

*Searching for*

# THE TRUTH



- ◆ When Genocide Justice is Unfair
- ◆ The Meeting with Duch

*«It was the happiest day of my life. There would be no days that are happier than the day I found my father...I feel as if I found my father alive.»*

*-- Chuon Reaksa*

**Special**  
English Edition  
Third Quarter 2012

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80-year-old Ieng Thirith, a former Minister of Social Affairs during Democratic Kampuchea was released on September 16, 2012 after the court found that she was unfit to stand trial. (Photo by ECCC)

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LETTER FROM YOUK CHHANG:

# WHEN GENOCIDE JUSTICE IS UNFAIR

The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) recently confirmed that Case 002 accused Ieng Thirith is unfit to stand trial as a result of suffering a progressive form of cognitive impairment. Despite being long-anticipated, this news remains a difficult reality for many victims of the Khmer Rouge to accept.

This is especially true when Ieng Thirith's specific role in the Khmer Rouge movement is considered. She has routinely been mislabelled the "First Lady" of the Khmer Rouge in the international press, a title that is both inaccurate and misleading. Ieng Thirith was not a passive individual who became linked to the Khmer Rouge solely through her status as Ieng Sary's wife and Pol Pot's sister-in-law, but was an influential party member who wielded nationwide power as the regime's Minister of Social Affairs. Indeed, in this role, Ieng Thirith was personally and directly involved in denying Cambodians with even the most basic of health care during the regime's years in power. Thus, for victims, Ieng Thirith's access to world class health care and multiple medical experts stands in stark contrast to the improvised and often deadly brand of "health care" she helped the Khmer Rouge impose.

In addition to the special medical attention Ieng Thirith has been receiving, it is also difficult for victims and indeed, all Cambodians to accept the especially vigorous enforcement of Ieng Thirith's rights taking place at the ECCC. Even the most basic defense rights remain a largely abstract concept in Cambodian courts and so the ECCC's statements about fair trial rights and rights of an accused are strange and foreign concepts to the average Cambodian person. Again, the failings of the Cambodia's criminal justice system are largely a legacy of the Khmer Rouge's decimation of Cambodia's institutions and civil society, creating a palpable sense of injustice for victims who see Ieng Thirith receiving a level of due process no Cambodian accused can expect when prosecuted even for minor crimes in local courts.

Yet, even if Ieng Thirith is ultimately wins the race against time and accountability and is never prosecuted for her role in the Khmer Rouge, this unfortunate turn of events could still be utilized as part of the larger transitional justice process taking place in Cambodia.

First, Ieng Thirith's unfitness is not fatal to the larger justice-seeking process currently underway at the ECCC in Case 002 and will hopefully reinforce the need for the Court to move forward in the case against other Khmer Rouge leaders with all urgency.

Also, the treatment Ieng Thirith has received can be a symbol of defiant compassion as a powerful counterpoint to the complete lack of compassion demonstrated by the Khmer Rouge regime. Some satisfaction can be salvaged from victims being stripped of the opportunity to hold Ieng Thirith to account in a court of law by refusing to compromise basic fair trial standards, even in the face of the horrific crimes she stands accused of. Moreover, the complex mental health issues at play at the ECCC can be used to underscore the ongoing mental health problems pervasive in Cambodia that are a legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime.

During the Khmer Rouge period, the regime fought violently against even the most basic of human emotions and saw even the slightest sign of pain, such as a headache, as a symbol of weakness and imperialism. People with serious mental health issues, such as those which Ieng Thirith now suffers, were simply discarded by the regime as symbols of social weakness that needed to be excised. Now, Ieng Thirith is defiantly being shown the compassion that she actively worked to eradicate as a Khmer Rouge Minister. While this is a painful lesson for victims, hopefully in the long run it will be seen as a small victory for justice and human dignity.

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***Youk Chhang is the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.***

# CAMBODIA: CHAIRMAN OF ASEAN 2012

I would like to welcome our many guests to Cambodia, who have come from throughout the region for official ASEAN meetings and engagement between ASEAN representatives and civil society.

As Cambodians, we are proud to host ASEAN in 2012. Our history has had dark chapters, when we were cut off from much of the world and the surrounding region. It is ironic that the country of Angkor Wat—one of the most magnificent sites in Southeast Asia—was the last to join ASEAN just thirteen years ago.

When we Cambodians look back, we see a painful past, but when we look forward, we see great opportunities to grow and to build bridges with our ASEAN partners. We see an obligation to help Cambodians remember, heal, and build a brighter future after the Khmer Rouge. We also see an obligation to share our experiences with our Southeast Asian friends to build a brighter regional future together.

Overcoming the Khmer Rouge legacy is about ensuring the right to life. The Khmer Rouge took from us our most basic necessities—love, livelihoods, family, and faith. We have to work to restore and protect those basic rights and freedoms across the ASEAN region. Here in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge tribunal is helping move us in a positive direction. It has aroused debate among Cambodians to an extent rarely seen in Cambodian history. Almost everyone in Cambodia has suffered in some way as a result of the Khmer Rouge tragedy.

Some of that debate has been tense, as citizens disagree about the requirements of key concepts like justice and reconciliation. But the dialogue restores a sense of equality among people, a sense that they are free to participate in public discussions and to have their voices heard. These basic freedoms create a culture of debate and deliberation. That culture is the

foundation for a strong democracy.

A culture of dialogue helps Cambodians air their differences with mutual respect. Peaceful means of disagreement help to decrease violence and promote healing at individual and community levels. Dialogue and debate also infuse energy and creativity into our schools and promote better learning about the past and about necessary skills for building a strong society in the future.

Particularly important are the voices of women and ethnic minorities. Here in Cambodia, a majority of survivors of the Khmer Rouge period are women. Many have struggled to raise children alone and have been keys to rebuilding our society, but they have had too little voice. Ethnic minorities also need to be included in the dialogue. If the Khmer Rouge genocide reminds us of anything, it is the need to protect the vulnerable groups in society.

Dialogue is also a key to ensuring respect for basic rights in the ASEAN region. We welcome the creation of the new ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights and progress toward an ASEAN human rights declaration. We encourage ASEAN officials to use them as ways to engage with citizens. That means a strong voice for civil society and for ordinary people. It is they who suffer most when rights break down, and it is they who offer the best hope for ensuring human rights are promoted and protected in the future.

We in Cambodia are proud that we are taking these steps to deal with the difficult aspects of our past. We are pleased to share this experience with our fellow ASEAN nations and to be a part of forging a stronger regional human rights regime.

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***Youk Chhang is the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.***



# THE METTING WITH DUCH

*Savina Sirik*

On the morning of August 29, 2012, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Duch, infamously known as the head of former Khmer Rouge secret prison S-21. The interview took approximately two hours. This was my first meeting with him. I had never imagined that I would one day sit before him and ask him to provide me with facts about his victims.

The purpose of the interview was to ask Duch to help me to understand two mysterious photographs of S-21 Western prisoners. While preparing my list of questions for him, I had many expectations. At first I hoped that he would provide me with long narrative answers, just like he did to the questions posed to him at his trial before the Extraordinary Chambers in Courts of Cambodia in 2009.

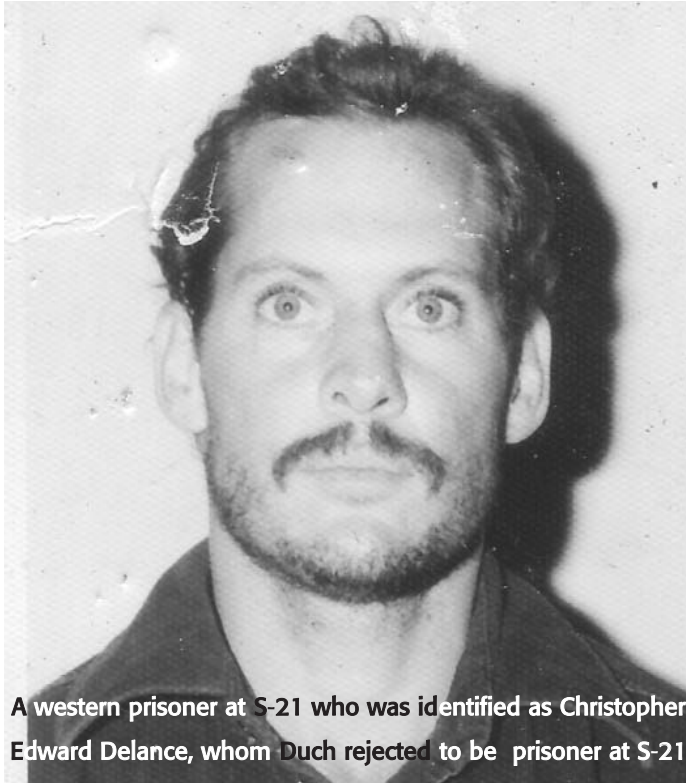
I also hoped that he would remember the faces

of his victims, given that, during his 2009 testimony, he had appeared to possess an excellent memory. I expected that he might express some sort of remorse or ask for forgiveness respecting the whose photos I was going to show to him. Finally, I hoped that he would indicate his sincerity through his verbal and bodily expressions.

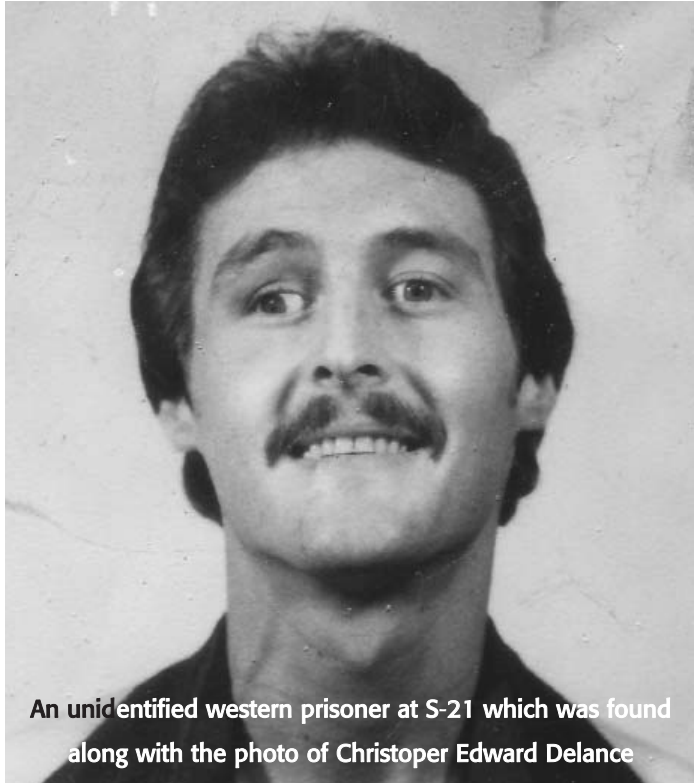
At the end of the day, I had quite high expectations of Duch. That morning, my DC-Cam colleague, Kok-Thay Eng, and I prepared for this important meeting. Kok-Thay had brought a camera and video to capture images of Duch. Interviewing Duch was such a unique opportunity that we wanted everything recorded. Kok-Thay loves photographs. So did Duch! I learned later that Duch loved photography and drawing, although he did not have much time for such hobbies. Duch told me he



Duch inspecting the biography of a wester prisoner during the meeting with Savina (right) on August 29, 2012



A western prisoner at S-21 who was identified as Christopher Edward Delance, whom Duch rejected to be prisoner at S-21



An unidentified western prisoner at S-21 which was found along with the photo of Christopher Edward Delance

owned a camera and a tripod with which he used to take photographs of himself, his family, and his colleagues. It surprised me that his favorite activities were the same as those of ordinary people.

The first thing Duch told me was that he was trying to locate a family photo of his dead wife and daughter. He first saw it published in a Thai newspaper in the 1980s, while he was living in a camp at the Thai border, and had been trying to locate it ever since. Among others, he had asked Rithy Panh, the Cambodian-French film producer, to find this photo. Now he asked me and DC-Cam to help him locate the photographs. He told me that he wanted the photo to make his memories with his wife come to life.

I was touched. I was also surprised that an executioner responsible for at least 14,000 victims at S-21 wanted to keep a memory of his family. It made me realize that he is nonetheless a human being, and can still express love, regret, compassion, or remorse.

Arriving at the ECCC, Kok-Thay and I underwent a security check before we were directed to a room the size of a small cabin, painted white inside and out. The room next door, of similar size and color, was the office of the detention facility's head. Just before we

stepped into the room, which contained nothing but a table, a few chairs, and an air-conditioning unit, Duch appeared from nowhere with two guards at his sides, and we all walked into the room. Duch waited in his seat while my colleague and I prepared our equipment. The room was actually a little larger than it looked, just enough space for several people and our camera equipment.

I sat down, introduced myself, explained why I wanted to meet him, and discussed how I was going to conduct the interview. Kok-Thay then took the opportunity to introduce himself. He said he was from Chikreng district of Siem Reap province and born into a Cambodian-Chinese family. The introduction, in some respect, was intended to draw Duch's attention to their common background, as both had come from Chinese families. Kok-Thay added that he used to visit Duch's home in Kampong Thom. Not surprisingly, Duch reacted "What were you doing at my home?"

Kok-Thay explained he had visited to get to know his family better, and that it was simply easy for him to drop by the village. It was interesting to see the strong reaction on Duch's face.

I thought he might have forgotten how much people knew about him, about his family, and about

his role at S-21, either through the 2006 book “Lost Executioner” or through the 2009 trial. To me, this was not a surprise, given that anyone would be concerned about his parents and family. Duch is, after all, a human being. In nature, all humans have the qualities of compassion, kindness, and benevolence. Even though he was a criminal convicted for crimes against humanity, I wanted to see him from a humanitarian perspective. I also wanted to see his human side come out during the interview.

I next showed Duch several photographs in the hopes that he would provide us with useful information. First, I took out the mysterious photographs of two Western victims. I asked if he could identify or remember the persons in the photos. After briefly inspecting the photos, he exclaimed, “Photos of Western people!” He then elaborated “there were only four Westerners who came in S-21 prison, but their photos were destroyed according to Nuon Chea's order.” Duch managed to keep a photograph of one prisoner, which he described as “the photo of prisoner with shackles on their legs.” He then added, “For these photographs, I never saw them. At S-21, the prisoners were ordered to wear clothes and tags.” He meant these photographs did not show the prisoners with tags or prisoners' clothes, so they were not from S-21. He denied seeing the photos before and only acknowledged four Western prisoners at S-21, whose documents had all been burned. According to the DC-Cam's S-21 list of prisoners, there were at least eleven Western prisoners who were imprisoned and killed at S-21.

Duch expressed no memories of several other S-21 victims whose photos I showed to him. Other photographs and documents of S-21 victims, including those of French national Andre Gaston Courtigne (right), British national John Dewhirst, and Cambodian prisoner Chuon Heng, he said he had no memories of these people, not even one of them. Without additional documents besides the photographs, I assumed he would not have even accepted they were the victims of S-21. In any case, he neither remembered the faces

of these people nor acknowledged that these people were imprisoned and killed at S-21.

Since Duch did not offer any new information about the photographs, I changed my line of questioning. I asked if he wanted to say anything to the victims' families. He just said “I have already expressed my apology in my statement at the trial, which I believe has been publicly published.”

I was expecting him to either repeat that apology or to ask for forgiveness from individual families. To me, Duch's unwillingness to express remorse reminded me of his role as the head of S-21. This undermined my belief in his statement at the trials. Throughout the conversation, he said he held close the memories of his family. I wondered if he had ever cherished other people's memories—especially those of his victims—as he did his own. In my opinion, Duch's expression of remorse at trial lacked sincerity.

In our last moments, I tried to get Duch to talk about his motivation for helping to identify the photos. What he responded was rather disappointing, “I am a politician. I take responsibility for what I did. If I did wrong, I acknowledged my action. Therefore, to be sure how wrong I am, truth should be revealed.”

He mentioned nothing about the victims. Whether this revelation of the truth is important to victims or not does not matter to him. He burst into laughter after finishing this sentence. His laugh sounded weird to me, and he made me feel uncomfortable continuing to ask further questions. When I asked if he wished to be forgiven by victims and Cambodian people, he said “It was a different story.”

This was unexpected and rather disappointing. Being a human, after all this time had passed since his commission of cruel crimes at S-21, Duch appeared reluctant to express remorse to the families of victims in the photographs. He failed to meet my expectations of him, and undermined my willingness to accept the human side of a perpetrator like him.

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***Savina Sirik is the office manager of The Documentation Center of Cambodia.***



# RECONCILIATORY PERSPECTIVES ON ANLONG VENG

*Kok-Thay Eng*

Anlong Veng was the Khmer Rouge's final retreat. At its height, all Khmer Rouge military powers, forming at least 9 military divisions, were compressed into this area. Its inhabitants today overwhelmingly are former Khmer Rouge officers and soldiers and their wives and children. There are only a small number of newcomers without links to the Khmer Rouge, as well

to him, and he shared with them his day-to-day activities. The killing that characterized the Khmer Rouge and was synonymous with the Southwest zone was never discussed by the people who lived under Ta Mok in Anlong Veng.

With the killings perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge regime in mind, how is it possible to talk to a

group of former Khmer Rouge cadre and their children in their home territory? Now that there is peace and the people of Anlong Veng have expressed their sense of guilt, how should they respond to the victims of Democratic Kampuchea and its communist revolution which they supported for more than thirty years? How should Khmer Rouge history be discussed and taught in Anlong Veng? These are the challenges facing reconciliation efforts in Anlong Veng.



Im Chaem (center) with other Anlong Veng villagers and students attending an anti-genocide slogan installed inside Anlong Veng High School in late June this year

as a few people who came in the early 1990s to live with their Khmer Rouge relatives. Today Anlong Veng is highly integrated with the rest of the country. It is linked to the rest of Cambodia by two main roads through Preah Vihear and Siem Reap provinces, as well as a border crossing to the province of Sisaket, which is a fairly isolated part of Thailand.

Anlong Veng was ruled by Ta Mok, the former secretary of the notorious Southwest zone, who was responsible for the purges of fellow Khmer Rouge cadres in 1977 and 1978. Yet surprisingly, interviews with hundreds of Anlong Veng inhabitants revealed that in the 1990s, Ta Mok was a remarkably generous and down-to-earth leader. His people could talk directly

## Perspectives of former Khmer Rouge cadre

Our meetings with hundreds of residents of Anlong Veng revealed a sense that they are not proud of what they did. The people of Anlong Veng expressed feelings of guilt and shame. They also showed disappointment that their dedication and commitment to the revolution resulted not only in no real benefit for themselves, but also in the deaths of their relatives, injuries to themselves and others and the destruction of their country.

At the same time, they defended their support for the Khmer Rouge revolution. Some were forced to join the Khmer Rouge. Others joined voluntarily, as ordinary Khmer Rouge staff and soldiers, without any





Kok-thay Eng talking to Anlong Veng villagers

idea that the revolution would lead to massacre. Some of those who continued to join the Khmer Rouge after 1979 were involved simply because they found themselves running together with the Khmer Rouge toward the Thai border, escaping Vietnamese attack. Some soldiers wanted to defect but were afraid for the safety of their wives and children living in Khmer Rouge camps.

#### **Perspective of a former Khmer Rouge official**

Two government officials provided very interesting perspectives on the Khmer Rouge regime among Anlong Veng inhabitants. Yim Phanna, formerly a division commander for the Khmer Rouge, defected in 1990 and later became the Hun Sen government's initial negotiator with the Khmer Rouge.

He said that in the 1990s, some Khmer Rouge leaders and soldiers wanted to negotiate and find a peaceful solution to the war. Anlong Veng, which by then was a concentrated Khmer Rouge territory, faced fracture between the commanders. It split into two groups, one belonging to Pol Pot and his military commanders, most notably Ta San (Ta 05) and Ta Saroeun (Ta 06). The Pol Pot team also consisted of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan. Another faction belonged to Ta Mok, Son Sen and their followers.

This resulted in infighting and assassinations in 1997 and 1998, including the killing of former Khmer

Rouge defense minister, Son Sen and all eleven members of his family, believed to be directly ordered by Pol Pot. One of his grand-daughters was allegedly beaten and raped before being killed. In response, Ta Mok distributed images of the bodies of Son Sen and his family members to the people of Anlong Veng. He then ordered the arrest of Pol Pot and his subsequent show trial in early 1998.

Yim Phanna said that many commanders sought solutions for

the war. With the collapse of global communism, there was a sense that the continuation of war was pointless. They did not want to kill each other and fight Hun Sen's government troops; they had had enough of death and injury. They only wanted to build a suitable foundation for a future of peace.

Because of his early attempts at negotiation with Hun Sen government officials, Yim Phanna he should be credited for the peace and tranquility currently prevailing in Anlong Veng. He strongly supports research and documentation into Anlong Veng history, especially the last years of the Khmer Rouge revolution, even over the objections of his former Khmer Rouge colleagues and friends. He appreciates the reconciliatory approach Prime Minister Hun Sen used to convince the Khmer Rouge and their family members to defect and integrate with the rest of Cambodia.

#### **Perspective of a Khmer Rouge victim**

As a government official who lost several close family members under the Khmer Rouge, H.E Ton Sa Im provided a balanced and reconciliatory perspective in a speech to Anlong Veng inhabitants during an anti-genocide inauguration event. Behind her was a prominent three-story building constructed by Ta Mok in 1993. She said that after the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, she and other victims worked very hard to rebuild their lives, to arrive to the point where they

are today.

H.E. Ton Sa Im blamed the Cambodian conflict, and indirectly the genocide from 1975 to 1979 on global ideological antagonism that spread to Cambodia through the second Indochinese War. Because the war was so close to Cambodia, North Vietnamese army infiltrations into Cambodian territory were inevitable. These incursions forced the South Vietnamese soldiers and American troops to pursue, resulting in the destruction of Cambodian agricultural products and consequent internal political destabilization and strengthening of communist guerrillas who became the Khmer Rouge. But it also took the Cambodians themselves to launch the country into the conflict that was Lon Nol's military coup.

H.E Ton Sa Im never used the words genocide or massacre in front of the Anlong Veng crowd. As an official from the Ministry of Education, H.E Ton Sa Im has been involved with DC-Cam's genocide education project for many years now, especially installing and inaugurating anti-genocide slogans in high schools across the country. She was very skillful at conveying a balanced view of the Khmer Rouge era.

H.E Ton Sa Im added that Cambodian politicians in the early 20th century such as the anti-colonial Issarak fighters, the communists and incumbent leaders at the time started off as most patriotic people do: They loved their country and people. The problem was they found different solutions to the country's social and political problems. By this H.E Ton Sa Im was saying softly that the Khmer Rouge was the group that was the most selfless and dedicated. They did not steal, lie and amass wealth. They were consistent with this behavior throughout their struggle. She avoided the fact that some of these Khmer Rouge were ruthless murderers of their communist colleagues and subordinates. They were plagued with distrust and fear of impurity.

