

Summary

Three travelers were kidnapped while touring Cambodia after the train they were journeying on was ambushed by a twenty strong Khmer Rouge raiding party. The young men were Australian national DAVID WILSON (29) British national MARK SLATER (28) and French national JEAN-MICHEL BRAQUET (27).

The guerrilla group who hijacked the train was led by the Khmer Rouge's most celebrated war hero COLONEL CHHOUK RIN. The hostages were then marched for six days through rugged Cambodian terrain until they reached a mountain hideout and Khmer Rouge stronghold Phnom Vour, (Vine Mountain).

The hostages were held captive in Pol Pot's almost impenetrable mountain fortress while negotiations took place. The jungle refuge had survived for sixteen years and withstood offensives from the American backed South Vietnamese Army, the Unified Vietnamese Army, and the Royal Cambodian Army.

When news broke that an Australian national was part of the kidnapped trio, the Australian government publicly cited the, No Negotiation, No Ransom Policy. But David Wilson's family were hopeful because Australia's Foreign Minister GARETH EVANS had influence with the Royal Cambodian Army and the Prime Minister of Cambodia and current ruler Hun Sen.

The Australian Prime Minister PAUL KEATING had hoped to build a presence in Southeast Asia and he had recently exploited Cambodia's internal conflict to become involved in the region. Australia's Foreign Minister had also become internationally famous after arranging peacekeeping forces to enter the country one year earlier.

The leaders of Britain and France were aware of Australia's commitment to Cambodia and unwilling to interfere with the machinations of America's Central Intelligence Agency. The leaders of both countries handed responsibility for negotiations over to the Australian politicians.

Despite the no negotiation and no ransom policy, most believed Australia's Foreign Minister would utilize his contacts to assist with the negotiations. He refused to become involved however and it created a public outcry and media condemnation in his home country.

The Australian Foreign Minister understood, however, that Cambodia's Prime Minister was a former Khmer Rouge Officer who was being backed by the newly unified country of Vietnam. And that America's C.I.A. was using the United Nations to shield Pol Pot from war crime investigations so they could bring down the new governments Vietnamese administrators.

Unfortunately, three young backpackers who were foolish enough to catch a train to a war zone, found themselves caught in the middle of the Australian politician's diplomatic grandstanding and Cambodia's political turmoil.

The bodies of the backpackers were found buried in a shallow grave three months after they were kidnapped. Mark Slater and Jean Michel Braquet had been shot once while David Wilson had been executed by blunt force trauma.

The parents of the backpackers then sought justice for the next 20 years. The main perpetrators were captured and sent to prison where they eventually died. Then after a thirteen-year Colonial Inquest, the Australian government was cleared of any culpability in the David Wilson kidnap case in 2013.