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*Cranium of a man, 20 to 40 years old.
 Gunshot wound of right anterior-parietal convexity (right side of the top of the head) with the bullet passing downward into the skull through the brain and exiting to the left of the foramen magnum (base of the neck where the spinal cord emerges from brain). [Catalogue No. TSL2, 2A50694]*

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Editorials:

An Initial Step toward Preserving Memory

Cambodian people are very much aware of their sufferings under the Khmer Rouge. Everyone in the country has been either directly or indirectly affected by the atrocities perpetrated. Every family lost at least one member to the regime as a result of hard labor, starvation, disease or execution. People were forced into cooperatives, farming, building water channels, dams and dikes, cutting wood, clearing land, and tending cattle. Each person worked hard, for their lives depended on it. Travel was strictly prohibited and could only be done with a pass. This and the Khmer Rouge's policy of secrecy prevented people from knowing what was happening, both in their own country and the outside world.

A 12th grade teacher at Bak Touk high school said, “a Khmer Rouge tribunal will drag everyone in [not just the Khmer Rouge leaders]” and that “the King will also be prosecuted because he was involved with the Khmer Rouge.” He lowered his voice as he mentioned the name of the King, and I could see a kind of pride in his eyes to know this part of his country's history. And recently, a Siem Reap prosecutor was quoted in *The Cambodia Daily* as saying “I don't know enough about Khmer Rouge history; how can I issue an arrest warrant for them [Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary]?” These two quotes by educated people reaffirm that the regime's history remains a mystery for Cambodian people, who still fear its return.

Each survivor has his or her own story to tell, but it is a combination of all their stories that gives a more complete picture of the regime. It is the task of DC-Cam researchers to gather the stories of individuals (what we call “living documents”) and analyze them along with other historical materials, and then tell the story to the Cambodian people so they know what really happened and why.

In late 2001 *Searching for the Truth* conducted a survey on national reconciliation and issues surrounding the tribunal for senior Khmer Rouge leaders. The survey revealed that the over 85% of respondents thought high

school and junior high school students should be educated on Khmer Rouge history, while 74% said they wanted to learn the truth about the Khmer Rouge regime.

Cambodian teachers and educators lack both knowledge and tools for teaching Khmer Rouge history; they recognize the urgent need to educate the younger generation about it (65% of the Cambodian population is under the age of 25). DC-Cam is thus launching a project to develop a curriculum on Democratic Kampuchea. It aims to improve the capacities of teachers and the Ministry of Education to convey the regime's history by providing ideas, materials, recommendations on curricula, and a short text on Democratic Kampuchea.

The Ministry of Education has been very cooperative in this effort. It has granted us permission to provide information and informal education to 12th grade students at 13 high schools in Phnom Penh. We sent books to the schools, gave short lectures to students, and showed them films on the regime. We also received permission from the government to distribute materials such as *Searching for the Truth* to communes nationwide. In addition, we met and interviewed officials from the Ministry of Education, who have welcomed us in our efforts effort to educate students about Khmer Rouge history. Cambodia's Secretary of State for the Ministry of Education Im Sethy has shown his support for this effort.

In the project, we plan to do the following:

Two surveys will be undertaken to gain a quick picture of the status of genocide education in Cambodia and what can be done to improve it. The results will help the Ministry of Education and other advocates to bolster their stance on the importance of genocide education in high schools, and to gain insights on the best ways to do this. We will also conduct interviews with villagers and teachers on the types of education they now provide and what instruction they would like children to receive on the regime.