In a broad sense, H.E Ton Sa Im said that different solutions to problems led to war. She added that during the Democratic Kampuchea era, everybody was a victim whether they were Khmer Rouge members or ordinary

people because the orders from the top came upon penalty of death. Then H.E Ton Sa Im said that top leaders are being prosecuted by the Khmer Rouge tribunal, in a way befitting the theory that the top leaders are solely responsible, in contrast to the ordinary people to whom she was speaking. This helped to assure them that their post-war lives could be peaceful and that they should not be afraid to speak with people from other parts of Cambodia.

She added that former Khmer Rouge members should feel that, by defecting and reconciling, they win. The Cambodian people should think that they win because this will bring final peace to a thirty-year-long brutal conflict. H.E Ton Sa Im added that everybody came out of the war with the dignity and courage to speak to each other face to face. She offered herself, speaking to them, and her audience, listening to her and asking questions, as examples.

To further emphasize her point, H.E Ton Sa Im quoted the story of Ankulimear, which presents a Buddhist doctrine of forgiveness and reconciliation. In the story, Ankulimear killed people so he could cut off their index fingers and collect them to gain spiritual strength so that he could have eternal life. Everybody saw Ankulimear as evil, hated him, and sought revenge. Ankulimear felt regret for what he had done. The Buddha saw goodness inside of Ankulimear. He explained to him what he had done wrong and made him a good person. Because Ankulimear was aware of his mistakes and repented, Buddha rejuvenated his life and forgave him the bad deeds he had done.

H.E Ton Sa Im also said that when Cambodians followed Hinduism, those who followed Shiva (God of Creation) and Vishnu (God of Protection) did not pray together. In order to resolve this problem, they created a god who had two faces: One face was Shiva's and the other one was Vishnu's. These stories were helpful in presenting and explaining Cambodian reconciliatory culture.

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***Kok-Thay Eng is the Deputy Director of The Documentation Center of Cambodia***

# CONFESSION OF OUM CHHOEUN (ALIAS MAI)

## A FORMER MEMBER IN REGION 6 IN THE NORTHWEST ZONE AND A PROTOCOL OFFICER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Bunthorn Som*

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Oum Chhoeun, a former committee member in Region 6 in the Northwest zone who later became a functionary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was arrested and sent to the security center S-21 on June 21, 1977. Chhoeun was interrogated by two people, Chhin and Vun, for a period of five months. Finally, on October 10, 1977, Chhoeun agreed to sign a 45-page document of his confessions.

Chhoeun's confessions were sent to a high official with the notations "confidential" and "important" on the cover of the confession. Also written on the cover and dated November 14, 1977 was the following: 1. "Send one copy to the Northwest Zone," and 2. "Ah (a vulgar word), Mai's answers were related to comrade Kren."

According to Kaing Guek Eav (alias Duch) who was the former chief of S-21, Oum Chhoeun (alias Mai) joined the revolution with Ta Mok in the Southwest. Because Ta Mok did not like his background as a former teacher, he fired Chhoeun. Pol Pot, however, heard of this and went to negotiate with Ta Mok. As a result, Chhoeun was sent to work in the Northwest Zone.

Later, Angkar transferred him to work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Phnom Penh where he was arrested. Duch also stated further that all prisoners who were sent to detention at S-21 were tortured except Koy Thuon, a former secretary of the Northern Zone. Duch added that what the prisoners wrote in their confessions was fake.

The following is an extract from Oum Chhoeun's confessions:

I, Oum Chhoeun, 42, was a protocol officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was born at Chang Roh Village, Rom Chek Commune, Ba Phnom District, Prey Veng Province. My father was Oum Paek, a clerk of a commune chief and later a farmer. My mother was In Pleung who was also a farmer.

From 1942 to 1943, I studied at Sothea Pagoda in Rom Chek Commune. Afterward, I went to Chher Kach Primary School from 1943 to 1953. At end of 1953, I finished my study there and went to take an examination in Svay Rieng Province for admission to further study; I failed this examination. I was one of ten candidates recruited to study at a teachers' training school in Phnom Penh. I went to study at the teacher training school in Phnom Penh in 1953 and became a teacher at Kampong Thom High School in 1961.

In 1965, I transferred to teach at Ta Khmao High School in Kandal province. Ke Kim Huot, called Soth, a former professor at Ta Khmao and currently a secretary of Region 7 in the Northwest Zone welcomed me warmly. Saing Rin, called On, another former professor became the secretary of the Southwest Zone in 1974. Thuch Rin, called Kren, also a former professor, became chief of Kampong Som sea port. After we got to know each other, Ke Kim Huot often talked to me about governments of the free world. He admired capitalist regimes and the fight led by the CIA against communism.

One day in May 1966, Saing Rin came to ask me, "Chhoeun, what do you think about the CIA and would you like to join?" I replied that I was ready to become a CIA member. The next morning, a Sunday in June 1966, Saing Rin came to my house again. After finding a suitable place to sit, he said, "Today, you must prepare to be inducted as a CIA member." He then requested that I go with him to Ta Khmao School. Upon entering Ke Kim Huot's office, I saw Ke Kim Huot and Thuch Rin seated, waiting for me. After we took our seats and talked for a while Ke Kim Huot invited all of us to a place prepared for the induction ceremony. It was furnished with a table, some chairs, and a CIA flag. It was a room on the ground floor. Ke Kim Huot told Saing Rin, Thuch



Rin, and me to sit around a square table. He then began the induction process in front of the group.

First, we had to salute the CIA flag. Second, Saing Rin reviewed my background with the help of Ke Kim Huot and Thoch Ren. Third, they explained my CIA obligations. Fourth, the actual oath to the CIA was administered. Lastly, we celebrated by eating food and cake. The ceremony was concluded, and we went home separately.

About one month after becoming a CIA member, Ke Kim Huot called Saing Rin and me to attend a meeting at Saing Rin's house. The purpose was:

1. To assign to me the task of building new CIA forces and combining them with the existing forces at Ta Khmao School.

2. To clarify the lines of communication. I was instructed to contact Saing Ren directly for all task assignments; Saing Ren would then contact Ke Kim Huot directly.

3. To introduce me to some existing CIA forces in Ta Khmao School. Among them were San Bunhi (alias Kuon), Sreng, Ly Sray, Hort, Chhun, Tor Savorn, and Tor Sokuntheary. They were students at this school and under the control of San Bunhi.

After the meeting I asked Saing Rin for some ideas about how we could increase CIA forces at the school. Saing Rin said that in order to build forces we had to directly approach students' commercial cooperatives in school. Therefore, every time I came to teach, I visited commercial cooperatives. I helped them by looking after their goods, and I donated some money to the cooperatives. I knew some of the students. Among them were Ke Mony, Ly Sruoy, and Gech. I contacted them and invited them to visit my house.

Whenever I met Ke Mony, who was a poor student, I always told him that poor people had to join the rich people of the world and the free countries like America so they too would become rich. If they joined communist groups, they would remain poor. If female students were from rich families, I told them that they were rich already but that if they joined the communist world, they would lose their wealth because communist people did not own property or have rights.

Whenever I met those three students at both my house and at school, I always told them the same things. I educated them again and again until they believed me completely. During mid 1967 I secretly called Ke Mony, Ly Sruoy, and Gech to come to my house and enlisted them as CIA members. After having enlisted those three students, I went to meet Saing Ren to report my activities which I completed at the school. Saing Ren advised me that these new members could join with the old members which were under the control of San Bunhi.

One day, I called Ke Mony, Ly Sruoy and Gech to introduce them to San Bunhi in a classroom and assigned them to Bunhi to lead along with the old members Sreng, Ly Sray, Hort, Chhun, Tao Savorn, and Tao Sokuntheary.

During the long break from school, I was closely involved in the students' commercial cooperatives in order to contact more new students and discourage them from considering communism. One day after the new school year began Saing Rin came to my house to tell me that I was going to be sent to become a spy in the revolutionary groups in the countryside so that I could more easily recruit people from those revolutionary groups. On November 26, 1967 at 7 pm I was to accompany Ke Kim Huot to a meeting place southeast of Sonthormok School. A person named Ken or Kun would be there waiting for us. He was a clerk of the Association of Professors of the Revolution.

When the due date came, Ke Kim Huot and I arrived at the meeting place. Immediately Kun took us to a car already waiting for us. There were two other people in the car, Seng, a messenger and Thay, a teacher at the Teachers' Training school.

That night we arrived at Kol Village, Viel Pun Commune in the Southwest which was controlled by Ta Pal. At that time I was allowed to leave and re-enter Kol Village to work in Trapaing Sra Nge Village in Peam Commune. Ke Kim Hout and I educated one comrade named Chreh. Whenever meeting comrade Chreh, I talked only about the weaknesses of revolution that how we could we defeat Prince Sihanouk and the imperialists even if we did not have proper resources including people and money.

After I had educated him for two months he started to trust me. On December 15, 1968, Ke Kim Huot and I called comrade Chreh to meet with us. We signed him up to be a CIA member and informed him that his duty was to build forces against the revolution.

On February 28, 1968 it was decided that we would confiscate weapons from enemies in the Northwest. Ta Pal led ten forces to go to live in the Aural Mountains with Ke Kim Huot and me. While taking our baths on the mountain, Ke Kim Huot always talked with me about the plans he had, things for us to do. For example, in April and May, 1968 when conditions became particularly difficult, Ke Kim Huot and I provoked discontent and hopelessness among youths about the revolution.

A youth named An ran away from the group to his home. Ke Kim Huot and I attracted the attention and gained the confidence of two other youths named Huon and Yeng by helping them when they were sick. In July 1968, we both enrolled Huon and Yeng as CIA members.

At the end of 1969, Ke Kim Huot and I were transferred to live in Aural again. As the leader of a group I created many disruptions. My group members fell sick and lacked food to eat because I was busy building CIA forces. The other groups could find Kduoch to eat. During that time I reeducated a youth named Bo from Phnom Penh.

In June 1970, Ke Kim Huot was transferred to work at Sorn Tey in the Northwest Zone. In August or September 1970, I was transferred to live in the Southwest region. I lost contact with Ke Kim Huot from that time.

Once Saing Rin and Thuch Rin had a job to do for Angkar in the Southwest Zone. I met those two people at my place. I took the opportunity to report to them Ke Kim Huot's and my activities in reeducating Chreh, Huon, Yeng, and Bo and stirring up trouble against revolutionary forces. I also told them that Ke Kim Huot was transferred to work at Sorn Tey.

In late November in 1970, Angkar in the Southwest Zone transferred me to work in the Northwest. Angkar in the Northwest Zone made me

the secretary of the region in early January 1971. In April 1971, the Northwest Zone built a school near the region office. All regions in the Northwest had to come to study here. Ke Kim Huot and Khaek Pen (called Sou), a former professor in Kampong Speu and currently chief of the Kampuchea-Thai Relations Committee also came to study there. During a lunch break, Ke Kim Huot called me and Khaek Pen to have a meeting under the shade of a tree far away from the others. We three knew each other well including where we each lived. Ke Kim Huot said that he worked at Sorn Tey, Kro Ko District, Region 2. Khaek Pen told me that he was in Region 4 and that he recently lived in the region office. Ke Kim Huot stated further that from then we had to keep in close touch with each other. Then Khaek Pen told me that there was a traitor whom I could contact in the Northwest Zone. His name was Say, and he was one of the region committee members. Khaek Pen stated that he would tell Say about me.

After finishing their course of study, I persuaded some youths to run away and return to their home. They were Hot, Khot, and others. I tried to make them understand that all these revolutionary tasks such as tending cattle, sending messages, planting, and so on were exactly the same tasks as they would do at home and that they did not provide fame or wealth. There were some youths who gave up hope in the revolution. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I enrolled them as CIA members. Those peoples' names were Kert, a soldier in Region 6, Kern, a Peam Prous Commune chief, Pen, a former militia, and Khuy, a Moug district chief.

In 1972, following Say's guidance, I assigned an agent named Pen the task of searching for secret bases of the revolution. After searching for four to five years, Pen found a rice bank and an arsenal hidden near the foot of Pak Troyaong Mountain. He also found a secret hospital for injured soldiers in the forest near Bos Dong Village. I reported this news to Say. According to the CIA committee's plan under Say, we had to destroy those warehouses by whatever means we could. However, this could not be achieved because revolution's methods for protecting those secret places were strict and careful.

Those places were guarded around the clock.

After that, I continued my activity in the region's telegram office. I encouraged young men and women to think about love and their families. Later, two youths named Ruom and Chhun committed an immoral defense. Chhun and a girl named Ren made love and fell into a state of corruption. This problem caused disorder in the office. Ruom, Chhun, and Ren were so frightened. The revolution was aware of their affair and punished them severely. This treatment turned them to my side. I knew their weaknesses and scared them a little bit more. After that they had complete faith in me. I enrolled these three people as new CIA members.

In 1973, because my workplace was close to Say's, I started my recruitment in his printing office. There was a person named Kem Yan working there. I told Kem Yan to intentionally damage some parts of the machines so the machines would be broken and unable to print newspapers. This would delay the publication of newspapers for a while. Sometimes I did not go to buy blank paper stock on which the newspaper was to be printed. Moreover, in the printing office there were some physically weak people such as Kem Yan and Kuy An. There was another friend who was a strong. I always told the physically weak people that they should work according to their power and ability because the energy of the weak people could not compare to the energy of the strong. The strong might be able to cut a tree down quickly but it might take those who were physically weak all morning. From that time the internal affairs of the printing office began to break down.

Because I knew both the physical and emotional weaknesses of Kem Yan and Kuy An, I always encouraged them not to believe in the revolution. Wherever I saw them I would degrade the revolution, saying that they would not be happy and that the revolution offered them no future. I told them that according to the revolution everything was for the community, not for the individual, things such as tools, resources, money, houses, factories, and industries. Because I educated them regularly for several months, they believed in me completely. At

the end, I enrolled them as CIA members as well.

In early January in 1974, Angkar moved me to work in Region 6. Before leaving for Region 6, Say told me not to forget about building CIA forces. Therefore, arriving at Region 6, I started my mission in my control area which was Leach District. First, I exaggerated Angkar's way, emphasizing that private properties such as gold, money, bracelets, and necklaces belonged to the community, not to the individual. I went on to explain to commune secretaries in the district that Angkar collected everything from us to increase rice production. After having explained these things to the commune secretaries, I began to force people to follow those severe rules which influenced their interest and their rice production and caused many disputes within the cooperatives. People no longer believed in the cooperatives and the revolution.

Then, I stirred up trouble among the youths in Sala Village, Ro Vieng Commune. I told them that if they went to the front line, they would die. Therefore, they should not go. So both female and male youths hid in back of the village in order to warn and protect their families. I also told them that they did not need to send food, rice, and vegetables to the front lines because if people did not go to the front lines there would be no need for food there.

In just only three or four months I enrolled some people in the commercial section. They were Thas, Mach, and Pon. From the medical section, there was a person named Loeung. All the commune secretaries in Leach District were also enrolled by me. Among those secretaries were Khat in Leach Commune; Reth and Oum in Boeng Ang Commune; and Chet, Thaong and Chheng in Ro Vieng Commune. After that, I included these people in the CIA members list.

Because Region 6 that I controlled and Kra Kor District were adjacent, in early May 1974, I reported directly to Ke Kim Huot about my activities such as stirring up discontent among people, exaggerating Angkar's way, encouraging people not to support the front line and signing up new CIA members.

In June 1974, the first training session was



opened in the Northwest Zone. All region cadres were required to attend. Before attending the session, I took the time to meet Say at his place in order to report my activities in Region 6. During the meeting, Say introduced me to some other members of the resistance in the Northwest such as Chea Huon (called Vanh), a former professor in 1974 and secretary of Region 2; Chun (called Hoeng), a former professor in 1974 and secretary of Region 5; Norng Saroem (called San), a former professor in 1974 and secretary of Region 3. Say always took some time to meet with them individually or in groups. He often met during his lunch breaks with Khet, Ben, Ke Kim Huot at a place along the river in order to update us about CIA plans and activities designed to build stronger forces. All the members would agree with Say's ideas and then the meetings would end.

The training session lasted more than twenty days. All regional secretaries had to return to their own Regions. As soon as I arrived at my region, I called comrade Thas and Mach to meet and start their missions in the commercial section. I brought up my idea to do whatever it took to cause people in the commercial section to strike out against the revolutionary movement. Comrade Thas as well as comrade Mach agreed that if we sold out of the product we had and did not replenish the stock; the trade process would be stuck. Some of the members of the commercial section started to buy all products that people sold such as rubber, vines, heartwood of trees, and other products which we sold for profit. We did not buy the clothes, cotton threads, salts, fish pastes and other important items to replenish the stock. People lacked salt, fish pastes, and important tools to use. Their clothes were in rags, and they did not dare come out of their houses. Soldiers lacked everything which caused problems to the revolution's cooperative forces. They had to face shortages both on the battle field and on the home front.

At the regional hospital, I assigned Loeung to create trouble in the hospital by not providing medicines to patients and not working to solve the problems that nurses and doctors had. Medical tools were destroyed

one by one. This caused people to remain sick.

Destructive activities in the commercial section and hospital were carried out for many months, even after the liberation in 1975. All people in the region faced more and more hardships; diseases became more widespread and more serious. Therefore, building dams, reservoirs, rivers and so on were adversely affected.

April 30, 1975, the CIA committee in the Northwest under Say called all members to a meeting at Battambang University. Those included were Say, regional committee member and secretary of Region 1; Comrade Van from the commercial region; Comrade San, a regional military chief; Comrade Hoeng, secretary of Region 5; Comrade Su, secretary of Region 4; Comrade Suy, secretary of Region 4; and me, secretary of Region 6. The purpose of this meeting was to plan for the following:

- (1) Preparation of CIA forces in the northwest,
- (2) Searching for existing forces before and after liberation,
- (3) Building CIA forces in base areas, communities, and ministries, and
- (4) Assigning CIA members their tasks and duties.

After some ideas were mentioned and some following discussion, I continued looking for members of my group from the Northwest Zone, among them Pen, Men, Kert, Kern, Khuy, Ruom, Chhun, Ren, Kem Yan, Kuy, An, Thas, Mach, Pon, Loeung, Khat, Reth, Oum, Chet, Thaong, and Chheng. In total, there were twenty people.

In early May 1975, I went to Battambang to make contact with comrade Vanh. Say was also staying there at that time. There was a lot of rice in big rice husking plants in the city. Bang Say called comrade Vanh and me to meet at Battambang University where comrade Vanh lived. Say said that we had to keep some rice in order to support our work and plan. He explained that we had so much rice that it had to be divided into three portions and hidden in different places. One portion was to be hidden at comrade Vanh's place because there were many big warehouses there and many people to protect it. Another portion was to be kept at his place in Banon or Sdao; there was also a

warehouse there in which to keep it, and it was well hidden. The last portion of about 150,000 *Thaing* (*Thaing* is a unit of volume equal to approximately one bushel) was kept with me. I guaranteed that I could keep it because I had forces in the commercial section and a big storehouse in Leach.

On June 26, 1975, *Bang* (brother) Korn, a permanent regional chief moved me to the commercial region. Comrade Vanh was a secretary, and I was a member there. When I arrived, Varn had already collected munitions to keep in houses and storehouses. There were also all kinds of replacement parts and tools for repairing cars and tractors. Moreover, the means for producing desserts and cokes had been installed already.

In early July of 1975, comrade Vanh called me to meet him secretly at his house. He said the collection of all these items and the creation of these work rooms would serve us well for the coup. I totally agreed with this statement at that time.

In August 1975, committees in the northwest region opened a second study session at Battambang University in order to discuss the plans for the coup. People who joined this meeting were Say, comrade Vanh, comrade San, comrade Hoeng, comrade Su, comrade Suy and me. First of all, Say asked all of us to review all old and new CIA forces. Then, he discussed ways to accomplish the following:

- (1) Build CIA forces in each region,
- (2) Educate and train new CIA forces,
- (3) Build a supporting base for disrupting activities in forest along Thai border,
- (4) Prepare food for supporting coup,
- (5) Contact forces who had escaped to live in Thailand, and
- (6) Encourage people to escape to Thailand.

After that, Say asked for some ideas from the group. Comrade Su said that we could buy rice and other tools at Thai border gate for the supporting base. I also added that besides buying at Thai border gate we could use rice that we had hidden in Region 6, Region 2, Region 1, and Battambang city. About comrade

Hoeng, he said that since liberation day he had helped hundreds of families including a commune chief in Thmor Puok District to run away to Thailand.

After this second meeting, comrade Vanh, comrade Kem Yan, and I met again. I said that we had already dispensed with some of the rice and salt that comrade Yan bought from the Thai border gate. Comrade Vanh and I agreed that we would hide rice and salt in O Chrov District because comrade Nov controlled units near the border there. Comrade Nov had many big warehouses in Nimit, in Kaub, and had staff to look after those rice storages.

In September 1975, comrade Suy and I, as well as comrade Kern who was the secretary of Peam Prous commune, had a meeting in Leach in order to find ways to encourage and facilitate people's escape to Thailand. Comrade Kern had an idea that there were some people who were in O Som Village in Veal Veng Commune who used to trade with Thailand. Enticing these people to run to Thailand would be a very easy task. We just told them that there would be no trade, no money, no markets, no religion, and no beliefs in the revolutionary society. After finishing this discussion, we assigned comrade Kern to spread these ideas in O Som. According to what comrade Kern reported to me in Battambang, there were one hundred families in all which ran away to Thailand.

I asked for confirmation that we could set up a supporting base in Perm Prous Commune in Region 6 when coup started. Comrade Kern answered that setting up a supporting base was a good idea because there was a border gate to a Thai village named Mai Rot along the border in Region 6. Some of the people who had already escaped to Thailand lived in this village, and it would be easy contact them in future.

Suddenly in early November in 1975, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs moved comrade Su and me into the Kampuchea-Thai relations Committee in Poipet. After arriving in Poipet, comrade Su, comrade Nov, a commander of Division 1, and I made an opportunity for four people to escape to Thailand disguised as movie producers. In the early part of 1976 we allowed

four soldiers to run to Thailand through the same gate. They were Kong and Koy, soldiers in Division 1; Thy, a commander in Division 1, and a car driver in Thmor Kol.

In early 1976, the commercial region was put under the supervision of the Kampuchea-Thai Relations Committee under the direction of comrade Su. At that time, comrade Su, comrade San, comrade Nov, and I sold tons of fish and meat every day to Thai merchants. Comrade Hoeng in Region 5 contacted comrade Su and me directly to help sell gold and jewels through the Poipet gate as well. Besides these goods, we also sold hundreds of tons of lotus seeds and coffee. We allowed hundreds of people to run to Thailand through the north and south Poipet gates.

In early 1976, Angkar ordered the purchase of 20,000 tons of salt from Thailand but Thailand delayed the delivery. One day in the evening, Snong, the chief of the Thai Relations Committee, called the chief of the Kampuchea Relations Committee and informed him that a vice minister named Pheng had asked to meet with him. We agreed. When vice minister Pheng and the Thai Relations Committee came, I saw photographers and people who controlled Thai warehouses coming along with them too. Pheng said that he had come to give us the salt. He carried a plastic bag full of salt and asked to take a photo together (including comrade Su and me). We responded that we did not want to take a photograph but the Thai side insisted and encouraged comrade Su to carry a bag of salt as well. It was a salt donation event and the photographers immediately took photos. After taking photos, the Thai officials asked to visit a train station in Poipet. Comrade Su and I took them there. After visiting the places they wanted to see, Pheng said that Thailand would guarantee the resources and help necessary to complete the Poipet railway. Comrade Su and I expressed our gratitude to the Thai officials. We were so happy that Thailand wanted to help us repair the railroad. Then, we took the Thai delegates to rest in front of our workplace and offered each of them a glass of wine. We made small talk and the Thai officials returned to their country.

