

early 1980

Family tell of escape from terror

A Cambodian family told in Oxford how they managed to survive the holocaust which griped their country.

They fled from their war-

By ROY COOPER

torn home to neighbouring Thailand, and then they were flown to England.

Their escape to freedom was nothing less than a miracle, for at times the children — Somaly,

ten, and Panita, six, — were so weak from hunger, they could hardly open their eyes.

The family, led by mother Mrs Var Hong, 31, and her sister Vyada, 22, were forced to work in the jungle when the Communists took over in 1975.

Mrs Hong Who was a teacher, said: "In the jungle, the soldiers would shoot about three people a day.

"They killed anyone who was intelligent. I came close to death when I had to pretend I was not a teacher and once when I bought rice."

When the Vietnamese invasion came, the family ran through the jungle for 16 hours with other refugees, crossing the border into Thailand.

But there the nightmare was not over for 1,700 refugees were sent back. Her family stayed because she was being treated for anthrax in hospital.

Service

They were helped to fly to England by the Christian Outreach Organisation, set up to help children in need by the Rev. Patrick Ashe, in 1968.

Last night the Cambodian family visited Westminster College, Oxford, where Mr Ashe's son, Andrew, 21, is studying.

They were guests at the college evening service.

The college has been raising money for the Cambodia appeal, and the college chaplain, the Rev. Tony Perry, said: "Since Andrew's family was involved in saving them, we thought it would be an ideal opportunity to meet them and discover the true situation."

The family has also appeared on Blue Peter to highlight the children's Cambodia appeal.



Pictured with Andrew Ashe, the Cambodian family which visited Oxford yesterday, left to right: Mrs Var Hong, Panita Hong, Somaly Hong and Vyada Hong.