1. CAMBODIA

In the spring of 1993, I arrived in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. As a member of the HALO Trust, my mission was to clear landmines. I spent the first month learning how to do this. Then I was sent to work in the area around Pursatt, a town northwest of Phnom Penh. My job there was to train and lead about a hundred deminers.

My day started at 5 o'clock. First I prepared and checked all the equipment. Then at 6 o'clock I set off with the interpreter and the team. When we arrived at the work area, the deminers were split up into pairs and started their work.

Here I'd like to explain how landmines are removed. The work is highly dangerous. The tension is so great that deminers usually take it in turn to work in thirty-minute shifts. While one works, the other keeps careful watch. They first cut the vegetation ahead of them in metre-wide lanes, then slowly pass the metal detector over the ground. Whenever the detector makes a noise, they gently prod the ground with a metal rod to find the metal.

Progress is slow. They work for six hours, during which time they clear about between three and six m2. The average number of mines cleared in one day is between two and six per person. When a mine is discovered, it is blown up in the presence of the leader. Once a space is free of mines, white sticks are stuck in the ground around it. This space is called a safety lane. It is safe to walk there.

I am sometimes asked, 'Can't the work be done more scientifically, or with machines?' I have to admit that doing the work manually seems slow and ineffective. But if machines are used, the success rate is only 90%. Besides, vibrations from the machines may cause mines to explode.

Here is another common question: 'The number of landmines is huge, isn't it? And yet every day you continue to clear them, one by one. Don't you think the task is hopeless? Surely it will take hundreds of years to get rid of all those mines.'

This is a good point. Even if all the deminers in the world do their very best, the number of landmines that can be cleared in one year is thought to be around 100,000. Compare that with the total number of mines hidden under ground, which is 110,000,000. In Cambodia alone there are said to be 8,000,000 landmines.

And yet, thanks to the small steps taken by us, there are now fields in Cambodia and other countries where people can walk freely, safe from the terror of landmines. I have seen the happiness on the faces of the owners of those fields when they came to thank us. And I have seen the tears in their eyes. At such moments, it is clear to me that this ineffective work is worth doing.

After a year and eight months in Cambodia, I was transferred to Mozambique.

EXERCISES (1)

Ａ　本文の内容に合うものにはＴ、合わないものにはＦを書きなさい．

(1) I trained and led about a hundred deminers in Phnom Penh. ( )

(2) When removing landmines, two people work at the same time. ( )

(3) I think that removing mines manually is better than using machines to do the work. ( )

(4) I think that it is hopeless to clear mines one by one, because the number of mines is huge. ( )

Ｂ　日本文の意味に合うように、（　）に適語を入れなさい．

(1) 彼は出かけるときはいつもかさを持っていく．

( ) he goes out, he carries an umbrella.

(2) 大雪のために、彼らは家に閉じこもっていた．

The heavy snow ( ) them ( ) stay indoors.

(3) 空き缶を全部取り除きなさい．

Get ( ) ( ) all the empty cans.

(4) 大阪弁と標準語を比べてみよう．

Let's ( ) the Osaka dialect ( ) standard Japanese.

(5) この雑誌は読む価値がある．

This magazine is ( ) ( ).