Later Comrade San, Nov, Su and I assigned

comrade Thy (a commander of Division 1 who had escaped to Thailand) to gather forces and find In Tam. We suggested that he might find In Tam if he checked the Khmer refugee camps because he often went to Khmer refugee camps in Aranprathet District in Thailand. Yeay (grandmother) Phon, a Thai merchant, came to trade every day in Poipet and knew the area very well. Therefore, whenever the coup occurred, he could take all forces assembled in Thailand to help fight the revolution.

In mid February 1976, Say called all forces in the northwest to meet at Battambang University with the purpose of bringing about a coup. People who attended this meeting were:

- (1) Say, a regional committee member,
- (2) Comrade Vanh from the commercial region,
- (3) Comrade San, from a regional military committee,
- (4) Comrade Su, from the Kampuchea-Thai Relations Committee,
- (5) Comrade Suy, the Secretary of Region 4,
- (6) Comrade Hoeng, the secretary of Region 5,
- (7) Soth, the secretary of Region 7,
- (8) I, from the Kampuchea-Thai Relations Committee,
- (9) Heang, the secretary of Region 4,
- (10) Kreng, a regional military chief,
- (11) Khoy from Division 2,
- (12) Nov from Division 1,
- (13) Ku, the secretary of Region 3, and
- (14) Khan, the secretary of Region 2.

Say put forward a plan to begin fighting against the revolution on April 17, 1976. Then he mentioned several ideas about the fighting and preparing soldiers for it. He said that Division 1 led by comrade Nov would occupy the area west of the border, and Division 2 led by comrade Khoy the northwest and south. Division 2 had its base in Kra Koh near Mounng District.

The chairman of the meeting stated that Sreng, a member of the regional committee in the north region, Chhuk, a permanent member of the regional committee in the east region, and Doeun, chief of the



870 Office were the individuals who would lead the forces to attack Phnom Penh. However, the plan for attacking Phnom Penh was delayed because the main leader Thuch was stripped of his duties and arrested. Doeun was moved to be closer to Angkar. The fighting in the northwest did not take place because regional sides took some measures to prevent it in advance. Vanh was then moved to Region 1. Say was also transferred by Angkar to a regional office as well. Seeing this, some opposition leaders including me made plans to go to Thailand but couldn't leave because Angkar took a very severe measure.

In July or August 1976, commerce with Thailand which was controlled by the Kampuchea-Thai Communication Committee was taken over by comrade Chhoeun. First, comrade Chhoeun went to Poipet and asked me to negotiate with the Thai merchants. Comrade Chhoeun cautioned me that when meeting with the merchants I should tell them that Cambodia had legal trading companies which were recognized by the government. Therefore, our expectation was that the Thais must have proper trading companies if they were to trade with Cambodia. They could not make private business dealings in the lax way they had done before. I added that bills could not be paid through a bank because Cambodia did not have a bank. Debts were settled according to the amount of and prices of each of the goods of both parties.

In August 1976, Comrade Chhoeun came to Poipet again to meet with Su and me at Su's house. Comrade Chhoeun informed us that the commercial section had a plan to sell rubber and other natural resources to Thailand. This plan was aimed at destroying the Cambodian economy. I replied that comrade Su and I as well as comrade Nov had sold hundreds of tons of jewels, diamonds, and fish every month. In addition, we helped hundreds of families to go to Thailand.

In January 1977 Comrade Su and I invited Sim Bun, the new chief of the Thai Relations Committee, Oum Nuoy, vice chief, and Oudom, a member, to meet in Poipet. Comrade Su and I met with the Thai Relations Committee officials in our living room. We offered them

fruit, wine, and cigarettes. Then, comrade Su and I reminded the new chief that in the early 1976 vice minister Pheng had guaranteed Thai help to repair our railway near Poipet. It was now time for the Thais to follow through on their promise because we urgently needed their help to complete the railroad repairs. After the meeting, we went back to our place.

On January 10, 1977, the committee in the northwest which had Say as chief called for a meeting in the northwest region in order to create a new plan for an attack to begin on April 2, 1977. People who attended this meeting were Say, the regional secretary; comrade Vanh, the secretary of Region 1; comrade San, a military committee member; comrade Suy, the chief of Region 6; comrade Heang, the secretary of Region 4; comrade Ku, the chief of Region 3; comrade Khan, the chief of Region 2; comrade Soth, the secretary of Region 7; comrade Su, the chief of the Kampuchea-Thai relations committee; comrade Mai (me), a Kampuchea-Thai committee member; Nov, the chief of a division; and Khuy, the chief of a division.

After the meeting, all the forces in the northwest started carrying out the tasks assigned to them during the meeting. At that time, I told comrade Thy that two days before the attack was to start he must bring forces to meet me in Khai Dorn Village near Nimit.

However, on April 2, 1977 the plan was cancelled because news of it was leaked, and Angkar took measures to prevent it. Angkar moved comrade San and comrade Soth, who were secretaries of Region 7 to the regional office. Comrade Su was transferred to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Phnom Penh. On May 29, 1977, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent me a fax instructing me to return to the ministry in Phnom Penh because Angkar had discontinued our relationship with Thailand. I had been back at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for twenty days when I was arrested on June 21, 1977 and brought to this security center.

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***Bunthorn Som is an assistant team leader of Searching for the Truth Magazine.***

# ANLONG VENG THEN AND NOW: A STORY OF ITS PEOPLE

*Kok-Thay Eng*

Anlong Veng district is revered by passerby, visitor and people coming here to conduct business because it is a former, final retreat of the Khmer Rouge. It is the place where Khmer Rouge communist revolution died in rather undignified and chaotic fashion. Anlong Veng is a special place, very much different from the rest of Cambodia because it has locations of Khmer Rouge's vestige. It has the tomb of Pol Pot who was Primer Minister of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) and the Khmer Rouge's top leader. The tomb is a very simple wooden structure covering a rectangular earth mount, now sitting right in front of a multi-storey casino, the kind of gambling Pol Pot so adamantly opposed throughout his iron grip of Democratic Kampuchea and areas where he controlled. It seems that now Pol Pot will forever lie there watching, unable to do anything against one of the ultimate act of "bourgeoisie" gambling.

Anlong Veng also has remnants of Democratic

Kampuchea such as Ta Mok house and headquarters sitting at the southern edge of a large lake which he dammed and flooded in the early 1990s. Ta Mok was originally chief of southwest zone under DK and he was feared for his implementation role in DK purges. Now the house remains the largest remaining structure of the Khmer Rouge's last government institutions. It contains wall murals, large tree trunks and a grove of mango trees. In front of it is his feared iron cage which Ta Mok used to detain his hated enemies or people he considered committing serious mistakes under his rules considered to be selling weapons to enemy, stealing, robbing, committing adultery and causing unrest.

Because Anlong Veng was the last Khmer Rouge stronghold it also has ammunition storehouse, houses of Pol Pot, Son Sen, Noun Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ke Pauk and other important Khmer Rouge



A boy paddling a boat in the natural lake in Anlong Veng

leaders. Most of these houses are simply small wooden buildings which now are smaller than many of the villagers' buildings which began to sprang up since around early 2000s, two or three years after the Khmer Rouge completely disintegrated in 1998. Anlong Veng also has bridges, a dam, a hospital, a school and roads which Ta Mok built. It also has a place where Pol Pot was sentenced by Ta Mok after a power struggle in the final days of the Khmer Rouge in 1998. As a Khmer Rouge administrative location, Anlong Veng also has its reeducation and execution site. As a war zone and defensive location, it is laid with landmines in its peripherals. Some of these mines were taken out by national and international demining teams as well as by villagers, former Khmer Rouge families entrenched in years of Khmer Rouge's own brand of communist ideologies but who were eager to privately farm the land to sustain their livelihood.

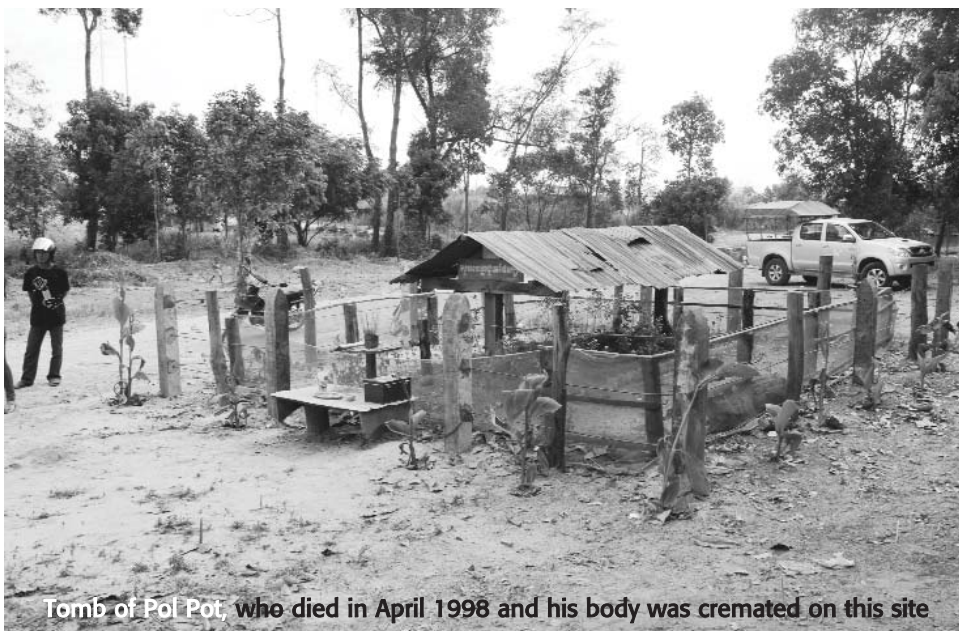
Now there is peace which is a huge feeling of desire of both its inhabitants and people coming to the district after so many years of war in this place. All the iron-fisted Khmer Rouge were gone not physically but ideologically. Many of the same lower ranking officers with little decision making and villager are still here except the top echelon of the leadership who were already dead due to illness or imprisoned by at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) known as The Khmer Rouge Tribunal. They are

totally different than what many people under control of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) believed them to be and they are happy to have changed and carry out a new way of life with freedoms and possibilities to improve their lives beyond the control of the Khmer Rouge. In the early 2000s Anlong Veng experienced a steep economic growth pushed by the rise of land price and construction of roads linking this small district with the rest of Cambodia, particularly Siem Reap town and Preah Vihear province. Anlong Veng itself has abundant forest. It also has vast uncultivated fields which the villagers are currently using as the only means to sustain their lives. They now predominantly grow cassava, rice during rainy season and short-term crops such as watermelon, cucumber, vegetables, sesame and peanut. Because of having adequate farming land, Anlong Veng villagers seem to be doing better than minimal living standard in Cambodia.

Anlong Veng town is dominated by a roundabout, a row of new houses, guesthouses, Karaoke centers and massage parlors. It is much different from what it used to be under Ta Mok when it had only DK business grocery stores selling daily necessities to villagers, small houses and administrative wooden houses. Before the Khmer Rouge settled in large number here, its center was located south of its present location, and Anlong Veng was just a small border village surrounded by dense, impenetrable jungles. Villagers

said elephants, wild buffaloes, large antelopes and tigers roamed the forest. When they arrived, the Khmer Rouge did not make significant structures here because it was a war zone which was abandoned often.

In the town center there are houses and stores of former Khmer Rouge top leaders, including son of Khieu Samphan who owns a small gasoline garage near the roundabout. Children of former top leaders are surprisingly doing



Tomb of Pol Pot, who died in April 1998 and his body was cremated on this site



fairly bad in Anlong Veng considering the positions of their fathers who naturally as dedicated communists did not leave anything significant for them before they died.

In the early 1990s after many of the Khmer Rouge areas were either captured or defected into the RGC, many Khmer Rouge top leaders moved to Anlong Veng. Anlong Veng then became a place compacted with Khmer Rouge dignitaries. So it now becomes a place offering great possibility to study Khmer Rouge's administrative leadership and control structure to understand further both their style of control and means of sustainability through the years in terms of seeking weapons, controlling the population and fighting war. Another important area of research in Anlong Veng is studying lives of ordinary villagers. How they conducted their lives, raised their children, lived on the run, viewed the Khmer Rouge top leaders and sustain themselves. Also what were their dreams?

I met several families who had lived in Anlong Veng since the early 1990s or before to talk to them about their perspectives from a standpoint of ordinary people living in Anlong Veng. This is a part of a project by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) to establish a thorough history of Anlong Veng, in collaboration with a government initiative—Ministry of Tourism—to develop Anlong Veng into a historical site of visit and learning.

### **Chea Im**

Chea Im, 65, was originally from Tramkak District, Takeo province. She joined the Khmer Rouge in 1973 and worked in Tramkak district throughout the years of Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979. In 1979 she moved to the Thai border and settled in Khao-I-Dang refugee camp, Thailand. She stayed there for the rest of 1980s. She and her family were repatriated in 1991 to Tramkak district where she was given half a hectare of land to feed her seven children. After living there for a year, she decided to bring her family to live in Anlong Veng with Ta Mok.

Chea Im had two brothers who were driving for Ta Mok and her mother was living in Anlong Veng at



the time. She said that her brothers asked Ta Mok to give permission for her to live in Anlong Veng. Ta Mok said, "No problem, let them come" Chea Im said Ta Mok replied quickly and

casually. He gave her brothers 1,000 Thai Baht to arrange for Chea Im and her family to come to Anlong Veng. There were also Khmer Rouge agents in Tramkak who told Chea Im about the arrangement and brought her to Anlong Veng crossing both government and Khmer Rouge frontlines. They made it through. Chea Im said that at the time, it was not difficult for people to cross between frontlines. Arriving in Anlong Veng, Ta Mok gave Chea Im another 500 Thai Baht to start her life. She used it to buy pots, pans and a few farming tools from Khmer Rouge trading stores and Thai sellers. She was given a small plot of land on which to build a small house with forest timber.

During her time in Anlong Veng, Chea Im said she abandoned her small house a few times. In one occasion it was burned by Khmer Rouge soldiers to prevent RGC military from "establishing a strong base." Her chickens and pigs were taken by the soldiers. When she arrived she had to rebuild her house. This experience led her to live a life of mobility under Ta Mok. She stopped farming, storing large amount of grain and raising large animals such as pigs and cattle.

Chea Im said that despite evacuations, she is now fairly satisfied by her decision to leave Tramkak to Anlong Veng. Ta Mok was a nice and generous person. Her children now have their own farm land of more than one hectare each which they can use to grow food and feed themselves. She was never discriminated against by the Khmer Rouge for being new comers.

Her land in Tramkak of less than a hectare was never enough for her family. She gave it to her uncle.

### Chea Phal

Chea Phal was originally from Tramkak district, Takeo province. She is now 52 and was married to Chhim Phon, 53, in 1980. They have two children



Chea Phal

together. Her wedding was arranged by the Khmer Rouge along with five other couples. Today her husband has a crippled right arm after a stray bullet hit it while he was climbing

a mountain with fellow soldiers in 1979. It was rotten for a few weeks before he reached a Khmer Rouge hospital. Its radius bone was never reconstructed.

In 1974 Chea Phal left home and joined the revolution after her village chief contacted her family. She was assigned as a messenger for the commune office and then in 1975 as Khmer Rouge medical staff in April 17 Hospital. Her hospital used both modern and traditional medicines.

Chea Phal knew how to make alcohol and medicines for headache, diarrhea and fever. Alcohol was made from the following ingredients: palm sugar, Rumdeng plant, Chheu Em vine and bamboo leaves. These were put together according to their proportion. Then water was added. The brew was left to ferment for one week. After that the water was boiled. Its steam condensed as alcohol. Chea Phal said she tested whether it was pure alcohol by throwing a spoonful of it into the fire. If it was pure alcohol it would catch flame.

Headache medicine was made from cassava flour, lime juice and a chemical component. Diarrhea pill was made from bark of Kantel plant boiled in

water according to a proper composition. After one third of the water evaporated through boiling, the remaining water was mixed with cassava flour to make pills. Fever medicine was made from Bandol Pich vine, Sleng nut and water.

In January 1979 she boarded a train to Battambang and then a truck to Samlaut district. After traveling from villages to villages, she reached a refugee camp named Khlaung Yai near Koh Kong province and in Thai territory. As she was a medical staff, the Khmer Rouge took her several days later to their military camp called Point 808 on Dangrek Mountains. There the Khmer Rouge set up a mobile hospital where they treated the wounded and the sick. Afterward she was sent to Point 1003, about 15 kilometers from Chaoam Sa Ngam border crossing. In 1990 she moved down to Lumtorng Chas village. In 1998 she moved to Hou Noy refugee camp before returning a year later to her present location in O Koki village, Lumtorng commune, Anlong Veng district.

When she was in Anlong Veng, Chea Phal said that food was adequate. She made straw mats to sell to Thai people on the border and saved up to 17,000 Thai Baht but these money was used up when she lived in Hou Noy camp in 1998. For her Ta Mok was a very good person. He cursed and yelled at his people but he gave them food. During internal fighting in 1997, Chea Phal said she was afraid for her life. Everybody was afraid because Khmer Rouge commanders were aiming guns at each other.

When reflecting on results of her affiliation and dedication with the Khmer Rouge, Chea Phal said after 25 years of struggle and living in the forest, all she got in 1999 was bare hands. Her husband was crippled and they both were old which was difficult to start a new life in a free-market economy. She said it was really difficult for her who had been living under food ration for many years to finally conduct business activities and farming to feed themselves. She said that her life was only blessed in early 2000s when land price in Anlong Veng steeply increased. She sold parts of her land and built her house in 2007. Angry at

having no results with the Khmer Rouge, in 1999 Chea Phal's husband resigned from military and worked in the farm. But that was a mistake as he now could not receive monthly pension fund for both disabled soldiers and veterans. She said her husband wanted to defect many times but he could not find a way to bring his family with him.

### Hiem Khoeun

Hiem Khoeun was from Thnaot Chrum village, Daun Keo commune, Pouk district, Siem Reap. She is now 47 and married to Kren Ka Re as her second husband. They have two children together. Her husband



lost his left arm in late 1980s when attempting to deactivate an antipersonnel landmine. He said simply that he lacked a proper skill to do the job at the time. Without an

arm it is hard for Kren Ka Re to farm. With few children, they need to pay people to plow, transplant and harvest rice in their field. Because she had tuberculosis, after prolonged treatment Hiem Khoeun has always been weak. She does not have an endurance to work long hours in the field. Her first marriage was with a soldier who was killed during a firefight in Angkor Chum district, Siem Reap province.

Hiem Khoeun was still a young girl during Democratic Kampuchea regime. Her father died of illness in 1975. Her mother died in 1982 when she was only 12 years old. She has a younger brother named Hiem Loeun, now 44. Sometime in mid-1980s, her brother joined the Khmer Rouge. Hiem Khoeun had never been a Khmer Rouge cadre or staff member before.

In 1991 Hiem Khoeun made a decision to

search for her brother in Khmer Rouge territory. She said she missed her brother and heard that he lived in Anlong Veng. She decided to walk to Anlong Veng to search for him. She travelled pass many Khmer Rouge checkpoints and was asked many questions but when she told them she was looking for her younger brother in the Khmer Rouge army they let her go. Getting close to Anlong Veng she joined the trip with a few other people who also came to Anlong Veng. When she arrived she found her brother living with his commander in his office near present district office. She cried but her brother did not although he was excited.

She served her brother's commander and lived together at the commander's house. She helped in farming and other works. Her brother defected in around 1993-1994 when he was sent on a mission to Siem Reap. He defected alone. Hiem Khoeun did not know that her brother defected and no one informed her. When she asked they told her that he defected. The defection did not affect her status in Anlong Veng. She was never taken to Toul Krous village as second class people. Hiem Khoeun moved to her present location in mid-1990s. During the integration fighting in 1998 she moved to the mountain with other people living in a camp known as Hou Noy and returned to her house in 1999 to find a family living in her house which she had to pay them to leave.

During Ta Mok regime, she said that she had enough to eat. She could conduct some religious activities. She also made some straw mats to sell to other people who in turn sold them to Thai businessmen.

When asked to make a comparison between Ta Mok and present regimes, she said that life is much better today. Her husband agrees. Although the family is struggling with daily lives and seems to be one of the worst in Anlong Veng, they still said that life now is by far better than under Ta Mok period for the fact that there is peace, more roads and freedom today.

### Lorng Lao

Lorng Lao is 59 and married to Tum Leun, 61, who is now the chief of Lumtong Chas village, Lumtong commune, Anlong Veng district. The village





Lorng Lao

is fourteen kilometers from the main road and can be reached by a dirt road through a grass-land with dotted trees. The road is more like a path for oxcart as it nears

Lumtong Chas. When arriving at the village, one sees more of dense forest around a small community of isolated people. The village has about one hundred families of interconnected people. The surrounding forest used to have abundant wild animals such as tigers and wild buffaloes. Just a few years ago there were two cases of tiger attacks which resulted in serious injuries. The tiger was later killed. Today there are only small animal such as wild pigs, deer and rodent species. Security of the village is still weak as Lorng Lao said that two months ago there were two cases of suspected robbery. A few years back a 14 year old girl was raped while traveling from Anlong Veng during holiday to visit her family in Lumtong Chas village. She was studying in a lower secondary school in Anlong Veng. There is a small elementary school in the village but today almost one hundred percent of the students never continued with further education beyond grade 5 as security as well as economic reasons prevented them from doing so.

Villagers grow crops in surrounding land which they cleared almost fifteen years ago when they returned to the village. Today large farm land is the only promise of greater economic prosperity for the villagers and their only reasons to remain in such isolated village. Hospital is far away too. Lorng Lao's daughter had to deliver one of her twin babies on a farm truck while traveling to hospital in Anlong Veng. Fourteen kilometer is not that far but road condition made it very difficult

for villagers to reach Anlong Veng.

Lomtong Chas and surrounding area used to be original villages of Anlong Veng before it became a district. When Ta Mok came he settled at the present intersection away from Lumtong Chas so that it was easy to travel to Dangrek Mountain and Preah Vihear province. Lorng Lao and her husband along with their seven children, the oldest is a daughter born in 1980, came to Lumtong Chas in 1999 a year after Anlong Veng became integrated with the RGC and the Khmer Rouge fell apart as an effective political and military organization. When they first came they had to clear their fields of landmines and UXO. Lorng Lao had to purchase more land from villagers to have enough space to farm and support her family. Her husband became the village chief a few years later as he used to serve some Khmer Rouge division commanders during Ta Mok regime in Anlong Veng and before that.

Before moving to Lumtong Chas, Lorng Lao and her family moved from places to places according to situation of the war. Being former members of the Khmer Rouge organization, they had led their lives on the move for almost twenty years along with the Khmer Rouge. They had enough to eat under the Khmer Rouge in 1980s and early 1990s.

