

**Intrepid larrikins defied Pol Pot's killers**  
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In late November 1978, in the Killing Fields of Cambodia, a 35-year-old Sydney pub and club worker Ronald Keith Dean signed a confession that he was an operative for the CIA.

Three weeks later, another Australian, David Lloyd Scott, signed a similar statement detailing years of anti-communist activity and a long career with the premier US spy agency.

Dean and Scott, two knockabout Aussies, who had embarked on a Southeast Asian yachting adventure and strayed into contested waters, thinking they were in Thailand, were, of course, nothing of the sort. Captured by the Khmer Rouge and undoubtedly terrified in Pol Pot's S-21 death camp, they produced a final act of defiance.

Now with the discovery of confessions which were buried in a Cambodian archive and testimonies to a war crimes tribunal in Phnom Penh, the full details of their capture, interrogation and murder are emerging. Their forced confessions, which have emerged 30 years after their deaths, cast new light on the enduring mystery over their disappearance and have again thrown into stark relief the brutality and paranoia of the Pol Pot death machine.

They also tell a tale of bravery and creativity under the gravest pressure, with Scott spinning a yarn of how Muresk College in Western Australia was a CIA training farm that churned out "active probationary CIA agents".

Scott, a former roadie with West Australian rock band Bakery, thumbed his nose at his captors, naming members of the band entourage, such as manager John Hopkins, as a CIA agent and saying he was recruited into the CIA by a "Mr Magoo". Dean also treated his torturers with contempt, spinning a fanciful tale of being recruited into the CIA in Prague.

But with their signatures on each page of the confessions and their thumbprints at the end of the documents, they were effectively signing their death warrants at the hands of Pol Pot's brutal regime. Documents obtained by The Weekend Australian show the two men were among about a dozen foreigners, including other yachtsmen, killed at the death camp.

Confirmation of their deaths has also cast new light on Andrew Peacock's resignation as the Fraser government's foreign minister in 1981 over his unease at Australia's decision to

recognise Pol Pot's regime under pressure from China.

Pol Pot's infamous extermination centre, through the entrance of which passed about 16,000 victims, lies off a quiet, dusty side street in the southern suburbs of Cambodia's bustling river port capital, Phnom Penh. Khmer know the old French lycee as Tuol Sleng, or Hill of Poisoned Trees. According to testimony to a UN-backed war crimes tribunal inquiring into the genocide in the Killing Fields, Dean or Scott died in horrific circumstances.

"At least one of the yachtsmen may have been killed on Mao Tse Tung Boulevard ... In this instance on an unknown date in 1978, a witness indicated that he observed a Westerner being taken to this location and incinerated on a pile of automobile tyres. It was stated that this prisoner was alive when set alight."

Scott and Dean met in December 1977 after spending their lives a continent apart. Scott had brushed with fame as a roadie for the band Bakery, while Dean had worked in pubs and casinos and travelled through Britain, Zimbabwe, South Africa and the then Czechoslovakia.

"I guess I just want to know what happened," said Jenny Morgan, a friend of Dean from his Sydney days.

"They took off on a carefree adventure and it went pear-shaped, and it just seems so unfair that nothing was ever done about it."

Peter Walker, a former guitarist with Bakery, has been haunted by Scott's disappearance for three decades. He remembers Scott as a knockabout country bloke who was the band's ever-reliable roadie.

"Dave was a very solid friend to the band and not forgotten by Hank (Davis, drummer) or John (Hopkins, the manager)," Walker told The Weekend Australian yesterday. "Dave was loyal and showed surprising enterprise and ability. His confession sadly demonstrates that behind the laconic farmer boy was a very creative mind."

Yesterday, Scott's sister-in-law, Pauline Scott, was reluctant to speak about the case after more than 30 years. "Let us hope and push the government in any way possible to actually make sure that these people who just carried out these atrocities are actually brought to justice," she said.

Former West Australian agriculture minister Kim Chance grew up near the Scotts' farm and was in Scott's year at Wesley. Chance said when he read Scott's 1978 "confession", he knew his former school mate had not been defeated.

"There was some real black humour in there," he said. "I knew it was meant to be seen as a funny document by those who knew him. I have been to Cambodia ... I just felt haunted by David the whole time I was there."

Dean and Scott met after Scott accepted an invitation from commercial diver and friend Kim Barnaby for a sailing holiday in Southeast Asia. The three men met in The Philippines and sailed to Brunei, where Barnaby left the yacht.

Scott and Dean continued for the final leg of their voyage to Sattahip, a port in southeast Thailand. But two days away from their destination, they were arrested by a Khmer patrol boat.

A war crimes tribunal in Phnom Penh is starting to shed new light on the fate of the two men and other Westerners, including four Americans, three Frenchmen, a Briton and a New Zealander. Held apart from the Cambodians, they were kept shackled by leg irons in a special section of Tuol Sleng reserved for "important prisoners".

They were fed twice a day -- a gruel of "banana stalk soup" or sometimes a little rice if they were lucky. Their toilet was an ammunition case and they were washed with a firehose. And they were tortured, beaten and given electric shocks to obtain the correct confession of offences.