We will create a listing of the best curricula materials, including texts and curricula guidance, analyze government

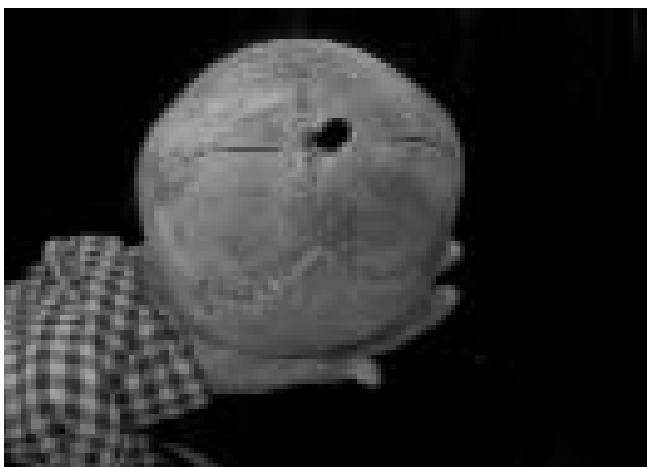
texts, conduct a literature survey (what other countries do to educate students about genocide, particularly the Jewish Holocaust), and analyze primary and secondary documents currently held at DC-Cam. In addition, we will include documentary films, radio broadcasts, Internet communication, the arts, and site visits into our materials search. Survivors' stories will also be valuable in this regard. Last, we will focus on preparing a brief text on the regime and developing capabilities in researching, teaching and writing history.

This project is one part of our larger efforts to help

Cambodians become more aware of their own tragic history and also learn about similar tragedies worldwide.

It is a quarter of a century now since the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed. One thing is certain: that the regime has left its legacy in a substandard education system, in societal violence, and in faltering economic development. Only when our people understand what befell them can they prevent it from happening again.

Kok-Thay Eng is the co-English editor-in-chief of the special English edition of Searching for the Truth.



*Cranium of a man, 20 to 40 years old.
Gunshot wound of right superior parietal convexity (top of the head) with the bullet passing downward into the skull through the brain and exiting to the left of the foramen magnum (base of the neck where the spinal cord emerges from brain). [Catalogue No. TSL15, 2A50695]*



*Cranium of a man, 30 to 55 years old.
Gunshot wound of entrance in the superior-posterior frontal convexity (top of the head) with the bullet passing left to right and downwards into the brain and exiting the skull in the right temple. [Catalogue No. TSL17, 2A50699]*



*Cranium of a man, 25 to 45 years old.
Gunshot wound of entrance in the left frontal convexity with the bullet passing into the brain from right to left and downward on a 45-degree angle (as indicated by the "keyhole" effect). [Catalogue No. TSL13, 2A50700]*



*Cranium of a man, 30 to 50 years old.
Blunt impact trauma of right mid-parietal convexity (right side of head) with a depressed "punched out" skull fracture. In addition, there are other skull fractures related to separate blunt impact sites on the back of the head on the left side and the left temple. [Catalogue No. TSL1, 2A50720]*



Letters from Youk Chhang:

The Bones Cannot Find Peace until the Truth They Hold in Themselves Has Been Revealed

Tuol Sleng Forensic Exhibit

In February 2004, DC-Cam mounted an exhibition of ten skulls at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. They were excavated from Choeung Ek (the “killing fields” south of Phnom Penh where prisoners from Tuol Sleng were executed) and other parts of Cambodia. This exhibit demonstrates the value of forensic evidence in documenting the Khmer Rouge’s crimes against humanity. It is also intended to educate the public about the types of information that can be scientifically gathered from victims’ remains in order to prove and record evidence of murder/genocide.

Forensic Evidence

Teams from DC-Cam provided a large number of skulls to a team of Canadian forensic specialists. The specialists chose ten for analysis. The skulls were selected based on their condition, level of preservation, and wound types; they were not selected randomly. Thus, one cannot infer that because one of the tens skulls is from a female that 10% of the Khmer Rouge’s victims were women, or that because four of them exhibit gunshot wounds that 40% of the victims were shot.

The specialists found three types of trauma to the skulls, which caused or contributed to the death of each individual: 1) blunt-force trauma (from such implements as a gun butt, hammer, mallet, or log) to two skulls, 2) sharp-force trauma (from a cutting implement such as machete, knife, hoe, ax, or hatchet) to four skulls, and gunshot wounds to four skulls.