When the Vietnamese came Lorng Lao traveled from Otdar Meanchey to Cambodian-Thai border in search of food and security in 1979. But she also traveled with the Khmer Rouge. She said that in 1979 she barely had enough to eat along the border. Her group passed through mine fields two times, one in a border area north of Otdar Meanchey and the other one when they had to pass from Thailand to Preah Vihear when Thai authority refused to receive more Cambodian refugees fleeing the war. When international organizations were able to provide food to refugees her life improved and food became adequate.

Lorng Lao lived in O Trav camp under the Khmer Rouge. She met her husband in 1980. After this she moved between Khmer Rouge posts on Dangrek Mountains. In late 1980s she settled in O Pha Kov village on Dangrek mountain. When Ta Mok moved



all inhabitants from O Pha Kov down to Anlong Veng in 1990, Lorng Lao did not follow him as she was sick and had to be treated in O Trav camp. Then she moved to Preah Pralay village under Ta Mok control (today in Trapeang Prasat district). Lorng Lao lived in Preah Pralay about four years before moving to Hou Noy camp in around 1998 during the integration period. After Hou Noy camp she moved to her present location. At Preah Pralay and while in O Pha Kov, Lorng Lao led a busy and flexible life. She tried to sell clandestine tools to fellow villagers which she bought from Thailand. She also sold cooked snacks to villagers. Because her husband was an active Khmer Rouge officer/soldier, her family received adequate food ration and she was able to farm the provided land for family consumption.

Lorng Lao believes that life today is better than under Ta Mok in 1990s as she has more freedom and there is no fear of evacuation and being killed in a fire fight. Her husband had no need to go to the battlefield any more. Some of her children have their own land to farm. For her Ta Mok was a good person. He ate with villagers and talked to them. He was a simple, man of the people. But Ta Mok sometimes had violent outburst. Lorng Lao said with a smile that when he gave you something you have to take it and go away otherwise Ta Mok would give it to someone else who asked. Lorng Lao knows little else about Son Sen and Pol Pot who she never met.

During Democratic Kampuchea, Lorng Lao was a Khmer Rouge member who was originally from Staung district, Kampong Thom province. She led a life of compassion, pragmatism and as a caring daughter. Lorng Lao was in fact a fairly important person in Chi Krenk district which she was assigned to work as chief of children and woman unit of the district as well as controlling rice and ammunition storehouse. She also taught children basic Khmer language which she learnt before she joined the Khmer Rouge revolution while she was 18 years old in Staung District in 1971.

Lorng Lao said that as a chief of mobile and woman unit she was compassionate and understanding. She tried to protect her unit members from being

punished or killed by other Khmer Rouge. She saved a man and a woman who fell in love which by the Khmer Rouge law meant violation of the moral code (*Khos Silathoa*). Lorng Lao said she told Khmer Rouge security personnel that if they fell in love, they should be married during mass wedding and should not be faulted. The Khmer Rouge agreed. Both Khmer Rouge cadres and ordinary people liked and loved Lorng Lao. Although she was in her early twenties, some villagers called her Mother because she said she was so nice to them and helped their lives on many occasions. Lorng Lao's reputation as a compassionate person toward the villagers and trustworthy member of the Khmer Rouge saved her life in a rebellion in Chi Krenk district which was to come in around 1977.

A few elder Khmer Rouge members named Ta Sot, Ta Sien and Ta Sinh became unhappy with the Khmer Rouge leadership and the ways they implemented national reconstruction after the war. They were unhappy with many other reasons which Lorng Lao said she could not understand. What they did was amounted to treason under the Khmer Rouge's rules. They persuaded a few other Khmer Rouge cadres and villagers to go house to house asking people to join a rebellion against the Khmer Rouge. They would cut to pieces those who refused to join. Every house they went they gathered more people and chanted along the road saying "destroy the Khmer Rouge" as they moved from between villages from south to north. The rebels slashed and killed unit, village, commune and district chiefs and supporting members of these people. Lorng Lao said a woman got her hand cut off when trying to hold onto the door handle. These rebels were later killed by Khmer Rouge execution squads coming from the Southwest. They were led by Hoeun and from Unit 07. Lorng Lao was spared in both occasions.

### **Meas Pov**

Meas Pov, 58 was married to Choun Nak, 60, in 1980. They have three children together. The oldest son is 31 years old. Now Meas Pov is chief of O Ky Leu village, Luntong village, Anlong Veng district.

Meas Pov was originally from Tang Banteay village, Veal Pon commune, Thpong district, Kampong Speu province. The Khmer Rouge entered her village in



1968. Then she was afraid of the Khmer Rouge guerillas and did not know what they did and why they were fighting. Her parents were farmers. However in 1972-1973

after constant Khmer Rouge present in her village, she joined them. First she helped them to carry the wounded, food and ammunition among other girls in the girl unit. In 1973 she worked in a factory to make white sugar. She said that the factory was fairly sophisticated. It made white sugar from brown sugar which the Khmer Rouge purchased from villagers who had made them from palm juice. She does not remember her factory chief. The villagers were not paid in cash but coupon which they used to exchange for food, clothing and other necessities from regional office run by the Khmer Rouge. Meas Pov did not know where the white sugar was sent or sold to.

In 1975 she was sent to Phnom Penh to work in a fishing net factory. The location of that factory was near Baktouk high school. Meas Pov remembers that it was immediately behind Sar Prum Meas cinema. The factory made net with machine. The factory chief was Ta Tung whose wife was also a chief of a blanket-making factory in Kandal province. Meas Pov said they were both purged in around 1977. Meas Pov was also afraid of her safety when Ta Tung was purged and she was also afraid when chief of region 15 named Cheng An was arrested as she was originally from that region while in Kampong Speu. Other than that life in the net factory was good for her. She was given enough food

to eat and worked along side old workers of the factory who had been there before the Khmer Rouge arrived. Meas Pov said she and her colleagues were able to search nearby houses for food, medicine and other necessities. She said sometimes she found jewelries and expensive clothes in rich villas but did not take them as the Khmer Rouge taught her to be selfless and avoid greed. She only took medicine and some candies. Meas Pov stayed at the factory until January 1979 when the Vietnamese arrived.

Meas Pov fled along with Khmer Rouge staff and cadres along highway 4, then she crossed to highway 5 to Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang and the Cambodian-Thai border. In the first five months of running, Meas Pov said it was the period when she actually suffered starvation under the Khmer Rouge. She had to dig potatoes and while tubers to eat. Thai potatoes were dug too but they were poisonous. She other Khmer Rouge members especially women and children were stuck at the border between Thai military who were reluctant to take them and the pursuing Vietnamese troops.

In July 1979, it was probably Ta Mok who sent trucks to take about half of the refugees to their camps to Otdarn Meanchey and other northern Cambodian provinces. She boarded the truck this time because people on the truck were Khmer and Khmer Rouge who she said she trusted. Some stayed behind. The truck took her to Point 1001 (Point 1001 was a Khmer Rouge military position based around intersection of Cambodian, Thai and Lao borders). There she helped the troops in distributing supplies to various units. Food was abundant. People could take food as they requested. If someone kept animals such as pigs they could retain the money after selling the animals to Thai people.

Meas Pov met her husband at Point 1002 (Point 1002 was located west of Point 1001). There were married in 1980 in an arrangement with five other pairs. Her husband loved her and requested his commander to come to her unit chief to request her for marriage. Initially Meas Pov refused as she wanted

to be single, mobile and did not want to have children. She said her contribution to the revolution would be lessened after marriage. But her husband persisted, he asked his commander to come in several times and refused to marry someone else. Her husband was a unit chief. She gave birth to her first child a year later.

Meas Pov and her husband later moved Point 808 (Trapeang Tav). They moved back and forth between Khmer Rouge camps depending on battle situations, always staying close to the Thai border. She lived like this throughout the 1980s. When Vietnamese and People Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) troops withdrew in 1989, Ta Mok began moving people down the mountains to Anlong Veng and surrounding area. Meas Pov was relocated to Lumtong Chas village, Lumtong commune, Anlong Veng district. She then moved closer to the mountains in 1995 as she said it was easier to escape during a fighting. In 1996 she moved to her present location in Phum O Ky Leu, Lumtong commune. In 1998 during Khmer Rouge government integration she moved again to Phu Noy camp and returned in 1999.

Under Ta Mok regime, there was enough to eat. Meas Pov said that in around 1992 there were hundreds of starving people who moved from government-controlled area to Anlong Veng seeking food. Ta Mok helped them, giving food and supplies. Ta Mok was so nice to them that some Anlong Veng people became a little jealous.

Ta Mok also gave a female cow to each family in Anlong Veng but not every family. Although he cared about other people, Ta Mok treated his daughters as equal to the way he treated his people. He exploited Anlong Veng forest resources but only cut old and mature trees. During the last days of his regime, Meas Pov joined a meeting with Ta Mok and heard him saying that his people had three choices to join the Cambodian People's Party, Funcinpec or Sam Rainsy and should not continue to fight so that nobody had to be widowed.

Religion was allowed to practice. During Khmer New Year and Pchum Ben days, people also worshiped. Meas Pov made her own incense and candles which she made from honey comb wax. Ta Mok built one

pagoda but unfortunately very few or no one gave the monks food during Buddhist ceremonies. Meas Pov laughed when saying that perhaps the monks also received food ration from Ta Mok that people had no need to feed them as was traditionally practiced in Khmer society.

Meas Pov is much happier today than in during Ta Mok time. She has a house and life is sedentary while before it was for mobility. She has land to farm and grow crops. She said that people in Anlong Veng carry on a society of trust and selflessness in which nobody is left hungry when unable to feed themselves as long as they asked. Sometimes there are cheating, crimes and theft which was conducted by people from other provinces. These activities are vehemently complained to the commune chief.

### Nhek Seun

Nhek Seun was from Phnom Sruoch district, Kampong Speu province. He married his wife Sam Lon in 1970. Today they have four children together;



Nhek Seun

their oldest one is a daughter 32 years old. Seun is 56 and his wife Sam Lon is 53. The Khmer Rouge controlled his village in Phnom Sruoch district in 1970 after he married his wife. Seun lived

in his village throughout the war years from 1970 to 1975. When the Khmer Rouge successfully controlled Phnom Penh in 1975, he was assigned as a group chief in his village cooperative. In his cooperative there were many groups. In his group there were 50 to 60 families. His main role as a group chief was to "lead people in doing their agricultural works."

In 1978 Nhek Seun was evacuated to Choam Khsan district, Preah Vihear province where he was



promoted to cooperative chief. Nhek Seun revealed that he was a cooperative chief but said little what his broader roles were. He said that he led people in production works, joined frequent meetings and educated the villagers about new ideologies and trainings from Angkar. Being a cooperative chief was equal to being commune chief today. A few months after arriving in Choam Ksan, Nhek Seun was evacuated again in around late 1978 because of Vietnamese attack. He and his family fled to the border along with a cohort of the Khmer Rouge, their staff members and villagers. Being so close to the Thai border Nhek Seun had only one choice which was to follow the mass. From 1979 to 1989, Nhek Seun and his family moved around from one temporary camp to another along with the Khmer Rouge until they reached a point called Point 803 which was west of Choam Sa-Ngam border check point. He lived there for a while before moving to Phum O Pha Av. Nhek Seun said life on the run was initially difficult especially in early 1979 when there was little food to eat. Whenever they stopped, people would decimate Thai potato and other food plantation which resulted in the Khmer Rouge leadership having to pay the Thai farmers. But later on international organizations brought food aids to the Khmer Rouge camps which then distributed to villagers. The Khmer Rouge constructed several store house around 30 by 60 meters which they stored rice, oil, dry and canned food, and other basic necessity to sustain life. Nhek Seun said villagers could collect rice from the store house as much as they wished and tried to find food supplements from the forest. For him that was good enough and was even better than people living inside the country.

In 1990 Phum O Pha Av was moved and all its inhabitants was sent down Dangrek mountains to live in Anlong Veng where they built new houses and roads. However Nhek Seun's family did not come down the mountain until 1992 because their children were sick. Nhek Seun himself was always sick and weak which was why he had never been called up by the Khmer Rouge to serve the frontline. He was occasionally

called to carry ammunitions and transport supplies by driving for the Khmer Rouge frontline. When he arrived in Anlong Veng he settled in his present village called Pdiek Chrum village, Pha Av commune, Trapeang Prasat district.

Under Ta Mok's control (1990-1998) Trapeang Prasat was also under Anlong Veng district. Nhek Seun continued to stay at the back with families of soldiers and officers fighting at the front. He helped them farm and carried heavy loads for them. He also farmed by himself for his own consumption. Nhek Seun said he received adequate food ration. It is important to note that without connection and important positions in the Khmer Rouge some villagers did not receive food ration at all. Neuk Seun's case was special.

Nhek Seun knew little about Ta Mok and other things he did such as his position on religion, trade and security. He only knew that people were able to recite sermon in the village when somebody died. They were able to purchase worshipping tools such as incense and candles which were brought in from Thailand. He was also able to buy some foods and tools brought in from Thailand by some people who dared to bring them in. Today in his village, there are people who are originally from Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom and other provinces who became connected with the Khmer Rouge. Under Ta Mok regime his village was controlled by Division 607.

#### Nou Naom



Nou Naom was originally from Kanthor village, Daem Bos commune, Kandal Stung district, Kandal province. He is 57. He married Khim Phon, 52, in 1982. They have eight childrens



together. Nou Naom received his education in a pagoda school in Phnom Penh. His children received basic education while under Khmer Rouge control in the 1980s and 1990s.

Nou Naom joined the revolution in 1973, not out of his will. When Prince Sihanouk was deposed and Cambodia was plunged into the Indochinese war, he fled to Phnom Penh to stay in a pagoda as well as to escape being recruited into the Khmer Rouge army. But when he visited Bek Chan village in 1973, he was captured by the Khmer Rouge who took him into their rank. He was first taken to Ou Chrey to work in administrative works as well as serving food for the soldiers. In April 1975, he was sent to Phnom Penh and then to Ratanak Kiri to station in Bar Keo to defend the border as well as to help in construction of some small bridges there. He was under division 801 under command of To Saroeun.

When the Vietnamese came he and his division moved to Point 1001. He walked with his army gears for 25 days crossing a few large rivers. At Point 1001 which was under control of Ta Mok then, he was sent to various missions fighting Vietnamese and PRK troops. In 1983 he moved to border pass 808, also under Ta Mok control, which was located only 15 kilometers west Choam Sa Ngam border crossing on Dangrek Mountains. The pass was as steep as Chaom Sa Ngam and offered another important outlets into Thailand when Vietnamese and PRK troops pushed them hard against the border, particularly during the dry season offensive in 1984-1985. The Khmer Rouge set up camps on various other passes along Dangrek Mountain. These camps were not only used as retreating points but also where women and children lived along with Khmer Rouge administrative personnel.

Nou Naom remembers clearly that he lost his right leg on January 19, 1987 while traveling between Khmer Rouge border camps. He said that the landmine which took out his leg was a small Chinese-made anti personnel landmine about the size of a cup. He added that it was not planted by PRK soldiers as it was in Khmer Rouge territory and the mine was Chinese-made. Among

the Khmer Rouge military there were also bad soldiers who did that against fellow combatants. In 1988 Nou Naom moved to Preah Pralay village (now in Trapeang Prasat district) which was located thirty kilometers east of Choam Sa-Ngam check point. Now it becomes a border village. Nou Naom continued to stay in Preah Pralay until 1997 when he moved down to Anlong Veng. A year later the town was evacuated because of final fighting between RGC and last remaining Ta Mok troops. He returned in 1999.

Being a soldier of the Khmer Rouge army, Nou Naom had enough to eat particularly since 1982 when there were food aids. His children received some education in Khmer Rouge camps. But for him life today is much better than under the Khmer Rouge. After serving the Khmer Rouge for nearly thirty years, Nou Naom said he received nothing from his dedication and hard works. He has a critical view of the Khmer Rouge leadership who used lives and labors of villagers and followers to serve their own hunger for power and control. He said the Khmer Rouge leadership was incompetent. The leaders were psychopathic and insecure. They had nothing special but only used power to kill people, and they killed each other. He believes that he wasted thirty years of his life and lost a leg for nothing. When asked about Ta Mok he said, he completed nothing during his control of Anlong Veng. His dams, hospital, school and road are little compared to progress Cambodia has made today. For him life today is much better. He owns land, a house and he could plant whatever he wants to serve himself and his family. After years of fighting, Nou Naom loves the peace and he has nothing else to ask for in his life today but to work hard and earn a reasonable living for his family. He would tell his children and grandchildren that war is generally destructive then constructive.

### **Sim Than**

Sim Than was originally from Tramkak district, Takeo province. She is now 63. She married Nuon Hem in 1976, arranged by Democratic Kampuchea government. They since have one daughter together. Now she is 31 years old. Sim Than joined the revolution



in 1970 after Sihanouk was deposed and hearing the announcement requesting people go to the Marqui jungle to join the revolution to depose Lon Nol and his government

from power. Sim Than then traveled to forested area of Tramkak district to join the revolution, first receiving education and training on key revolutionary ideals such as eliminating the rich and raising up the poor worker and peasant. With such education, Sim Than taught other women and people who joined the revolution. When she joined the revolution she was 18 and studied at grade 10. She was good enough to read and write basic Khmer.

After staying in Tramkak for a few years, Sim Than was reassigned to Phnom Den to join battlefield army. She was put in a woman unit with 300 women. She carried a gun and stayed in second front line. She said she sometimes fought against the enemies when necessary. She stayed in Phnom Penh until April 1975 and did not participate in the final fight to control Phnom Penh. Soon after the fall of Phnom Penh, Sim Than was sent along with her unit to come to Phnom Penh, receiving orders to defend the city from enemy counterattack. She was positioned in Olympic Stadium with other women. She was under Division 801 under the leadership of Ta Saroeun.

Into early 1976 she and her unit was reassigned to Veun Sai in Ratanak Kiri to defend the border with Vietnam. But when arriving there she was put to work in the rice field helping the farmers to do their job there. In 1978 Ta Saroeun was suspected which he was aware of. He told his soldiers to avoid traveling by boat down the Mekong river when there was such

request for them to do so from Angkar as they could be slaughtered along the way. Luckily Vietnamese attack came and Ta Saroeun was spared. He led his division soldiers along the border with Lao, dodging Vietnamese attacks until they reached a place called Point 1001 where Cambodian, Thai and Lao borders intersected, after a month-long trek. Ta Saroeun was arrested and killed some time later when arriving at Point 1001. At this place, Sim Than met Ta Mok who took charge of the large concentrating Khmer Rouge armies there.

At Point 1001 Sim Than was assigned to work in logistics office to provide and prepare rice and food for hungry, retreating Khmer Rouge soldiers who escaped from inner Cambodia. Sim Than moved between villages and camps along the border with Ta Mok and his troops between 1979 and 1989 until they reached Phum O Pha Kov village on Dangrek mountain where many Khmer Rouge divisions converged including Divisions 612, 616, 785 and 980. But mostly people who lived here were wives and children of soldiers and officers who were fighting at the front line. Also living there were some administrative staff and leaders and disabled soldiers. Sim Than helped and arranged food supplies for soldiers coming to receive ration and other war necessities from the base of Dangrek mountain. She said the women had to carry those stuff on their back down the mountain trails to get to the soldiers who were usually weak and hungry by the time they reached the mountain.

In 1990 after Anlong Veng was liberated from State of Cambodia control and it was stable enough to live, Ta Mok moved people living in Phum O Pha Kov to Anlong Veng. Sim Than came with them to present-day Anlong Veng town. During their stay from 1990 and 1998 when the Khmer Rouge army completely integrated with RGC army, Sim Than and others abandoned Anlong Veng a few times including one time when they were forced to burn their homes, which were fairly large and wooden, to prevent the enemy from establishing a strong and comfortable base there.

Sim Than has a fair amount of knowledge about

Ta Mok's character and family as she was a friend of one of his five daughters, named Khom (Khom is another daughter whose husband Vin was executed by Ta Mok). Ta Mok trusted her. Sim Than said that Ta Mok was a person who loved people who worked hard and despised those who were lazy and liked to sit around chatting. She said when Ta Mok visited her village and saw villagers met and talked not doing anything he would say, "if you keep on chatting, you'll gossip about other people and that would lead to quarrel." If she saw people working in their backyard he would say, "you do that is good, you'll have plenty to eat and when you die your coconut and other trees you plant would be your memory. I build roads, dams and buildings so that when I die people would still see my results."

Ta Mok was a simple person who addressed his villagers as *Ngaeng* and *Haeng*. He was very good in working with villagers. During rainy season, when the frogs and toads made sound, he would gather ten or twenty people to carry torch and catch those animals for eating and sending to the soldiers. He joined that process. He enjoyed doing it. Ta Mok was sometimes gentle and other times having outbursts. If he gave you something such as money or watch, for example, you should take it and leave immediately otherwise when someone came and ask for the same thing he might change his mind. He hated those people who were dishonest and lied. He punished severely thieves and robbers.

Ta Mok lost his leg in around 1982 when ordering his soldiers to clear a road on a bulldozer which hit an anti-tank mine. The shrapnel cut off one of his leg. In around 1979 he ordered an assassination of one of his son in law named Win who he found to have smuggled weapons and women to Thai bandits. Sim Than said that he had proves before he decided. He talked to Sim Than before he decided. He said, "I am going order an execution of A Vin. He is a traitor and he was duped by the CIA and corrupted by the enemy. I don't know what will happen to us if I keep him alive." Sim Than said that after contemplation, Ta Mok ordered

his soldiers to shoot Vin while he was sleeping on a hammock under Vin's house. Ta Mok had five daughters. One died.

Ta Mok allowed people to believe but not too strongly. He himself believed in some superstition. He allowed the construction of a pagoda in which he placed a few monks and built a few stupas. Now this pagoda becomes Anlong Veng pagoda. But because one of the monks was involved in a love scandal, he closed it later. Ta Mok did not like many people getting together believing in somebody or something which he believed could undermine his effective control of Anlong Veng. He allowed some trades but when it grew out of control, he closed it. He allowed pagoda but when there was superstition, he closed it as well.

For example, there was the case of a girl named Ka Pum who was executed along with her family for believing in soul possession. But Sim Than said that before he arrested people, he made sure they were sufficiently warned. She herself sold some noodle in Anlong Veng town, but when Ta Mok told her to close she followed. Five months later he arrested several people for continuing to do business. These arrested persons were later known as *Chen Yum* or crying Chinese. They were put in a village east of Toul Krous village.

### Sok Khan

Sok Khan, 60, was originally from Kampong



Sok Khan

Tralach district, K a m p o n g Chhnang. Her husband was a unit commander of the Khmer Rouge military. When the Vietnamese came in 1979, she and her four children were evacuated

along with other Khmer Rouge personnel toward the



Thai border. Her husband stayed behind to slow down Vietnamese advance. During the retreat, Sok Khan said food was scarce. In mid-1979 where she finally settled in a Khmer Rouge camp on Dangrek Mountain.

