical factory in Phnom Penh the Danish guests saw only children and very young workers and were told that the old working class had been sent to re-education in rural areas. In connection with the reconstruction of the cities the delegates told the press immediately upon their return that the country's industrial production was resumed on the outskirts of Phnom Penh:

“Here we include in Phnom Penh seen several industries and many small workshops. And Foreign Minister Ieng Sary recently in an interview to Le Monde said – and it is similar to what we saw and was told – that you will repopulate the cities as the reconstruction of the industry. But they emphasize that they do not want to restore the towns entirely consumer-cities. And we have also both on a shipbuilding and more schools seen how alongside its own production or teaching also grow vegetables, yes, in some places even rice to feed themselves. “

IN the KAP’s press reports they were publicly silent about what they internally discussed as the negative aspects of Democratic Kampuchea, principally because the articles were regarded as a response to the hostile Western press coverage of the situation in Cambodia. So despite their reservations, it was reported that “the Kampuchean society seems to contain many real, strong and forward-looking feature.” However a result of the internal confidential report to the KAP leadership saw plans for a formal link with the Communist Party of Kampuchea abandoned. The more sceptical viewpoint of the KAP delegation was discussed in Peter Frederiksen book *Kiss on the Cheek of Pol Pot – Cambodia and the Danish connection*, published by Lindhardt and Ringhof in 2004.