About the Exhibit

Originally, DC-Cam wished to display the skulls for public viewing. However, there is controversy in Cambodian society over whether this is appropriate. Some Cambodians are uncomfortable with the idea of boxing human remains. People feel that although the spirit no longer lives in the bones, they should not be sealed so that the spirit can access them. Ideally, families should cremate the remains of the dead and store the

ashes in a stupa to liberate the victims’ souls for reincarnation. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk also expressed his discomfort with the idea of displaying the skulls.

DC-Cam, like the majority of Cambodians, believes the bones have a more important function in our society: they are a reminder for future generations of our country’s suffering and devastation, and will also serve as evidence of the crimes committed from 1975-1979 in Democratic Kampuchea. But out of respect for the King’s wishes not to have the skulls displayed, we housed them in a separate room at Tuol Sleng, which is open only to officials (e.g., prosecutors at the Khmer Rouge tribunal). Their final disposition will be determined once the tribunal is over.

The skulls rest on identical pedestals built from slightly overlapping wooden slats. Spaces have been left between slats so that air can reach the skulls, thus allowing the spirits to come and go as they wish. To protect the skulls, we have placed them in clear, five-sided Plexiglas cases secured with soft silicone caulk. The cases can be removed by cutting the caulk with a razor blade, allowing the skulls to be cleaned or moved.



*Cranium of a woman, 35 to 50 years old.
Chopping/hacking wound on the anterior portion of the right parietal convexity (right side of the top of the head). [TSL11, 2A50709]*



Fair and Credible Trials Are Essential for Cambodia

There is hope that survivors of the Cambodian genocide might receive justice. From 1975-1979, the Khmer Rouge regime oversaw the killing of more than 1.7 million people, or one fifth of Cambodia’s population. The regime’s leader, Pol Pot, is now dead but many of its senior leaders continue to live with impunity for their crimes. Now there is a real possibility that the perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge “killing fields” can be brought to trial.

After years of negotiations, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and the United Nations finally reached a draft agreement to establish a tribunal to bring the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime to trial. Cambodia’s National Assembly must first ratify the Agreement and the tribunal will need funds from donor countries to carry out its mission.

However, the UN and the RGC have yet to reach official agreement on the budget for the tribunal of senior Khmer Rouge leaders. The government has proposed a budget of US\$40 million for the trials, which will take an estimated three years to complete.

Even though US\$40 million is less than what was spent on the tribunal in Sierra Leone, it is still a substantial amount of money. Fair and credible trials are essential

for Cambodia, but such a large budget will not guarantee this. Instead, it is likely that such a large sum will present temptations that encourage the norm of corruption in Cambodia. Both the UN and RGC should work to minimize expenses as much as possible, and to utilize local resources whenever practical. Only when these two bodies work together with the common and exclusive purpose of enforcing the rule of law in Cambodia can the possibility of fair trials be realized.



*Cranium of a man, 20 to 40 years old.
Two deeply incised wounds (cuts), or superficial chopping/hacking wounds superior to the right lambdoid suture (right side of the back of the head). [TSL3, 2A50707]*



*Cranium of a man, 25 to 45 years old.
Deeply incised wound (cut), or superficial chopping/hacking wound crossing the left lambdoid suture (left side of the back of the head). [Catalogue No. TSL16, 2A50706]*



*Cranium of a man, 25 to 45 years old.
Complex system of radiating skull fractures due to an impact in the right posterior-lateral cranium near the mastoid process (right side of the back of the head). [Catalogue No. TSL6, 2A50696]*



Assignment Table of the Northern Zone (304)

(D00128)

This document has been translated from Khmer Rouge document D15726, which is held at DC-Cam. Its author was Doeun, a high-ranking Khmer Rouge cadre who probably submitted this detailed report to the upper Angkar (the “Organization” or “Party.”)

a. The assignment table of the Northern Zone (304) from 1963 to February 1977

Zone members selected from 1963 to February 1977.