Being a wife of a Khmer Rouge active soldiers, she and her children were fed well. Food ration was provided regularly in the forms of rice, oil, sugar, canned sardines, dry fish and meat. She said that it was delighted to receive fresh fish but it was impossible to get because it took too long to deliver them to her. Two of her sons were sent to the battlefield to transport ammunitions and drive military vehicles. Sometimes Sok Khan was also asked to help the military by cooking food and carry weapons. In 1986-1987, Sok Khan's husband defected along with 8 of his soldiers. He was in love with a fellow female soldier before he did so. Sok Khan said that her husband had arguments with another unit commander before he defected. When asked about how she knew the news, she said that Khmer Rouge soldiers informed her about the news in a rather plain fashion. She was told that, "Your husband defected. From now you will live with us." Contrary to many impressions by other Anlong Veng villagers, Sok Khan was allowed to live freely in Khmer Rouge camps. She was not isolated and her food ration was never reduced even though her husband defected. Perhaps it was because her sons remained behind.

Now her husband is living in Prek Prasab district, Kratie province with his second wife and children. Sok Khan said that his second wife had relatives there who had good connections with PRK commanders. She helped arrange the defection. Sok Khan is happy for him now that he lives well. He visited her once in Anlong Veng. Sok Khan said that Ta Mok was a nice person. She has no ill feeling toward him.

### **Soun Thy**

Soun Thy, 65, was originally from Koh Sotin district, Kampong Cham province. During the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 she stayed in Koh Sotin along with her family. She was married before the Khmer Rouge to her first husband and bore seven children. She went through the Khmer Rouge regime with much



story to tell. Her entire family survived the regime as well as her parents. Her main life story began after her experience from 1975 to 1978 under the Khmer Rouge.

In 1979 her first husband

left her and children and married another woman. Broken-hearted she left her home leaving all her children to her parents to look after. She intended to travel to refugee camps in Thailand intending to find job or to opportunities to live in a foreign country. When she arrived in Sot Nikum district, Siem Reap province she met a group of Khmer Rouge who persuaded her to join them and told her that the road to Thailand was ridden with bandits and landmines. She agreed and joined them. But the Khmer Rouge also screened her and asked her whether she was a spy. She said no. Soun Thy said her first task was to "follow the troops and assist the people" living on both sides of the front line. According to her personal experience she said life with the Khmer Rouge guerillas was actually a blessing. Without going to the battlefields, she worked in social affairs, sometimes trying to persuade villagers to join the Khmer Rouge guerillas. Sometimes she took villagers on PRK sides to take food ration from the Khmer Rouge and did not force them to join. As the years passed she became chief of social affairs. She was paid 1,000 Thai Baht per month, a little higher than a salary of a foot soldier who was paid 600 Thai Baht per month. The Khmer Rouge changed. Under DK they never paid cadres or soldiers.

Soun Thy met her second husband in 1982 who was about ten years older than him. Today she lives with him but they never have children today. In around 1987, Soun Thy was poisoned after drinking



water from a lake contaminated with poison she said was put by Vietnamese soldiers. During the guerilla warfare, it appears that both sides used both poison and poisonous gas against each other. After drinking the water Soun Thy fell ill and was taken to Khmer Rouge hospital at O Trav refugee camp, along Cambodian-Thai border. Her second husband came with her. He was allowed to come along to take care of her. But when she recovered they did not return to Sot Nikum district but stayed at a border village on Dangrek mountain named Pha Kov village (or Teuk Kiev village), now it locates pass the Choam Sangam border check point in Thailand. Ta Mok claimed it was Cambodian village. Now it is in Thailand.

After staying in Pha Kov village for a few years Soun Thy and her husband was asked to live in Anlong Veng town near present-day Anlong Veng market. Living there for a few, her husband had a fight with another Khmer Rouge officer. Soun Thy said that the officer kept his salary. When her husband asked for the money he did not return. Feeling betrayed and seeing corruption, her husband was angry and decided to come to Toul Krous village to live as a form of personal strike against the injustice they both received.

Toul Krous is not a normal village in Anlong Veng. It is a village where the Khmer Rouge relocated those people they considered committing crimes such as being former PRK soldiers, Son San soldiers, Funcinpec soldiers, selling cattles and other acts. It was probably that Soun Thy and her husband was sent to this village after their background were found by higher Khmer Rouge leadership that they used to be in PRK control. According to Soun Thy, Toul Krous is like a prison without wall. Many people were sent to this village as punishment and a few were executed. In the past the village had two or three rows of houses. Now it becomes fairly small with only two lines of houses on both sides of the road. Many people abandoned this place after 1998, maybe because of its reputation as a "*Sach Haem, Sach Sa Oy*" village (village of swollen and rotten flesh, as it was known during the early 1990s under the Khmer Rouge) and with bad memory

they did not want to continue associating with it.

More than ten years after the Khmer Rouge's leadership of Cambodia which resulted in the death of more than 1.7 million people in which people were forced to work long hours in the rice field with frequent meetings and indoctrination, Toul Krous village continues to resemble the Khmer Rouge's Democratic Kampuchea. Villagers had to get up at 5:30 in the morning to do exercise and prepare themselves for morning meeting before departing to work in the field. They worked in solidarity groups in which people helped farm in each other's provided land but retained the harvests for their own consumption. Everyday there were three meetings in which Soun Thy said it was nothing other than a meeting of threat and intimidation to the villagers. Soun Thy said that during that time the Khmer Rouge used three ways to change people. First, when a person is seen as committing mistake he/she would be given advice and told to change. Second, when that person commits the same mistake, he/she would be warned with some beating. Third when the same mistake is committed for the third time, the Khmer Rouge would send them to Toul Krous village for hard labor with constant threat of torture and death. The first step they called education, second called warning and third called keeping aside.

Soun Thy saw a few people taken to be executed at the edge of the village. She was frightened. She knew that that person was taken to be killed when seeing that through the window and dared not come outside to look at it closely. Nobody dared in Toul Krous. A person was usually taken on small truck. After awhile Soun Thy heard sound of gun. She did not dare to go and check at the forest to find the body which was usually left to rot and for animal to devour. In Toul Krous the Khmer Rouge dug detention cells into the ground. For example, a few holes here and there. Villagers in this village were not provided with food ration.

Soun Thy said Ta Mok was a nice and kind person with sudden outburst when angry. He sometimes yelled bad words to villagers who would not talk to

him when he remained angry. After that Ta Mok would give money to them or something else when they requested. His temper was like “hay fire.” Soun Thy first met Ta Mok in O Trav refugee camp. She said Ta Mok even knew how to make pastes to cure children illness. For her Ta Mok was a fairly liberal and pragmatic person. He created a pagoda in around 1993 which became Anlong Veng pagoda. But when Ta Mok created it one of the monks who he brought in fell in love with a woman and ran away. With this Ta Mok became discredited the pagoda and dissolved the place. Soun Thy said Ta Mok used to provide food to people who were hungry.

The case of a young woman named Kra Pum was peculiar. Soun Thy said she was a niece of Ta Mok but she and her entire family was executed after finding that she conducted “soul possession,” which was a superstition in which souls of possess the body of a person so that it can communicate with human. Kra Pum and her family was first taken to be killed at Toul Krous village but people in the village sometime kept them alive for about a year. When she was found out to be alive she and her family were shot. Considering that Ta Mok was a more pragmatic person and became less strict in his communist ideology, and he even created a pagoda, Kra Pum's crime should not result in execution of the whole family. Some villagers said she was a scapegoat of a conspiracy.

### **Yeay Kiek**

Yeay Kiek, 60, currently lives in Thlat commune, Anlong Veng district. She is married to Sieng Dy who was a foot and irregular soldier of the Khmer Rouge during Ta Mok regime. They have five children. Their oldest son is 32 years old who used to own a small truck to be used as transporter for the community. He used to be better than other children but since he was arrested for transporting luxury wood two years ago, he became poor as all his money had to be used to bail him from jail. Her youngest son is currently studying at military training school in Kampong Speu province. Her second son in law recently had a traffic accident and being treated for broken leg. Yeay Kiek is currently doing fairly well apart from all the reasons problems

her children had. They are rebuilding their lives.

Yeay Kiek was originally from Baray district, Kampong Thom province. From 1975 to 1979 she was a base people working in the field. When the Vietnamese came she and many other people fled along with the Khmer Rouge as they said the Vietnamese would arrive and kill them with rifle knife. Yeay Kiek settled on the border and later moved around between Khmer Rouge camps. She finally moved down from Dangrek mountains in a gradual move until they reached their present location in Thlat commune. They cleared a forested area and a patch of land for farming where it used to dense forest with tall trees.

Under Ta Mok regime Yeay Kiek led a simple life as a mother and wife, who never cared about politics or the revolution. Her husband was not an important and regular soldier. So the family was frequently reprimanded by the Khmer Rouge who at one point threatened to take all her land from her and send her family to Toul Krous village as punishment. Yeay Kiek said she did not receive adequate food ration from Ta Mok regime. She said even during that period there were corruption and favoritism in terms of food distribution. For those who had relatives in important positions, they had more and regular ration. She said as for her family, there was no “string” to pull.

In stead, ignoring politics and the Khmer Rouge's professed selfless revolution, Yeay Kiek found different ways to trade cattle with Thai businessmen. A business trip took her more than three weeks to complete. She had to walk through various Khmer Rouge checkpoints to reach Staung and other towns controlled by the RGC and buy the cows from villagers using Thai Baht. Then she needed to take the cow north to Dangrek mountains and find an easy, less steep pass to take them to the border. The whole round trip is about 200 kilometer and had to be done by walking. When asked if they Khmer Rouge knew about the trade, she believed some of them knew about it but the division commander, Chea Pauch, responsible for her village did not do anything as he

also run a noodle factory for Ta Mok.

Under Ta Mok regime Yeay Kiek owned a bicycle which became a subject of a lot of criticism from the regime's security. Many people did not own bicycles, motorbikes and other vehicles. The road was occupied by military trucks. Life was lived as temporary and made as mobile as possible waiting for the day to evacuate during firefight. Yeay Kiek made sure all her belongings could be carried by hand, thus she never kept cattle, used bicycle and a lot of rice in the barn. After all Ta Mok would not allow her to own that much belongings although she could afford it through her profit from the cattle trade.

One day her husband was almost arrested by the Khmer Rouge. She said that he waited for the Khmer Rouge truck for several hours to take him to fulfill his military duty in Preah Vihear but the truck did not show up. He returned home. The next day two Khmer Rouge police came and talked to him about the absence. Yeay Kiek said they threatened to arrest her husband and wanted to take all the land she belonged. But they did not do both. Instead they order her husband to walk all the way to Preah Vihear along with his gears. He disappeared for several months. Everyday she waited for him. Whenever she heard the sound of truck through the village she was worried as trucks usually brought wounded and death to the village and hospitals. Her husband returned home safely.

### **Yoeung Oeun**

Yoeung Oeun, 55, is married to Khim Khon, 50, in 1983. They have three children today. Khim Khon is a deputy village chief of Lumtong Thmei village, Lumtong Thmei commune, Anlong Veng district. Yoeung Oeun was originally from Tramkak district, Takeo province. He joined the Khmer Rouge revolution at the age of 14 in 1971 in Tramkak district. He said that he joined the revolution because he wanted to help return Prince Sihanouk to power. He was first assigned as a messenger for the district office which had a few other young messenger. Being a messenger suits Yoeung Oeun. He was young and enthusiastic and would do what he was told to do. A messenger's job usually involved



Yoeung Oeun

sending letters around the commune and sending words by mouth to other people in the commune. He walked and rode bicycle but he never used a horse which was used widely in his district,

as he was afraid of the animal. A messenger was an important communication tool for the commune as there were no radio and phone at the time, he said. He said he had to bring all information exactly as it was to intended recipients.

In 1975 when the Khmer Rouge controlled Phnom Penh, he was still in Tramkak district but was asked to help building a bridge at Kirivong district along with Khmer Rouge soldiers. In 1976 he was sent to Ratanak Kiri to help build a bridge across Sre Pauk river. Here he saw members of the Khmer Rouge construction team being purged and killed. The bridge was never complete when the Khmer Rouge sent replacement construction engineers. Yoeung Oeun continued staying in Ratanak Kiri until late 1978 when the Vietnamese came. He intended to travel to Tramkak district to meet his parents and siblings as "he missed them." But he could not do that as a mass number of Khmer Rouge cadres fled to the Thai border. He said he went along with these soldiers until reaching Malai where he said he worked in cooking food and transporting them for frontline soldiers. Yoeung Oeun continued to move until between Khmer Rouge posts along the border. He stayed for a few years at Point 1002 doing a variety of works including making bamboo and wooden spikes for making traps. He said to make a one-foot long spikes, 500 per day. Finally in early 1990s he returned to Anlong Veng being a member of Division 912, controlled by Ta Kong.



Yoeung Oeun knows little about Ta Mok, Son Sen and other important leaders. He is very positive about life in Anlong Veng today which he views as being much better than under Ta Mok. What he wants now is for his children to find jobs as he does not have land for them to find. Two of his children finished high school.

### Conclusion

In the stories of twelve Anlong Veng inhabitants above, there are varied experiences of how they joined the Khmer Rouge, what they did under the Khmer Rouge, why they ended up in Anlong Veng and what their impression about Anlong Veng and Ta Mok now. Three of these interviewees were from Takeo

province. Two joined the Khmer Rouge in 1980s and 1990s. There are also two women whose husband and brother defected with RGC while they stayed behind. There is one family who illegally traded cattle with Thai businessmen while living in Anlong Veng. There is also indication that families whose members served in the Khmer Rouge army received regular and more food ration. Eleven interviewees have good impression about Ta Mok except one former soldier who thinks what Ta Mok did amounted to nothing significant.

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# CAMBODIA TRIBUNAL MONITOR

W W W . C A M B O D I A T R I B U N A L . O R G

The Cambodia Tribunal Monitor website provides extensive coverage throughout the trial of three former senior Khmer Rouge officials accused of atrocity crimes. The Monitor provides daily in-depth analysis from correspondents in Phnom Penh, as well as complete English-translated video of the proceedings, with Khmer-language video to follow. Additional commentary is provided by a range of Monitor-affiliated experts in human rights and international law.

The Monitor has been the leading source of news and information on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC) since its inception in 2007. The website hosts an archive of footage from the tribunal and a regularly updated blog containing analysis from expert commentators and coverage by Phnom Penh-based correspondents.

An estimated 1.7 million Cambodian citizens died under the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979. The former Khmer Rouge officials to be tried in the ECCC's "Case 002" are Nuon Chea, former Deputy Secretary of the Cambodian Communist Party's Central Committee and a member of its Standing Committee; Ieng Sary, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Democratic Kampuchea and Khieu Samphan, former Chairman of Democratic Kampuchea State Presidium.

The Cambodia Tribunal Monitor was developed by a consortium of academic, philanthropic and non-profit organizations committed to providing public access to the tribunal and ensuring open discussions throughout the judicial process. The site sponsors include Northwestern University School of Law's Center for International Human Rights, the Documentation Center of Cambodia, the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation and the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. The concept for the website was conceived by Illinois State Senator Jeff Schoenberg, a Chicago-area legislator who also advises the Pritzker family on its philanthropy.

# SEEING THE KHMER ROUGE FROM A RETIRED CHINESE SPY

## "ON THE WAVE OF MEKONG" BY HUANG SHIMING

*Michael Y. Liu*



A Khmer Rouge cadre at the Ministry of Commerce, Um Sarun (center standing), posing with two Chinese advisors

There has been much speculation, and writing, on Communist Beijing's role in Cambodia's Khmer Rouge Period (1975-1979). Yet little is known about the personal experience of the Chinese individuals who were involved in this part of Cambodia's history. This is partially due to the role Beijing played in the Khmer Rouge Period, which is considered embarrassing and has been frequently brought up by human rights organizations. Encouraging the sharing of these types of stories could lead to even more political embarrassment for Beijing. Recently, however, as China and its citizens grow more confident to believe it is not necessarily the case, a range of Chinese publication on the Khmer Rouge Period is now available. The book "On the

Wave of Mekong" is such an example.

The author Mr. HUANG Shiming was a communist Chinese "intelligence worker" working undercover in Cambodia. He lived under Cambodia's Sihanouk (1955-1970), Lol Nol (1970-1975) and Khmer Rouge period (1975-1979). Though written as a novel, Mr. HUANG has publicly admitted that the book is simply a memoir of his life. The story of the protagonist is based on his personal experience. In his book, "intelligence worker" is a glorified name for spy. As his identity suggests, his story is nothing but fascinating. It gives readers of the book a unique angle to look into this part of history, an authentic personal account of this time. In a way, it also reflects the unfortunate fate of

individuals living during this period, forced to choose between different political identities and ideologies.

### **Background on the Author**

The author used a pen name Tie Ge, when writing this book. It is hard to use modern day laws to define his nationality. His family was originally from Puning county, Chaozhou (Teochiu), Guangdong province, China. But he was born and raised in Phnom Penh. If this were to happen today, he would most likely be Cambodian, one of the some 700,000 ethnic Chinese Cambodian living in the country.

Nevertheless, historians' studies have found that in the pre-Lol Nol days a large portion of the ethnic Chinese communities in Cambodia were highly autonomous. This was especially true in Phnom Penh. They went to Chinese schools, used different Chinese dialects, frequented and supported business within the community and had all sorts of connections with Chinese living back in China. They tried hard to preserve their own ethnic identity and their communities thrived. Inevitably, some of them tend to more stay current and echo with situations or revolutions back in China. The author is one of them. Answering Mao's call in 1950s for all Chinese living abroad to help build a new and great socialist China, the author travelled back to China, claimed his Chinese nationality, and submitted himself to the revolution. Because he was fluent in Khmer and accustomed with Cambodian society, he was recruited for intelligence work in Cambodia and was sent back to Phnom Penh at the end of 1950s.

Even now a Chinese national, his "Khmerness" can be witnessed from his affection towards the Mekong River (rather than Yangtze River, Yellow River which were frequently referred in Chinese mainstream literature). As he enthusiastically said of the Mekong River, "I love this river, salute this river so much, I feel that my entire life is deeply influenced by and tied to this river."

### **Evacuation and Return to Phnom Penh**

Mr. Huang lived under the cover of a Chinese businessman after he returned to Cambodia. During this time, he travelled to different places around Cambodia and Vietnam. When the forced evacuation

of Phnom Penh came in 1975, he and his family members were all "evacuated" to the countryside and then later to deep into the jungle. Like everyone else, hunger and disease came in turns to all of his family members. Soon his nephew died. The same doom started to approach the rest of his family members. He, his mother, and his wife started to become sick.

When joining the "revolutionary work", Mr. Huang felt he was helping Cambodia and its people fight against American imperialism. Therefore, he found little difficulty in justifying his role as an intelligence worker working for another country. His sense of ideological superiority naturally extended to the Khmer Rouge, an ally in the fight against imperialism and a communist friend of Beijing. He probably never thought that the first "gift" he would receive from the Khmer Rouge would be this hardship. After a few months, he totally lost faith in the Khmer Rouge's propaganda and the Khmer Rouge itself. He chose to violate the party discipline and disclosed his identity to the Khmer Rouge cadre living his village. After a round of reporting, he could return to Phnom Penh.

Upon returning to Phnom Penh and for years latter, he learnt the chilling fate of his colleagues. After the fall of Phnom Penh and practically overnight, Beijing lost all contact with its intelligence workers in Cambodia. Beijing was desperate, they had no knowledge of the situation on the ground and there was nothing they could do. Even they could not have seen what was coming! As the author himself has noted, all of the intelligence workers were fine under the theoretically hostile Lol Nol regime, but immediately after the Khmer Rouge took power, their whereabouts were out of reach to Beijing. Unlike the author, some others chose to stick to the party discipline to the last minute, as they have been constantly instructed and educated to do.

### **Disbelief in the Khmer Rouge**

With hind sight, the author made a wise choice to deviate from the party discipline. This choice might have been impossible for many of his colleagues; to observe the party discipline is the foremost responsibility of any communist party member. For them, a violation



of this rule is unjustifiable in almost all circumstances. The author dared to deviate because he had seen the tragic nature of the Khmer Rouge's drastic policies.

"Pol Pot and his clique, from theory to practice, have considered all urban residents as soaked in the capitalism's poison and cannot be alleviated. Except kids who knew nothing, they have to be all smashed", the author had observed, "Khmer Rouge leaders blindly indoctrinated all people to hate urban residents". One of the Khmer Rouge soldiers even asked the author: "My superior had told me urban residents eat people and don't even spit out the bones, is it true?" The author saw no hope of success in the Khmer Rouge's policy. Out of such conviction and his desperation, he chose to disclose his identity.

### **Atrocities and the Khmer Rouge Leaders**

If the author had not claimed his Chinese nationality, he would have become one of the 400,000 ethnic Chinese Cambodian when the Khmer Rouge took over or even the half of which that perished under the Khmer Rouge period. Naturally, he used his book to help document some of the atrocities the ethnic Chinese faced in Cambodia.

"There was an ethnic Chinese who did not understand the Khmer language, and one day, out of nowhere, he was suddenly tied up. Khmer Rouge officials in the village convened a mass meeting and announced that he was a loafer, a leech to the new society. Several cadres, in turns, used an industrial clamp to piece off his flesh, chunk by chunk. He was covered with blood, fell onto the ground, shouting and screaming."

His personal experience under the Khmer Rouge made him completely lose faith in the Khmer Rouge's leadership. He called them "a group of insane people soaked in the extreme leftist ideology, drenched in blood, who treated people like animals".

Despite the popular belief that the Khmer Rouge found much inspiration from Communist Beijing on its drastic social policies, some academics have been skeptical of the Khmer Rouge's ideology debt from China. In the split debate, the author offered his understanding. He unequivocally alleged it is Gang

of Four (a cult who are widely held as responsible for waging China's Culture Revolution) and their clique who indoctrinated their devastating methods to Pol Pot and his clique. In the view of the author, the later dedicated to be a "better" student who can even overpass their teacher, hijacked Cambodia into a hopeless political "experiment" and made its people being through the hell.

### **Departure from Cambodia in 1976 until today**

After the author's identity was confirmed, he was treated with great privilege and sent back to Phnom Penh with a Khmer Rouge truck in February 1976. Phnom Penh was empty at that time. He was directly sent to the Chinese embassy. Disturbed by the experience under the Khmer Rouge and out of concern for his family members' safety, he requested to be sent back to China. Shortly thereafter, he and his family members took a flight back to Beijing. The plane was empty, except a few Chinese experts.

It's unclear how much his briefing on his opinion of the Khmer Rouge influenced Beijing's decision making. Most likely it was not enough. The author himself now lives in Guangzhou with his family. He has occasionally been involved in the state affairs concerning Cambodia. He and his wife frequently travel back to Cambodia, to see the country he affectionately loves yet witnessed so much heartbreak.

The author started to write this some 600,000 word book in 1998 in part out of his undying affection for his second home—Cambodia. He also wanted to share his experience and his personal account of the history of this time period. Above all, he would like to use his own experience to educate younger generations. When the book was completed in 2008, he launched a campaign to donate copies to the Chaoshan Technology Institute, the most notable college in Chaozhou area and to around twenty middle schools in Puning County of Chaozhou.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Chinese publications on the Khmer Rouge period has been very removed from mainstream research on the topic, which is mostly done in English or French. There was little interaction between Chinese authors and mainstream researchers except occasionally in

some academic studies. "On the Wave of Mekong" in many ways echoes the previous understandings of the Khmer Rouge period, but from a separate and personal perspective. It offers a lot of detailed description of some historical events. Publications like this contribute to a more thorough understanding of this most unthinkable cruel period of Cambodia, and the world's history.

The release of this book itself is worth noting. One would have reason to assume any promotion of this book in China would be carried out discreetly. Beijing has been skeptical of any reference back to the Khmer Rouge Period, most notably its past unfavorable approach to the establishment of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. However, when the book was officially launched in 2008, several retired senior Chinese Communist Party cadres and current governmental officials attended the event. Several of them made some remarks. As one of them concluded, "this book has a irreplaceable documentary, historical and educational value; ... it is a great teaching material for the young generation".

Surely, to talk and discuss the Khmer Rouge and Beijing's involvement is not necessarily a social taboo. Despite inconvenient and painful as it could be, I wish China and its leaders could go even further by

truly taking note of the lessons from this part of the history and by contributing towards reconciliation in Cambodia. As a leant friend has put (he wrote in a Cambodian context but this is applicable universally), Many Cambodians have tried to put their memories of the regime behind them and move on. But we cannot progress—much less reconcile with ourselves and others—until we have confronted the past and understand both what happened and why it happened. Only with this understanding can we truly begin to heal.

After all, it was a Chinese diplomat Zhou Daguang who wrote the first history book of Cambodia some eight hundred years ago. Much useful to the current scenario is that, despite his book documented some gruesome stories he witnessed in the Angkor Thom and hence been constantly challenged, it also gave the world today an account of the life in the great Angkor empire, almost the only one from that time. There is no reason his proud descendants should not follow this noble tradition.

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***Michael Y. Liu is a lawyer from China and is doing research on the ethnic Chinese during the Khmer Rouge period.***



A Chinese advisor (fourth from right) standing with other Khmer Rouge cadres during Democratic Kampuchea

# THREE YEARS AWAY FROM MOTHER

## NOV SOKUN NO LONGER RECOGNIZES HER FACE

*Bunthorn Som*



Nov Sokun

Nov Sokun, 44, originally from Sa-Ang district, Kandal province, is a high school History and Khmer Literature teacher in Koh Kong province.

Sitting on a bench under a coconut tree, Sokun said, “After having been apart from my mother for three years during Khmer Rouge regime, I was no longer able to recognize her face.” Before the Khmer Rouge regime, Sokun's parents were well-to-do farmers and Kapok traders. In 1973, there was a Khmer Rouge revolution around the city, and several Khmer Rouge cadres came to his village to collect money, rice, and medicine from the villagers. “My father was secretly against the Lon Nol government and wanted to support resistance to it even though his farm was in an area still controlled by that government.” He discretely donated funds and medicine to the Khmer Rouge revolution

through a Khmer Rouge agent whom he had known in the village. He was very disappointed to learn later that none of the goods which he had given to the Khmer Rouge soldiers had actually gone to the cause of resistance.

One night a group of Khmer Rouge security spies knocked on the door; his father went to open it. Immediately, those spies put a gun to his father's head and accused him of not donating funds to the Khmer Rouge revolution. His mother upon seeing that yelled at them saying, “What did my husband do wrong?” The spies refused to listen to any explanation and arrested his father on the spot.

That night Sokun's mother was so frightened that she took all her six children and left their house on the farm to go to another house which was about one kilometer from the main road. Half way to the new house, his mother heard the sound of Khmer Rouge soldiers walking and immediately hid all her children in clump of banana trees until the soldiers walked past. Then she continued their journey.

Three days later, Sokun's mother found her husband's corpse. The Khmer Rouge had shot his father at the back of the village. She recovered the body and prepared a traditional funeral. After the funeral, his mother took all children to live in Phnom Penh. One of his aunts lived in a house near the Chinese Hospital and allowed them to build a hut there to live temporarily. This aunt, his father's sister, had a husband who was a colonel and also a pilot. Sokun's family faced a lot of difficulties living in Phnom Penh because his mother did not have a job or business with which to support the family. Because of this, she sent Sokun to live with her sister who sold



pork at Kandal Market. Eventually, his mother sent his three older brothers to live with other relatives and took his two younger brothers with her to live in Battambang Province.

Sokun lived with his aunt until the Khmer Rouge came into Phnom Penh, forcing everyone to evacuate the city. His eldest brother quickly arrived to gather all of his siblings including the second and third sister, five-year-old Sokun, and the family of his aunt and uncle. Then they and many other families left the city, walking across the Monivong Bridge and traveling along National Road 1. Sokun was very afraid because he saw many dead bodies along the road. The group arrived at Treu Sla pagoda in Kien Svay district and rested there.

After remaining at the pagoda for a while, his four siblings, their families, the aunt's entire family, and other displaced families were put on trucks by Khmer Rouge soldiers and taken back to Phnom Penh. When they arrived, all the passengers in the trucks shouted, "We're here! We have arrived at Phnom Penh." Sokun tried to see outside but he could not because of the darkness. There were no lights illuminating the streets as before. The electricity had been turned off.

The Khmer Rouge took all of the people to the train station near the Central market because they wanted to evacuate them to Banteay Meanchey province. Sokun does not remember anything that had happened on that trip. He was very young and very tired; he fell asleep. He awoke when they arrived at Svay Sisophon market, and he, his siblings, and his aunt's family left the train.

After that, the Khmer Rouge brought ox carts to carry them to a village called Rumpeak in Chhnuor Meanchey commune, Preah Neth Preah district, Region 5. This village was nineteen kilometers from Svay Sisophon. When he arrived, he saw limitless rice fields with many green trees.

Sokun's brother and third sister were assigned to work in a mobile unit, but the Khmer Rouge separated Sokun and allowed him to live with his second sister who was eighteen years old at the time. Being that Sokun did not have a mother with him, the unit chief

considered his second sister as a widow and allowed them both to live in the mother's unit in the village.

Sokun said that the village chief called him along with the other kids to study in a big, crowded hall in the village. The teacher wrote words on the blackboard, and the students read. However, Sokun did not understand what the teacher had written because he had never before gone to school. He did not return to study the following day.

Sokun explained that his living in the village was made easier because the people native to Ram Peak village were so kind. They always helped newly evacuated people. One day Sokun went to visit his brother who worked at a construction site in a distant forest. However, he missed his home so much that he returned.

When he arrived back at the village, a villager took pity on him and took him to eat rice in the rice hall. However, the cook told him that no food was reserved for him and that he could not assign a ration to him. When the villager heard that, she told the cook to divide her food ration with Sokun. Sokun to this day remembers that person's kind deed. He always called her "*Mae* [mother] Tuon."

In addition to the food ration that Angkar gave, Sokun's family was very smart about finding other sources of food. Sokun would pick Phti and other edible plants. He also found crabs or snails to cook and eat with rice soup or gruel. Whenever a commune chief called his brother to help husk rice, the brother would volunteer to take the husks to burn, but in fact he hid rice under those husks and gave it to his siblings to cook. Sokun's third sister was four years his senior and looked more masculine than feminine. When she was not working, she often took him with her to find mice in the rice fields. Sokun's job was to close the mouse holes to prevent the mice from escaping; his sister would then dig them up. They always caught four to ten mice before they returned home.

When the food rationing stopped, this same sister took Sokun to steal rice from the rice fields. Because Sokun was so small he could move through the rice plants undetected by spies while his sister stood

watch on the dike. There once was a young adult who was stealing corn from the farm and was caught by a spy. The spy tied the ears of corn together, put them around the boy's neck, and told him to announce his mistake to all the villagers. Sokun and many of the young villagers followed the boy around laughing at him. They were too young to understand what was actually happening. After the boy had announced his mistake to the entire village the Khmer Rouge took him to the back of his house and shot him.

Three days later, the older people in the village gathered to see the hole in the boy's swollen body. Sokun went to see the corpse and was afraid. One day when came back from his construction site, Sokun's first brother told him that people were being killed. He related a story of two men who worked at mobile unit and who had done something which was considered morally wrong. Later, when the unit chief found out about it, he tied them to a tree in front of people and cut their bellies open with a knife.

In the village, many kids including native village people had infected wounds from which they seldom recovered because there was no medicine. Some of these starving patients ate beef. Usually people in this condition cannot eat beef. Those who did died immediately. Sokun said that there was no hospital in his village, but from time to time he did see a doctor bring what appeared to be water in a bottle and inject it into patients in the village. He did not know whether this made them better or not.

Four of Sokun's siblings had malaria at the same time. Every morning they went outside to sit under the sun because they felt so cold. A female staff member who had known them before the evacuation and loved his brother gave Sokun and his third sister two tablets. His first brother and second sister went to visit a traditional Khmer doctor. Because of these treatments all of his siblings recovered from the disease.

At the end of 1978, a chief of the children's unit assigned Sokun and other children in the village to load rice sheaves onto ox carts and transport them to another place. He could not remember the exact

place, but it was near Svay Sisophorn. Sokun at that time was living away from his sister. After a while, because he missed his sister so much, he asked the unit chief's permission to return to his village. The chief refused; Sokun and another relocated child decided to run away. When they arrived at the village, the elders were so happy that their little brother had returned. They questioned him about his defection, and his sister told him not to go back to the unit.

The next day he saw that all of the children had been sent back to their villages by the unit chief because the countryside was in such turmoil. So, Sokun and his elders walked back to his birthplace. Sometimes he sat on Angrek and was carried by his elders. He and his brothers and sisters stayed at Battambang for a while in order to search for their mother. She had gone there to work in 1975. Every morning Sokun's elders would fish until noon and then return home with the fish for cooking. Sokun was afraid and worried. He often stared through the window at the road.

One day, Sokun saw his brothers and sisters come along the road with two elderly women. When they got to the house one of the women motioned to Sokun and called him "*Kon*" (child). This frightened him so much that he ran to hold onto his sister. He did not recognize the woman. His sister said, "This is your mother. She is your mother." His mother cried out loud, ran to him, and embraced him tightly. Sokun explained that since his mother had been away from him in Battambang, he had only his sister to look after him, and he had come to think of her as his mother. The entire family walked together back from Battambang to their birthplace. They eventually arrived at Ta Khmao, where Sokun found his grandmother. After living with her for a while he moved to Phnom Penh where he received permission from a monk to study in Wat Preah Put School. After studying there he continued his study at Bak Touk high school.

Before he could complete high school at Bak Touk his sister who was married and lived in Koh Kong asked him to live with her. He moved to live with her and continued his studies, passing the High School

examination in 1993. He then passed the entrance examination to study for two years to be a primary school teacher. After teaching as a primary teacher for nine years he began studies which lead to his certification as a secondary school teacher.

In 2011, Sokun took another examination to change his position from a secondary school teacher to a high school teacher. He is now a student at the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Sokun stated that the reason he wanted to study History was so that he could know and understand events of the past, particularly of Cambodia and the region.

He recently attended "The History of Democratic Kampuchea from 1975-1979," a training course organized by the Documentation Center of Cambodia in cooperation with the National Institute of Education. Sokun said that his supervising teacher had recommended that he take the course and that he had gained much knowledge which he will combine with his existing curriculum. This will make it possible for his students to be far ahead of where they might have been otherwise in understanding important particulars about their past.

He added that it will help them better understand their present and help them plan for a better future. He believes History to be very useful.

Sokun stated that he had told his niece and nephew about the Khmer Rouge regime, but they simply could not believe that such things had happened. Because he believed it to be so important that his niece and nephew understand and believe that those events actually did happen, he brought them to meet the people who were kind to him during the period. He took them to the places where he worked and lived in Rum Peak village, Chhnuol Mean Chey commune, Preah Neth Preah district. He says that he will never stop sharing these experiences with his students because they are the future leaders of our society and must understand the past in order to guide us to a better, more secure future. Sokun intends to teach in ways that lead students to learn to make history relevant and important to their present and their future.

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***Bunthorn Som is an assistant team leader of Searching for the Truth Magazine***



Sokun practicing teaching methodology during the Training on Genocide Education organized by DC-Cam at National Institute of Education



# PUBLIC INFORMATION ROOM

DC-Cam's Public Information Room (PIR) is open to students, researchers, government and non-government organizations, and interested members of the public who want to learn more about the history of Democratic Kampuchea and the developments of the coming Khmer Rouge tribunal.

DC-Cam is the largest repository of primary materials on Democratic Kampuchea. The materials in its archives are consequently of the utmost historical interest and has served as important evidentiary materials in any accountability process relating to the DK regime. To disseminate the truth about the DK period and to promote lawful accountability and national reconciliation, it is imperative that materials be made available to historians, judicial officials, and other interested members of the public. Through the PIR, the public can read the documents and use them for research. The documents in our possession include biographies, confessions, party records, correspondence, and interview transcripts. We also have a database that can be used to find information on mass graves, prisons, and genocide memorial sites throughout Cambodia.

The PIR offers three services:

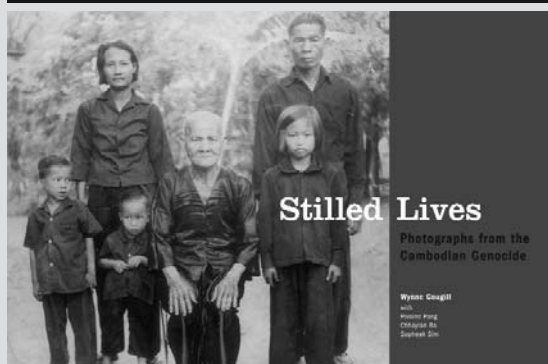
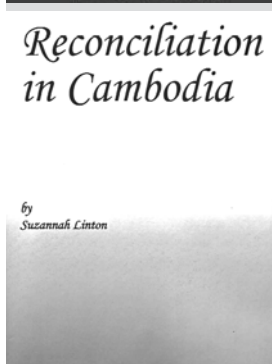
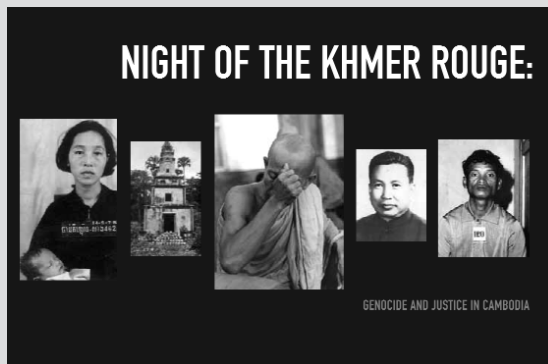
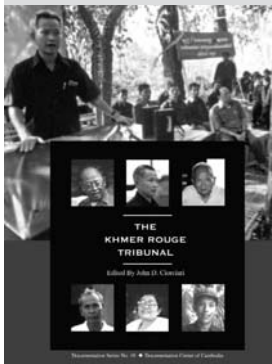
1. Library: Through our library, the public can read documents, books and magazine, listen to tapes, watch documentary films, and view photographs held at DC-Cam, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, National Archives and other locations.

2. Educational Center: DC-Cam shows documentary films and offers lectures on Khmer Rouge history, the Khmer Rouge tribunal, and other related subjects.

3. Tribunal Response Team: Our document and legal advisors have provided research assistance to the tribunal's legal experts from both Cambodia and the United Nations, as well as to the public.

Khmer Rouge documentary films are shown everyday upon request.

The PIR is located at House 66, Preah Sihanouk Blvd, east of the Independence Monument. It is open to the public from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or if you want to arrange a group event, please contact our staff, Savina Sirik, at [truthsavina.s@dccam.org](mailto:truthsavina.s@dccam.org) or at 023 211 875. Thank you.



# RECONSIDERING THE SCOPE OF THE FIRST “MINI-TRIAL” IN THE CASE AGAINST KHMER ROUGE SENIOR LEADERS

Anne Heindel

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Last September the Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) split the indictment against the surviving senior Khmer Rouge leaders into five core criminal policies with the intention of holding several short sequential trials. The Chamber noted that in cases of similar complexity at international courts, up to 10 years had been required to reach judgment. In recognition of the advanced age of both the Case 002 accused and many victims, the Chamber sought “to limit the number of witnesses, experts and Civil Parties called,” enabling it “to issue a verdict following a shortened trial, safeguarding the fundamental interest of victims in achieving meaningful and timely justice, and the right of all Accused in Case 002 to an expeditious trial.”

Pursuant to the severance order, the Case 002/1 trial is currently addressing only the alleged criminal policy of forced movement comprising the evacuation of Phnom Penh after April 17, 1975, and the forced migration to the North and Northwest Zones from 1975 to 1977. The Trial Chamber ruled:

*No co-operatives, worksites, security centers, execution sites or facts relevant to the third phase of population movements will be examined during the first trial. Further, all allegations of, inter alia, genocide, persecution on religious grounds as a crime against humanity and Grave Breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 have also been deferred to later phases of the proceedings in Case 002.*

None of the parties were asked for their views in advance of this decision, as the Trial Chamber believed that a consultative procedure would itself result in unacceptable delay. Although supporting the

purpose behind the order, the Co-Prosecutors strongly objected to the Chamber's approach, noting:

*[T]he charges selected for the first and likely only trial of the Accused would not be representative of their alleged criminal conduct, in contrast to international practice; it would not promote an accurate historical record; and would diminish the legacy of ECCC proceedings in advancing national reconciliation.<sup>6</sup>*

The Co-Prosecutors argued that the first trial should instead include “the most grave forms of harm suffered by the great majority of Cambodians during the [Democratic Kampuchea] period,” including not only the evacuation of Phnom Penh, but also two related execution sites, as well as a few security centers, work sites, and cooperatives.

The Trial Chamber rejected the prosecution's request for reconsideration but did allow for the possibility that additional charges could be added at a later date. In response, in January 2012, the Co-Prosecutors filed a truncated request to add only two related execution sites and the S-21 Security Center/Choeung Ek killing fields and asked the Chamber to rule on their request immediately. On August 3, 2012, the Trial Chamber announced that it would hold a management conference later this month—nine months after the start of trial—to discuss the Co-Prosecutors' outstanding motion and determine the final scope of the Case 002/1 proceedings. After assessing the prosecution request in detail, the Trial Chamber agrees that adding the three additional crime sites may be appropriate. However, it believes that hearing all of the prosecution's proposed witnesses would be unnecessary and would undercut the Chamber's other efforts to “streamline” the proceedings

and ensure that all evidence is heard by the end of 2013. Noting that ten of the prosecution's proposed witnesses have already been heard and that it does not wish to take the time to recall them, the Chamber proposes that if the sites are added, only four currently scheduled witnesses and eight new witnesses be heard on these charges. It therefore is asking the Co-Prosecutors to advise it if adding the new crime sites with these evidentiary limitations will assist the prosecution in meeting its burden of proof and also "outweighs the risks" inherent in a projected additional three months of trial.

For the same reasons that the Trial Chamber seeks to act quickly to reach an initial trial verdict before one of the accused dies or becomes incapacitated, all Case 002 parties and trial observers agree that the advanced age and poor health of the accused make it extremely unlikely that additional "mini-trials" will ever be held. The ECCC is the first mass crimes court to contemplate consecutive trials based on one indictment, and the first trial is not proceeding swiftly, in part due to many novel procedural questions raised. Case 002/1 evidentiary proceedings are now projected to last more than two years.

Procedural issues are also likely to prevent an expeditious start to a second trial. The Trial Chamber said that it selected Case 002/1's subject matter "to ensure that the issues examined in the first trial provide a basis to consider the role and responsibility of all Accused, and to provide a foundation for the remaining charges in later trials."

However, as noted by the Co-Prosecutors, the only way the Trial Chamber could adopt facts established in the first trial into a subsequent trial would be through judicial notice of adjudicated facts or *res judicata*. It is unclear whether the Trial Chamber has the ability to take judicial notice of adjudicated facts as it has previously determined that "there is no legal basis in the Law on the Establishment of the ECCC or in the Internal Rules for the Chamber to take judicial notice of adjudicated facts...before the ECCC." Moreover, neither mechanism would be available in Case 002/2 until the Supreme Court Chamber issues its final judgment, as Trial Chamber rulings could be overturned.

In the Court's first case, the time between the issuance of the trial and appeal judgments was a year and a half.

The Trial Chamber, however, believes there is no impediment using a trial verdict as a legal and factual foundation for a second trial without waiting for the Supreme Court Chamber to issue a final judgment. Even if this were possible, it is questionable how the Trial Chamber could draft a complex foundational judgment while overseeing a new trial. After the first trial involving one accused who admitted to many of the allegations against him, the Trial Chamber took over eight months to draft the judgment.

In seeking to reach an expedited verdict against the accused senior Khmer Rouge leaders and ensure that victims will receive some measure of justice after more than 30 years, the Trial Chamber has paradoxically limited the trial's relevance for survivors, as it no longer includes discussion of many crimes that epitomize the DK regime, including forced labor, forced collectivization, forced marriage, and genocide. The addition of only the three proposed crime sites would do much more to ease the prosecution's burden of proof than to increase the relevance of the proceedings for the majority of survivors.

Due to the narrow charges at issue in Case 002/1 and the implausibility of any other cases going to trial—either against the senior Khmer Rouge leaders or the suspects in controversial Cases 003 and 004—there are strong reasons to fear that many of the emblematic atrocities of the Khmer Rouge era will never be addressed by the ECCC.

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***Anne Heindel is a DC-Cam legal advisor***

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# "CRITICAL" IRREGULARITIES IN INTERVIEW PROCEDURES HIGHLIGHTED DURING WITNESS TESTIMONY

Anne Heindel

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During the testimony of Rochoem Ton, alias Phy Phuon, alias cheam, the Ieng Sary team pointed out irregularities in the recording of his second interview with Office of Co-Investigating Judges (OCIJ). The team is now asking the Trial Chamber to call the interpreter present at the interview to testify about the circumstances under which it was conducted, arguing that it "appears to have been an act of subterfuge: a staged interview where questions and answers were prepared based on a prior unrecorded interview and then read into a recording device, creating the illusion that the recording reflects the actual interview. This development has the potential to impact both the Trial Chamber's perception of the credibility of Phy Phuon—a key insider witness who may have dissembled when asked about the interview procedure—and the weight the Trial Chamber accords to any OCIJ interview summary unaccompanied by oral testimony.

Unique among mass-crimes courts, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) follows the French-based civil law preference for giving judges the primary investigatory role. In theory, this should result in a long investigation and a short trial. An impartial investigating judge "seeks the truth" by gathering both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence in a written dossier including all information necessary for the trial judges to reach judgment, with only a very few witnesses orally testifying to the acts or conduct of the accused at trial. Likewise, because the OCIJ is independent and neutral, its witness statements should be presumptively reliable and thus suitable for admission as evidence without the necessity of calling most witnesses to appear a second time during trial

hearings.

As noted in my previous commentary, "Admissibility of Witness Statements In Lieu of Oral Testimony," the prosecutors are seeking admission of numerous OCIJ summaries without calling the witnesses to testify orally, consistent with "the civil law procedure applicable before the ECCC, which places significant emphasis on the use of written records gathered by investigating judges" and the need for a "flexible approach" in mass crimes cases. They argue:

*[W]ritten records of interviews produced by investigators working under the supervision of the CIJ clearly have probative value and a strong indicia of reliability in that they were given under oath, recorded by Court officials signed by the witnesses and accompanied by audio recordings.*

Although the Trial Chamber previously granted OCIJ statements a "presumption of relevance and reliability," it has recently been less supportive of OCIJ work product, finding that unless there is an opportunity for parties to confront a witness, the written summary of his or her interview may be entitled "to little, if any probative value or weight." At least in part, this is likely because CIJ practice has been to audio record witness interviews and then to create written summaries rather than transcribe the entire recording.

All parties acknowledge that some witness summaries contain some defects. The prosecution asserts that these errors do not impact the inherent reliability of the witness summaries. In contrast, defense teams allege that potentially exculpatory evidence has been excluded. The Nuon Chea team has argued that

“material inconsistencies between the written and audio records...stand to undermine the credibility of the entire judicial investigation, suggest a troubling pattern of inconsistencies in the record and are sufficient to give this [Trial] Chamber ‘reason to believe’ that evidence may have been tampered with.” According to its analysis of thirteen summaries, in addition to missing and distorted information:

*The written records often transmute innocuous statements into incriminating testimony by characterizing mere acquiescence to investigators' leading questions as clear, affirmative statements of knowledge. This effect is also accomplished when the investigators summarize the witness' remarks out of sequence in order to produce a seamless, straightforward narrative, which can give the false impression of certainty where there is none.*

The team also highlighted instances of investigators interviewing witnesses “off the record”—without creating a transcript in either audio or written form, despite the explicit requirement of the ECCC Rules that “[a] written record be made of every interview.” This week the Court published an example of this practice. Toward the beginning of the transcript, the witness says, “I spoke all about that yesterday,” and the interviewer responds, “But I want you to enumerate them again because yesterday I did not make any audio recording.”

Thus far, the Trial Chamber has said that challenges to interview summaries will only be entertained where alleged defects “are identified with sufficient particularity and have clear relevance to the trial.” However, the Trial Chamber President notably called the recent Ieng Sary allegations “very critical.” The team's written filing buttressing its oral allegations is likely to generate further concern about the underlying reliability of the OCIJ summaries. In asking the Trial Chamber to hear the interpreter's testimony, it states:

On August 1, 2012, the Defence spoke to the interpreter who was present during the OCIJ interview of Phy Phuon. The interpreter indicated that the OCIJ investigators did conduct a lengthy interview with Phy

Phuon that was not recorded. Written questions and answers were then prepared by the OCIJ investigators based on this unrecorded interview, and those questions and answers were read into a recording device. The interpreter stated that he read out the questions and Phy Phuon read out the answers. A written record of interview was then prepared based on these recorded questions and answers.

When the Ieng Sary team first raised this issue prior to Phy Phuon's testimony, the prosecution responded, “What I would simply say is we're going to question this witness. If there are any issues, it will come up in his testimony.” Oral confrontation may overcome most procedural irregularities in the creation of OCIJ witness summaries. However, this solution begs the question: what value has a lengthy judicial investigation added to the ECCC process if substantial witness testimony must be heard again at trial?

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**Anne Heindel is a DC-Cam legal adviser**

## SIGNIFICANCE OF GENOCIDE EDUCATION

- ♦ *Your questions empower and give meaning to those who have suffered. Asking your parents and grand-parents about the Khmer Rouge will further there conciliation of the Cambodian nation.*
- ♦ *Teaching children about the Khmer Rouge regime means teaching students the difference between good and evil and how to forgive. Broken societies must know their past in order to rebuild for their future.*
- ♦ *Teaching children about the history of the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as stimulating discussion between children and their parents and grand-parents about what happened, are important to preventing genocide both in Cambodia and the world at-large.*

# REACTIONS TO LENG THIRITH'S RELEASE

*Sok-Keang Ly*

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Trial Chamber's reaffirmation on the release of leng Thirith, one of the four Accused in Case 002, on September 13, 2012 serves as a flashpoint to prompt an exploration into the lay person's overall feelings toward the legal scenarios. This article does not aim to challenge or question the court's discretion, but to get the voices of civil parties, educators and the public heard about the fact that leng Thirith, a former Minister of Social Affairs during the Democratic Kampuchea's rule (1975-1979), was found unfit to stand trial by five court-appointed medical experts. Their "unanimous conclusion" stated that she suffered from "progressive, degenerative cognitive condition."

In a series of twenty-seven interviews with civil parties to the Case 002 and teachers, their perceptions would be understandably depicted in several terms such as "satisfaction," "regret," "dissatisfaction," and "concern," although their general sense is hard to accept that one of the already few suspects are being released from ECCC detention facility indefinitely. Below are the exact quotes:

**Lonh Nha**, a civil party, says: "This is the court's decision. The court followed the existing law. I have no problem with the release because she suffered from mental illness. But if she recovered, she should be brought back to trial. I am just an ordinary citizen. I have no right [to decide] but respect the court's discretion."

**Chao Khim**, a civil party, says: "We are no longer able to try her because the experts said she had no ability to join the hearing. I have no problem with the decision. In reality, she had her husband face the charges at ECCC."

**Ly Pat**, a civil party, says: "To be honest, I am not so satisfied with the release of leng Thirith for medical treatment. I think she may pretend. This is the ECCC's

decision. I acknowledge that it's correct as I have listened to RFA [Radio Free Asia] and RFI [Radio France International]. To me, I wish the court to imprison her. She could not think and concentrate. Although experts provided an acceptable explanation about her health, I keep feeling that she pretends."

**Em Oeun**, a civil party, says: "I think there is no problem at all with the release. The legal experts stick to the law to do justice. For the sake of justice for all, we could not bring the ill or the mentally ill person to be tried. What the court is doing is right. It'd be best if leng Thirith could speak out those truth."

**Soy Sen**, a civil party, who lives in Angtasom commune, Tramkak distict, Takeo province, says: "As the court decided to release her, I feel unhappy. Although leng Thirith suffered from mental illness, I am still unhappy with this. The court should reconsider the decision on leng Thirith's release from detention facility. So, justice seems enough for me and other victims."

**San Sok**, who lives in Prey Kabas district, Takeo province, says: "While following the court proceeding yesterday and finding that leng Thirith was released, I think that leng Thirith is old and the court would not try the person with mental illness. So, I think it depends on the court to deal with leng Thirith."

**Chea Yutharun**, who lives in Serey Sophon district, Banteay Meanchey province, says: "Although I followed the court proceeding and find out that she will be released, I think leng Thirith should not stay outside the detention facility. She is among the persons who claimed the lives of the Cambodian people and my relatives. So, I regret for hearing the release. Finally, I would like the court to review it again."

**Chhe Heap**, a civil party, says: "I disagree with the court which decided to let leng Thirith stay outside



the detention facility. In my opinion, leng Thirith is one of the KR leaders who caused many people died. I think when leng Thirith was released, the other three KR leaders would make the same request. Ultimately, I think the people could not receive justice."

**Hun Chim**, a civil party who lives in Takeo province, says: "I agree with the court which decided to release leng Thirith."

**Im Vannak**, a civil party, says: "In accordance with the Buddhist religion, there should be tolerant. So, I agree with the release of leng Thirith. We have a tribunal which applies the law, the release should be based on the law as well."

**Chan Sopheap**, a civil party, says: "I agree with the release of leng Thirith. I believe in the court's decision because she really has the mental illness and could not restore her memory. Therefore, I think her release was right because in a law a mental ill person should not be tried."

**The Ysa**, a civil party who lives in Kampong Siem district, Kampong Cham province says: "Although I am not a legal expert, I feel not satisfied with the release of leng Thirith. But I believe in the court's decision. The court has its own reason and legal base to release her."

**Khun Samit**, a civil party, says: "I agree with the release of leng Thirith because she has an unstable mental state. But I suggest a further trial of those accused who have a good health."

**Sos Min**, a civil party, says: "If leng Thirith has that illness, I am satisfied with the court's procedure to release her indefinitely. I have nothing to add."

**Man Kry Yah**, a civil party, says: "I would pardon and forgive, if leng Thirith has an illness which made her unable to speak out and understand. But leng Thirith has a good health, ECCC should further try her. My tremendous sufferings are caused by the killing of my uncle, aunty, and grandparents."

**Um Piseth**, a civil party, says: "When it comes to the law, a tribunal would not bring a person without the ability to remember and mental illness to be tried. In contrast, if ECCC continued to try her, the trial

would not be just at all. Therefore, I totally agree with the release of leng Thirith. However, I continue to view leng Thirith as having guilt because she was one of the KR leaders. On the other hand, I regret for not being able to hear leng Thirith's answer in the court hearing. It's a loss for the younger generations."

**Hav Sophea**, a civil party, says: "I am not happy with the ECCC's decision to release leng Thirith. The court should continue to detain her. leng Thirith is a well-educated person who could be good at pretending to be mentally ill. I also did not believe in the medical experts. I suggest that ECCC think of the survivors' feelings and sufferings because I am also a victim who waits for this trial for more than thirty years. Ultimately, all did not get the satisfactory justice."

**Teng Sophea Leaksmeay**, a teacher, says: "Religiously, we should not remain tied with anger with leng Thirith because we want a reconciliation and tolerance for the sake of happiness. Buddhist principle says: "Do good, receive good; commit sins, receive sins." On other hand, leng Thirith is old and suffers from her old-age illness and mental problem could happen to her. Therefore, it is not a problem to release her from the detention facility. Legally, those committed sins would be punishable and faced sentencing. However, the release was supported by both national and international co-prosecutors. In my opinion, ECCC just doesn't want any difficulty inside the detention facility because of her illness.

**Chea Kalyan**, a teacher, says: "ECCC should not release her because of her illness. We all know what she committed during the KR rule. I think that she should be kept inside the detention facility. It's better."

**Siv Thuon**, a teacher, says: "In regard to the release, ECCC should decide it in a provisional way. When she recovered her mental state and had a good memory, ECCC should try her again. She is not a simple suspect, but committed a crime of genocide during the KR regime. On the other hand, I wish the court to move faster because of aging KR leaders. A speedier process would enable the KR survivors to obtain justice."

**Kung Hak**, a teacher, says: "In this case, we can't do

anything because the decision to release her was made by the court. On the other hand, we can't try a person with an incapable memory. If the case proceeded, it seemed to be the same as the time of their dictatorial rule of the KR regime."

**Chhim Dina**, a teacher, says: "In my opinion, there should be no protest over the release of Ieng Thirith because it was the court's decision with the support from the national and international co-prosecutors. On the other hand, as a historian, I follow the information about the trial. I have collected relevant document to teach youth about what had happened during the KR to promote reconciliation and build peace.

**Ben Neang**, a teacher, says: "To my thinking, I agree with the release of Ieng Thirith. I also feel pity of her as she is so old. I acknowledged that she was hated because the crimes on the Cambodian people were committed during her rule. But I changed my mind. This has passed for years. Especially, Buddhist philosophy reads: "vindictiveness ends by not being vindictive." Legally, her health condition deteriorated. ECCC should tolerate her by not imprisoning her for life or sentencing her to death. In the meantime, we need to educate youth about what had happened to foster reconciliation and to build peace."

**Seng Piseth Neary**, a teacher, says: "Like other survivors, I am not satisfied with ECCC's decision on the release because she is the one who cause the death of nearly 2 million people including my family members during the KR regime. I think that the court should try those KR leaders to bring justice to the people, including me. In other words, I wonder that when Ieng Thirith suffered from deteriorating mental state, why doesn't the court speed up the trial?"

**Mom Met**, a teacher, says: "It appears to me that Ieng Thirith doesn't suffer from mental illness. It was that although my mother is 89 years old, she has

a good memory and can speak about the period from Issarak to present. So, I think Ieng Thirith may pretend to avoid the trial. In fact, I am not happy with the release because approximately 2 million people died under her rule. So, the court should proceed a trial. Anyway, as it's the court's decision, I don't know what to do."

**Ten Kimton**, a teacher, says: "To my thinking, I don't want Ieng Thirith to be released. ECCC should continue to detain her and follow her health condition because the mental state is not a stable issue. Young people can have a good and bad mood. So, I want the court to proceed a trial to serve as a model for those who have the tendency to violate the law. In this case, it may set a bad example for others in society. For just having mental state or bad memory, the court decided to release?"

**Muong Sophat**, a teacher, says: "Morally, the court's decision to release Ieng Thirith is acceptable because most Cambodian people have in mind tolerance. In other words, if the court proceeds to try her, she may face death inside the detention facility. Her health condition is deteriorating from day to day. So, in my opinion, it's the right decision to let her out of the detention facility.

These are the general reactions among the twenty seven people. However, a glimpse of hope remains. The Trial Chamber's decision that experts made an annual evaluation of "whether new treatment options or therapy for progressive, dementing illnesses (in particular Alzheimer's disease), have been discovered ..." [2] This gives a clear message that Ieng Thirith's recovery would enable ECCC to proceed, but the court's mandate is a concern.

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***Sok-kheng Ly is a consultant to DC-Cam's Genocide Education Project***

## READING HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

*DC-Cam's publication History of Democratic Kampuchea written by Dy Kamboly and teacher guidebooks can be downloaded with free of charge at [http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Genocide\\_Education.htm](http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/Genocide_Education.htm)*

## A KHMER ROUGE NOVEL

## THE RED HEART OF DAM PHENG

*A [possible] Khmer Rouge Senior Leader*

*Who is Dam Pheng? He is a Khmer Rouge fantasy. And his fictional story, published in a 1973 edition of the Khmer Rouge magazine "Revolutionary Youth," resonates with what some of the former senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge have been saying during Case 002 at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). In particular, these leaders have suggested that they were driven by patriotism—even as they have pleaded they had little power and were just following orders.*

*Written just two years before the Khmer Rouge rose to power, Dam Pheng provides an example of what the leadership viewed as the ideal Cambodian youth. Dam Pheng has "pure" origins, coming from a poor peasant family that had been exploited even as he is exploited by the "capitalist" and "feudalist" state. Then he meets Angkar and "wakes up."*

*Under the revolutionary organization's political tutelage, Dam Pheng attains "clear vision" about reasons for the oppression of his family and the "imperialist" threat posed by the United States. He takes up the revolutionary struggle and becomes a "role model," embodying the key revolutionary characteristics of gentleness (toward friends and the masses), patriotism, sacrifice, malice (toward the enemy), and, critically, an "absolute stance of struggle."*

*Dam Pheng cannot be swayed from his revolutionary duty, even when his own security is threatened. Indeed, such threats only strengthen his resolve to "build" himself and hone his revolutionary consciousness.*

*This process of self-construction is critical to the ultimate challenge he confronts after his arrest by the "traitorous" Lon Nol state. Despite being severely tortured, Dam Pheng refuses to confess. His last defiant act, performed the night before he dies, is to use his own blood to write a poem in homage of the "Red Heart."*

*As Case 002 unfolds, Dam Pheng stands as a reminder of how the Khmer Rouge leadership viewed their struggle and what they expected of their followers. Even in 1973, Dam Pheng had clear undertones of the fervor that would help catalyze not just revolution, but mass murder against a multitude of perceived "enemies." At a time when former Khmer Rouge claim they were "just following orders," Dam Pheng invites us to consider an alternative explanation and a different ending written in the blood of the DK regime's victims.*

***Remarks by Anthropology Professor Alexander Hinton of Rutgers University***

Dam Pheng was born to a poor peasant family in Ba Phnom district, Prey Veng province. Like other poor peasants across Cambodia, his parents were suppressed materially and mentally by the French colonials in regard to their political rights and freedom, and were also exploited everyday by local feudalists and capitalists. For that reason Dam Pheng's family and the families of other peasants were constantly suffering and did not have enough food to eat.

Since the day he opened his eyes, Dam Pheng lived in extreme poverty. Due to this extremely difficult life without enough food, clothing or medications, his brothers and sisters died one after another. Later, his parents also died of disease. Finally, only two members of his family were still alive: Dam Pheng and his elder sister. Dam Pheng was about seven or eight years old and his sister was a teenager. The two became orphans without anyone to depend on. His sister was adopted



by one of the villagers, while he was adopted by a monk. Dam Pheng then lived at a pagoda where he studied literature and mathematics.

Although young, Dam Pheng was clever, industrious, meticulous and punctual. As a result, all the monks were sympathetic toward him. After completing elementary school, the monks sent Dam Pheng to Saravoan pagoda to pursue his studies in Phnom Penh. He entered the sixth grade at Youkunthor High School.

Dam Pheng had to deal with all of his study expenses on his own because the colonial, feudal, and capitalist state did not support industrious students. They only indoctrinated the youths with oppressive ideology. They adopted strict rules whereby the children of poor peasants could not go to school; only their own children could. Therefore, Dam Pheng and other poor youths who wished to pursue education were forced to sell their labor to the feudalists and capitalist during their school breaks so they could afford school materials, clothing and food.

During the daytime, Dam Pheng went to school; at night, he sold bread or peddled a cyclo (tricycle) to support himself. During the long national holiday and school vacations, he worked at a construction site, carrying cement or bricks to get extra money. Studying and working to support his life made Dam Pheng tired both physically and mentally. Exhaustion, lack of food, and insufficient sleep made it difficult for students to earn a diploma or baccalaureate certificate, and their physical health worsen. Some students developed tuberculosis, or became mentally dysfunctional, and others became very weak physically.

In 1960, a revolutionary body then known as the “Youth Alliance of Democratic Kampuchea” was established. Under the leadership of the revolutionary organization (Angkar) of Kampuchea, an enthusiastic student movement began to emerge in Phnom Penh. Dam Pheng became a member of this revolutionary youth organization in 1961. After that, he was educated politically and mentally by the Angkar. He grew up



Khmer Rouge soldiers who defected into the Vietnamese soldiers in 1978

quickly in terms of his physical body, intellectual ideas, political stance, and consciousness under the instruction and support of the Angkar. He started to have a clear vision. The countless hardships of the people under the severe suppression of the imperialists, feudalists, and capitalists became clear. Through this, he understood the reasons behind the suffering of his family and relatives who lost their lives or became separated from each other, and their current hardships. In addition, he saw the danger facing his country—US interference and invasion. Along the border, the blood of the Cambodian people, male and female, old and young, was shed every day by the US invasion and its entourage—Saigon and Bangkok—both on land and by air.

The beloved motherland calling for the younger generations to stand up to protect [Cambodia's] territory came into the pure and young heart of Dam Pheng and all other Cambodian youths. Dam Pheng began to look at himself and found that it was useless for him to spend time, physical strength, intellect, and his youth to earn a degree, position, and fortune because all of that wouldn't benefit the people. In contrast, such knowledge and understanding served the imperialists, feudalists, and capitalists in suppressing, exploiting, and killing the people.

Through the education and explanatory propaganda provided by the Angkar, Dam Pheng as well as other youths woke up just in time—for the country was appealing for their help. He then shifted the course of his action to one that would serve the country, people, and poor peasants. He became a role model in regards to sacrifice and solidarity unity amongst the revolutionary youth movements in Phnom Penh because of his gentle attitude, patriotism particularly towards the poor, willingness to sacrifice his personal interests for the shared cause, and absolute stance against the Imperialists and the oppressors as well as against all obstacles both small and large. In Youkunthor High School as well as other high schools and secondary schools in Phnom Penh, Dam Pheng got on well with all other youths. Because of his gentle attitude, understanding, and helpfulness toward others

in the areas of study and daily life, he gained the appreciation of other youths.

In late 1963 and early 1964, the Imperialist US and her entourage—Saigon and Bangkok—strongly threatened Cambodia's independence, neutrality and sovereignty. Cambodia was facing the danger of a military coup staged by the Imperialist US dogs with Lon Nol and his cronies as permanent leaders. However, the leaders at that time compromised with the Imperialist US and her entourage in return for peace, regardless of the fact the country had become a slave. Therefore, Revolutionary Youth of Kampuchea, in the name of Cambodia's representative and protecting the interest of the country and Cambodian people as a whole, led Cambodian youths nationwide to struggle using all possible means against the Imperialist US and her entourage—Saigon and Bangkok—and forced and lobbied the leaders not to surrender. Under the leadership of the Angkar, Dam Pheng engaged with the youth circles in Phnom Penh, carried out educational propaganda and unmasked the tricks and crimes committed by the Imperialist US and her entourage—Saigon and Bangkok—which attempted to slay Cambodia's independence, peace, and sovereignty. Dam Pheng courageously mobilized youth movements and led them in struggling enthusiastically against the Imperialist US and her entourage. Acts carried out by the movements included distributing leaflets, demonstrating, rioting, and meeting.

Because Cambodian youths, under the clever leadership of the Revolutionary Youths of Kampuchea, struggled strongly and enthusiastically across the country, the then-leaders were forced to reject the poisonous aid from the Imperialist US in November 1963. This was a tremendous victory of Cambodian people and youths under the great leadership of the revolutionary organization (Angkar) of Kampuchea. And it was such a shameful loss of the Imperialist US and its lackey. With its fascist and stubborn nature, the Imperialist US and her entourage were using black tricks, one after another, in an attempt to kill Cambodia's independence, peace, and sovereignty.

In accordance with the January 1964 instruction

from the Angkar, Dam Pheng engaged in mobilizing and leading student movements to organize demonstrations, riots, and meetings at Veal Maen, in front of the Royal Palace, and the National Assembly. These actions were done in order to unmask the plots and criminal acts of the Imperialist US and her entourage, who attempted to kill the independence, peace and neutrality of Cambodia. These acts condemned the interference, invasion, and bombing destroying villages, property, crops, and killing innocent people, female, male, young, and old along the border everyday. In addition, the struggle was demanding that the then-leaders cut off diplomatic relations with the Imperialist US and her entourage. However, not only did those reactionary leaders refuse to take into account the people and youths' suggestions, but they also increased their investigations, arrests, and murders threatening the security of the patriotic youths.

Although his personal security was threatened all the time, Dam Pheng continued his revolutionary acts in propagandizing, organizing students, mobilizing, and leading struggle movements in the city. Youth struggle movements in the form of riots, demonstrations, and meetings against the Imperialist US and her entourage were continuously established in secondary schools, high schools and universities in Phnom Penh.

In March 1964, a mass demonstration, staged by youths and other people, particularly workers in Phnom Penh, under the leadership of the Angkar was held in the middle of Phnom Penh, destroying the embassy of the Imperialist US. This was our great victory, which became famous all across Cambodia and the world, while the Imperialist US and its entourage were badly embarrassed.

After this famous demonstration, the leaders once again continued to increase their investigations, threats, and arrests of compatriots. At the same time, our youths' struggle movements sprang up in Phnom Penh, provinces, and provincial towns all over the country. The Angkar appealed to a number of cadres and revolutionary youths to quit school and secretly lead and manage the youth and student movements

that were emerging dramatically. At the time, Dam Pheng was studying in grade 2 [baccalaureate] at Youkunthor High School. In response to an appeal by Angkar, he was gladly willing to give up his education in late 1964 and act secretly under the instructions of the Angkar. Seeing his courage, fighting and sacrificing consciousness, and absolute stance, Angkar promoted Dam Pheng to secretary of the Yuvakok [Youth] Alliance in Phnom Penh. Even in the position as secretary, Dam Pheng still maintained his gentle attitude towards friends and people, and was holding a strong grudge against the Imperialist US, her entourage, and the reactionary leaders. Although he was in a room, unable to move freely as when he was a student, he was not stressed or unhappy with his new lifestyle. On the contrary, he tried to study harder, build and train himself in order to build and strengthen his political stance and consciousness. In the meantime, he tried to understand the instructions given by Angkar in order to improve and strengthen the leadership of youth movements.

Youth movements in Phnom Penh as well as those all over the country grew strong quickly. Movements struggling against the Imperialist US and her entourage, under the leadership of the revolutionary Angkar were growing bigger and bigger all over the country. Voices raised against the US demanding that diplomatic relations with the US be cut off were growing louder and louder, which made the US and her entourage become very concerned in the face of the struggle movements of people and youths. The then-leaders were also concerned and tried all means, both hot and cold, to calm down this national anger. However, this anger would not recede and became stronger and stronger, forcing the leaders to cut off diplomatic relations with the US and her entourage in April 1964. This was another victory that was also famous all over the world.

The Imperialist US and her entourage suffered an embarrassing failure in Cambodia. They then secretly tried poisonous tricks together with reactionary countries in order to destroy all patriotic movements all over Cambodia. For that reason, in late 1966, the gruesome fascist National Assembly was established in Phnom



Penh under the instruction of the CIA. Soon after that, this National Assembly appointed Lon Nol as the Prime Minister, as instructed directly by the Imperialist US. This was a coup d'état staged by the Imperialist US, her entourage and Lon Nolists in order to gain control over Cambodia for the first time.

As soon as it was formed, this traitorous government began to cause trouble, large-scale persecution, and suppression of innocent people and compatriots. In March 1967 they waged a civil war in Battambang province under the command of the US. However, the courageous and clever revolutionary Angkar frantically mobilized political struggle movements to cope with [that strike] and destroy the enemy's criminal plot. Particularly in early May 1967, a huge struggle movement of youths in Phnom Penh, close to the enemy's machinery, successfully unmasked and destroyed such plots planned by the US, her entourage and the traitors, Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Soeng Ngoc Thanh and In Tam, and as a result the traitorous government and Lon Nol in particular failed suddenly in May 1967. The US Imperialist and her entourage suffered another embarrassing failure in Cambodia. The reactionary leaders, under the orders of the US, tried more tricks in order to calm the sparks of national and class anger. They would move on to destroy the whole patriotic revolutionary force.

They began actively applying the politics of fascism, starvation, and the formation of gangs among people in the city, countryside, and remote areas. Revolutionary organizations led by Cambodian youths were formed to fight bravely against the three criminal policies of the enemy; hence the enemy could not achieve their black plans.

In early 1968, the enemy provoked internal war again in order to destroy the revolutionary forces and our patriotic movement. But on the contrary, under the brilliant and pure leadership of the revolution, people began to fight an internal war against the US imperialists and their cliques. The movement spread quickly from one province to another which vigorously fought the enemy. Throughout Phnom Penh, the revolutionary organization convinced and guided the

political struggle movement by all means, publicly, semi-publicly, and secretly. The enemy, which wanted to defeat us in a short time, then fell into difficulty in terms of force, policy and economics. Because of this, they only sought to ultimately politicize fascism by completely destroying, arresting, and killing all sort of people without trial.

In Phnom Penh the enemy also attacked on a large scale, day and night. Even the situation in Phnom Penh was difficult, and Dam Pheng and his friends risked their lives to serve in Phnom Penh; they struggled against all obstacles to complete their appointed tasks. In August 1968, while completing his tasks, he was arrested. The Imperialist lackey had no doubts about arresting Dam Pheng since they knew him well when he was a student at Youkunthor High School. They did not need to ask any further questions; instead, they wanted to destroy the senior leadership.

Therefore, they brought him to be tortured physically and mentally in order to obtain, extract information and an important confession. He was not fearful of being severely tortured by the enemy. Instead, "his revolutionary life was finished, but other friends continued raising the flag to destroy the enemy and finally we succeeded...So comrade died in the name of revolutionary and patriotic youth. This means that he died well and honorably. Comrade did not die as a traitor or coward. He was determined to fight until his final breath." Thinking in that way, he kept his firm stance to attack the enemy in all ways. He bravely entered the torture room. His two eyes stared at the murderer in an extremely hateful manner. When he was first questioned, he angrily replied that "You are traitors and servants of the US imperials, and we are patriotic and Salvationist, and the liberators of people from the US's invasion and exploitation. This is a clear difference between you and me! So I have nothing to say to you! You can do to me whatever you want. No need to ask me!" After this, he spit on them and stopped talking. The enemy atrociously tortured him for three days and three nights. He did not shout. Every day, he was hit until he became unconscious many

times. Every time, he awoke and always condemned the US interference in Cambodia's independence, peace, and neutrality; he also slammed Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, Soeng Ngoc Thanh, and In Tam who supported the US Imperialists to damage and kill our country. He was only quiet when he was unconscious.

The enemy did not know what to do as he was tortured using all means, but they could not get his confession. Then, they used cold methods. They promised to bring him a girl; and they promised to send him abroad to France or the USA if he gave them the names and locations of our senior leaders. Confronted with this cold method, he bravely condemned, unmasked, and attacked the enemy—making them run out of ideas in dealing with him.

The enemy used both cold and hot methods, but they still could not get answers; then they used a final hot method. Since he had been arrested, the enemy did not put him with other prisoners. He was put in a small dark cell. After several days, his body was damaged, but his soul was still solid. He walked through other prisoners' cells to be tortured. Other youth who knew his background looked at him. He was very tired and almost could not walk, but he was strong when he saw the other arrested youths looking at him with worry. He raised his two hands up and shouted "Bravo prosperous Kampuchean revolution! Bravo brave Cambodians! The Kampuchean revolution will absolutely win! Defeat the US Imperialists and their clique!" At that time, there was shouting from all cells. Then, he smiled at the other youths to reassure them that he would be fine and told them to continue to fight the enemy.

One night after being severely torturing, Dam Pheng was unconscious. The enemy brought him back to his dark cell. When he awoke, he coughed and blood came out. He was sure that he would not live, so he tried to stand against the wall and wrote a poem with his fresh blood on the wall.

"Red heart, I care for you and educate you every day for the valuable revolution, the poor, and the peasants.

This time, Cambodians need my heart urgently to deal with heavy suffering, which (I) a Cambodian

child, happily sacrifice."

He expressed his pure and deep sentiment to the revolutionary organization, the people, and the poor who he respected, served and loved more than his life.

The next morning, Dam Pheng died in his cell for the sake of defending and liberating people from the imperialists and suffering.

The enemy could hit his body and even end his life, but they could not destroy his absolute consciousness. With his absolute stance of struggle, though the enemy possessed the modern weapons of fascists, the enemy still lost. But Comrade Dam Pheng won! He died in the name of attackers and winners, and won forever! Other tens of thousands of youth determined to raise the fighting flag just like Dam Pheng will finally liberated Cambodia totally. This is our victory of the revolution and the Cambodian people, but it is also a great victory of Dam Pheng and all other youths who died on the battlefield.

Dam Pheng's life was a life of struggle; he struggled until his final breath. He took the absolute stance of struggle without fear of difficulty and death, and always fought against the enemy in any circumstance even when he was arrested. This is the stance of a revolutionary man who was living honorably, died bravely, and ultimately well.

## LOST RELATIVES

My name is Elfa Wong, from Hong Kong. My mom came to Hong Kong from Cambodia in the 1970s, before the massacre. But somehow, her parents, sisters, and brothers were lost during the tragedies because they did not get out from the country. My mother went back to Cambodia in 1998, trying to find her family, posting news on newspaper, but nothing were found. I would like to get any more information about my mother's family during that period. My mom's relatives who remains in Cambodia after she left: 1. Guok Mou Heng/ Guo Wu Han, 2. Guok Mou Qeng/ Guo Wu Qing, 3. Guok Mou Hein/ Guo Wu Xian, 4. Guok Ka Gim/ Guo Qiao Jin and 5. Guok Ka Eg/ Gui Qiao Yu.

If anyone have information about above names, please contact me at: [elfa226@gmail.com](mailto:elfa226@gmail.com). Thank you.

# NEARLY FOUR DECADES OF SEARCHING FOR FATHER

*Socheat Nhean*

Chuon Reaksa has been searching for the whereabouts of his father, Chuon Heng, for almost forty years. Chuon Heng was a doctor and the chief of Takeo provincial hospital until the day the Khmer Rouge forces captured Takeo town. As Chuon Heng was a well-known member of society amongst the people of Takeo town, and those of his professional peer group at the time, he was invited by the Khmer Rouge cadres to get 'further education' in early 1976. Since that invitation, Chuon Heng disappeared, and at that time, Reaksa was a young boy of only eight years old. Presently, whenever Reaksa travels to Takeo, he is unable to forget the visits to the hospital where his father worked. He is also unable to forget the place where he and his father stayed together on the eve of the Khmer Rouge victory, in a concrete building inside the hospital grounds. Recently, Ieng Sary's sickness had given Reaksa the momentum to increase his efforts to search for his father. Reaksa travelled to Takeo, where he walked around the hospital courtyard, grasping onto the fence looking at the building where he used to stay with his father, tears ran down his face as he was overcome with emotion as he knew that he

would never have the chance to see him again. At the same time, Reaksa thought to himself "father, I've made a mistake because I can't locate where you were killed."

Reaksa has been waiting and searching for his father since the last day he saw him. Days after his father did not return home, he kept asking his mother about his father, he also asked several other people about him. However, the answers about his father's whereabouts were mixed and confusing. Some people told him that his father would be coming home tomorrow, some said his father was killed at Chunncheang Mountain in Preah Neth Preah district, some reported seeing him being trucked to Sisophon, while others said his father was sent to other places further afield.

Searching for lost family members remains a huge issue in contemporary Cambodia even though the Khmer Rouge period, (which claimed nearly two million lives, and caused several thousands of people to be separated from family members) collapsed over three decades ago. While each family lost at least one member to the regime, surviving relatives continue to

wait for lost members to come home although they often have no clue where the lost loved one was sent to. Sometimes, the family knows that their lost loved one was sent to a specific place and was then killed but the remains cannot be found. However, Reaksa, with the picture of his father in mind, never gave up his mission, fueled with courage to search for his long-lost father. Reaksa had been living with his father every



Reaksa and his family in Siem Reap



day. As he has a student portrait photograph of him, he hung it on the wall of his house so that he could see his face every day; Reaksa has a vivid set of memories of his father. When his father was working at Takeo provincial hospital, he was living in a building inside the hospital court. Reaksa was taken by his father to and from Phnom Penh and Takeo very often. That house remains there today; however, it has been turned into a storage house for hospital tools. His desire to find his father would never end until he could finally find the light one day.

Finally, Reaksa found a biography and photo of his father who, it transpires, was sent to S-21. The biography revealed that his father was arrested on 10th January 1976 at Chup commune, Preah Neth Preah district, at the age of 37. "It was the happiest day of my life. There would be no days that are happier than the day I found my father," said Reaksa. With a face full of emotion, Reaksa could feel a huge sense of relief in finding his father. "I feel as if I found my father alive," said Reaksa with tears streaming down his cheeks.

Reaksa's finding of the photograph of his father came just days after a pile of 1,427 S-21 black and white photographs were donated to the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) by a lady who had worked with the government in the 1980s. Similarly to what Reaksa found, the 1,427 photographs received will shed light on many stories that will aid the survivors who are looking for their lost loved ones. Almost all the photographs have names on them; sixty three of which are unidentified; while two are photographs of Westerners. As survivors are still searching for their lost relatives today, this finding will pave the way for survivors to trace their family members whom they have been searching for decades. "Each photograph will have at least one surviving relative from the Khmer Rouge regime" said Youk Chhang, the Director of DC-Cam, "with these photographs, relatives can finally find where their lost family members were sent to after they had been looking for them for decades." Also, during this month, To Sochanthy donated fourteen portrait

photos of S-21 prisoners that he has possessed since he was a young boy to DC-Cam in order to contribute to the family tracing project.

For Reaksa, finding his father again was a dream come true, a dream of epic proportions. Although his emotions were running high, he could still recall his past life noting that he lost his father, mother and was separated from his sister and brother for ten years.

### **Early life**

Born in 1968 into an educated family of three siblings, Reaksa's family lived near Lon Nol's house in Tuol Tumpung Quarter. His father, Chuon Heng, was born in 1937, and was a doctor during the last days of the Lon Nol regime, and also was a chief of Takeo provincial hospital. When in Takeo, Chuon Heng brought Reaksa with him to Takeo town very often to stay in the state-sponsored house inside the hospital. Reaksa took after his father in looks and shape and was well known by his father's friends who were employees at the Takeo hospital at the time. Chuon Heng was widely recognized and was known to be a generous doctor at the time, who, as Reaksa witnessed, was busy on duty to help the wounded villagers and soldiers who were sent to the hospital for treatment. "Sometimes, my father carried wounded villagers with blood stains on his body and sometimes he had to get up at two in the morning to tend to the wounded soldiers," Reaksa recalled, "Sometimes, my father drove to pick up the wounded by himself near the battle fields just less than ten kilometers from the town."

When the Khmer Rouge forces took over the national road between Phnom Penh and Takeo, travelling could only be done by helicopter. A few months before the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, Dr. Chuon Heng was in much greater demand to treat the wounded villagers as more and more villagers were being brought to the hospital. Reaksa could not come to Phnom Penh to meet with his mother and his two siblings. On April 17, 1975, some hospital staff did not come to work, but remained with their family members as Khmer Rouge soldiers marched into Takeo town. However, as a hospital chief, Chuon Heng, as well as

few others, could not escape their duty, but had to help as many of the wounded as possible.

### **During the Khmer Rouge period**

The Khmer Rouge captured Takeo town on April 17th, 1975. Shortly afterwards, the Khmer Rouge soldiers appealed to those who were government officials to meet in Takeo town, under the pretext that the Khmer Rouge would bring them back to the same position that they had previously occupied. Dr. Chuon Heng showed up and honestly reported to the Khmer Rouge about his real position. All the government officials that reported to the Khmer Rouge were escorted to Champa pagoda at the west of Ang Tasom in Tramkok district.

Chuon Heng was escorted, along with other government officials, to Champa pagoda on a very hot day without water and food. Reaksa, who was seven years old, was travelling with him. As Reaksa got tired and could not walk far, his father carried him on his back and shoulders and made lots of stops along the way allowing him to stay behind others who could walk faster.

As his father was carrying Reaksa, a young Khmer Rouge soldier who knew Dr. Chuon Heng kindly asked him to escape from the group as that group was being taken to be killed. Chuon Heng successfully managed to escape the group and travelled back to his homeland at Samdach Poan village in Prey Kabas district, where Reaksa reunited with his mother and siblings after they separated for a few months.

In late 1975, the Khmer Rouge intended to send 'New People' with 'bad elements' (such as government officials) to rice field-abundant areas in Pursat and Battambang province. Khmer Rouge local cadres asked if some families wanted to go to those places. Reaksa's father raised his hand and said he wanted to go to Battambang on the belief that it had abundant rice to eat which would be a better situation than that at Prey Kabas.

Shortly afterwards, a large group of 'New People' including all the members of Reaksa's family, was boarded onto a train from Takeo town to Sisophon. Reaksa recalled that the train arrived at Sisophon

Station at around 7 or 8 in the evening.

After staying there for a few days, all the family members were brought by a truck to Poy Samrong village, Pos Chas commune, Preah Neth Preah district where the family was put to stay with local villagers until sometime in 1977. After the family arrived there, Dr. Chuon Heng was only able to stay with his family for three days before he was sent to get re-educated, but in fact he was actually sent to Chup Security Office.

At the time when his father was sent to Chup, Reaksa was not at home. However, his father had to leave with the Khmer Rouge cadres. Before he left, Reaksa's father left a message for him with his sister. His sister only told Reaksa of this message recently, relaying it to him, "Please tell Reaksa not to be so naughty. Try to live in this new land with mom and brother and sister and tell him that I would return in a few days". Unfortunately, this message never transpired into actuality. His father never returned.

Reaksa added that after his father was sent to Chup, his mother became very sick for the rest of her life. His mother gave some jewelry she brought from home as to bribe the local cadres to ask about information regarding his father. The answer Reaksa and his mother received was that "he would return tomorrow or the day after tomorrow." However, it never came true making his mother mentally and physically more sick.

In 1977, Reaksa was assigned to the Child Unit which meant he had to work away from home. While he was away, his mother, who was seriously sick, was transferred to a hospital at Sisophon along with Reaksa's sister and brother. Reaksa was separated from the rest of family member ever since that time.

### **An orphan and adopted child**

Reaksa returned to his home at Poy Samrong village after the Vietnamese soldiers defeated the Khmer Rouge army. Having been away from home for a year, Reaksa could not wait to see his mother, sister and brother again. However, when he arrived home, he could not find them. With nowhere to go, Reaksa cried like a baby for days and days-hopelessly lost and emotionally sad. Having no means to search for his

mother and siblings, Reaksa decided to be adopted by a family and live near Mongkul Borey.

Reaksa lived with his adopted family until 1989 when he enlisted as a soldier with the government at Banteay Meanchey provincial town during which time he was sent to the battle field twice, in order take revenge against the Khmer Rouge who had caused him to be separated from the rest of his family. Shortly afterwards, Reaksa was sent to get additional training at a military camp in Udong district.

A search to be reunited with his mother and siblings While in Udong in late 1989, Reaksa realized that his house in Phnom Penh, which he had not visited since 1975, was not very far away. Reaksa began to search for his mother, sister and brother. After asking for some money from his commander, Reaksa travelled to his grandfather's house (the house where the whole family had lived before 1975) to search for his relatives. Upon seeing his house, Reaksa could do nothing but cry as he missed the time he had spent with his family. He found that the family living in that house was strangers who claimed this house in 1979 as their own. Without hope, Reaksa had to leave his former house for the national radio station at Steung Meanchey to have his family tracing broadcasted on the radio.

Then, donning military uniform, Reaksa travelled to Takeo hospital where his father had been working before 1975. There, he saw his father's house. Without delay, he jumped over the fence and met with some former colleagues of his father who recognized Reaksa pretty well as they and Reaksa's father, along with Reaksa, were evacuated to Champa pagoda together on April 17th, 1975. The next day, one of the doctors who was a close friend of his father drove him to meet Reaksa's aunt in Phnom Penh and he lived with her ever since. Later on, Reaksa went to his former house to leave a letter with the house owners saying that "I am Reaksa, if my mother, sister and brother came to our house, please come to meet me at my aunt's house at Santhormok."

Two years later, Reaksa's sister and brother

showed up and the family was reunited. That day, it came to Reaksa's knowledge that his mother had died at Mongkol Borey hospital in late 1978.

### **Another attempt to search for his father**

For Reaksa, the whereabouts of his father was still a mystery. However, Reaksa had never given up hope in his efforts to search for him. He always believed that there must be some light on the whereabouts of his father. He set about tracing him down ever since. At that time, he talked to the colleagues and other higher-ranking government officials who might have known his father from the Lon Nol period. The brother of Reaksa's grandfather, named Suth Sakhorn, who was also sent to Chup and then ran away from the site, told Reaksa in 1976 that his father was brought to Sisophon. Sakhorn, who was later re-arrested by the Khmer Rouge, had his life ended at S-21.

A close friend of his father's, who was also a doctor (and is now living in the United States) visited Cambodia earlier this year and told Reaksa that his father had been sent to S-21.

This led Reaksa to pursue information relating to his father at the Tuol Sleng Museum. Reaksa went to Tuol Sleng and met with the staff there. However, the Tuol Sleng staff could not locate information about his father; this naturally led to further confusion about the whereabouts of his father.

Reaksa went to Tuol Sleng again and again, but the information was not found. Fortunately later, Reaksa was given a book with a prisoner list printed in 1980 by the Tuol Sleng museum. However, he found the name, which was not Chuon Heng, but Nuon Heng, who was listed as a doctor. Reaksa brought a book to Tuol Sleng museum and met with the same lady who had helped him before. Time and time again, the information about his father still could not be found.

After some searching, Chuon Heng's biography and photograph were found at the Documentation Center of Cambodia. It was the day that Reaksa obtained the file and photograph of his father, putting an end to his agonizing search.

### **A life of revenge**



Now, Reaksa would always be angry with the Khmer Rouge. He wants revenge. He hated the Khmer Rouge leaders for killing his parents and caused the separation from his sister and brother. Although the Khmer Rouge collapsed more than thirty-five years, Reaksa still harbors anger towards the Khmer Rouge.

He blames Ta Mok, whom Reaksa calls *Ah Mok* (the cursive word that is used to refer to those who one hates), and Duch for causing his father's death. However, Reaksa found the news out about his father just after Duch's tribunal case was over. "If I had known earlier that my father was killed at S-21, I would file a legal complaint to the Khmer Rouge tribunal against

Duch," said Reaksa with anger in his face.

Not only Reaksa does hate Ta Mok, but he wanted to take revenge against all the Khmer Rouge leaders who are standing trial at the Khmer Rouge tribunal currently.

At the same time, Reaksa has a feeling of mental reconciliation now that he has found his father. Although he found his father dead, Reaksa feels that he can touch his father again having searched for him for nearly forty years.

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*Socheat Nhean is a team leader and editor-in-chief of Searching for the Truth Magazine*

## AFTER 36 YEARS, TRACES OF MY CAMBODIAN FRIEND LAM VIRI IS FOUND

On June 19, 1976 in Moscow, I said goodbye to my Cambodian friend Dr. Lam Viri. I have wished Viri a nice journey to his homeland not knowing that I would have waited for him until his death. In December 1976, my Nepalese friend Manik and I have only learned that Viri had left Moscow in July 1976 for his country.

Today I learned from the documents of the Documentation Center of Cambodia that Viri had been arrested and detained in October 1976 in the concentration camp of Tuol Sleng in the center of Phnom Penh and after tortures and interrogations, he was killed in March 1977. I tried to find traces of Viri because there were his wife and his daughter in Moscow who longed to look for him. I have not lost hope. On August 17, 2012, I met and talked to the daughter of Viri and his grandson Anton. Anton is a great dancer who won German Open Championships in Dance Sport in Stuttgart. The daughter and the grandson of Viri are the gracefulness by itself. You can only love Anton and wish him luck once you see him. Viri would be proud of them. And I am glad that my friend Viri could leave this his traces. Hans Koch

**Note:** *Lam Viri was studying for an advanced degree in hydroelectric engineering in Soviet Union. Then, he returned to his home in Cambodia in 1976. Viri was one of many students educated in foreign countries who wished to apply the skills they had learned to develop the country. But instead, Viri was accused of being a traitor to the communist revolution. He was arrested on October 10, 1976, and was killed on March 18, 1977.*



Anton and Hans Koch



## THE BOOK OF MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED UNDER THE KHMER ROUGE

The Documentation Center of Cambodia is writing and compiling a book of records of names of those who died under the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 and those who disappeared during the period, who are still not known by their relatives. It also includes a section for family tracing purposes.



DC-Cam already has in its database up to a million names of those who may have died under the Khmer Rouge. If you would like to have your relatives' names, who died under the Khmer Rouge or disappeared then, appearing in this book.

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