I. From 1963 to 1972

1. Comrade Koy Thioun, professor, alias Kem or Kun, was selected as the secretary of the zone.
2. Ke Vin, farmer, alias Kang or Ket, was selected as deputy secretary of the zone.
3. Thaong Sam-at, alis Ket, Va, Leoun or Kuong, teacher, was selected as a member.
4. Tit Chhorn, alias Tim or Brang, on-contract teacher, was selected as a member.
5. Va Sy, alias Ban or Rath, 11th grade student, was selected as a member.
6. Chey Chhan, alias Teav or Seng, 3rd grade student, was selected as a member.

Notes:

- ◆ Comrades Kem and Kan were assigned by the party as full-fledged members (2 members).
- ◆ Comrades Ket, Tin, Ban and Teav, were assigned as candidate zone members (4 members).
- ◆ Comrades Ket and Tin sacrificed their lives during the internal war.

II. From 1972 to 1973

1. Comrade Kun, alias Thuch, was assigned as secretary of zone 304
2. Comrade Kit, alias Theng, was assigned as deputy secretary of the zone.
3. Comrade Kann, alias Doeun, was assigned as a member.

4. Comrade Teav, alias Seng, was assigned as a member.
5. Comrade Phal, alias Soth, 3rd grade student, was assigned as a candidate member.

Notes:

- ◆ Comrades Thuch, Kit and Doeun were assigned as permanent members of the zone.
- ◆ Comrade Soth was assigned as candidate member.

III. From 1973 to 1975

1. Comrade Thuch, alias Khuon, was assigned as secretary of zone 304
2. Comrade Pauk, alias Khun, was assigned as deputy secretary of zone 304
3. Comrade Kann, alias Doeun, was assigned as a member of zone 304
4. Comrade Sreng, alias Pok, was assigned as a member of zone 304
5. Comrade Soth was assigned as a candidate member of the zone
6. Comrade Mon, alias Khan or Tol, farmer, was assigned as a candidate member.

Notes:

During this period the zone focused on reeducating comrades Soth and Tol, so that they could become full-fledged members. They were too weak in ideology and politics.

IV. From June 1975 to February 1977

1. Comrade Pauk, alias Khun, was assigned as secretary of the new north zone, number 303.
2. Comrade Sreng, alias Pak, was assigned as a new deputy secretary of the north zone.
3. Comrade Tol was selected as a full-fledged member of the new north zone.
4. Comrade Pech Cheang, alias Kev or Thau, 1st grade student, candidate member of the new north zone.
5. Comrade Sey, farmer, was selected as a candidate member.

Notes:

◆ The assignment of comrades Thau and Sey as members was based on merit. The purpose of the selection was to add leading apparatus of the zone to bring it to adequacy.

◆ During this period, the Party reassigned comrades Khuon and I (Doeun) from the zone to fulfill obligations in Phnom Penh as the country was fully liberated.

◆ Comrade Sreng was reassigned from zone secretary to work in the zone office.

◆ Comrade Soth was transferred from zone 303 in about June 1975 to Region 106, Siem Reap-Otdar Meanchey, as secretary.

◆ From June 1975 onward, Angkar excluded region 106 from the north zone (304) and changed its name to zone 303.

◆ During this period, Kampuchea was fully and successfully liberated.

b. Assignment table of regions in the north zone from 1963 to February 1977

I. From 1963 to 1972

1. Region 30

This region covered Prey Chhor, Peam Chygang and Cheung Prey (Skun) districts.

The regional committee has the following members:

1. Comrade Sreng was selected as region secretary, responsible for Prey Chhor and Cheung Prey districts.

2. Comrade Tin was selected as deputy secretary of the region, responsible for Prey Chhor district.

3. Comrade Phal, alias Sou, teacher, was a member, responsible for Peam Chygang district.

Notes:

◆ Comrade Tin used to be assigned as secretary of region 30 when he was secretly transferred to this region. He worked as secretary, replacing comrade Sreng.

◆ Comrade Kun, zone secretary, lived secretly in region 30 so as to make it easy for him to contact other regions, because region 30 is located at the center of

the zone.

◆ Comrade Sou, a regional member, sacrificed his life in 1967 after the enemy captured him. The zone had assigned him to hide and build a base in Stung Trang in region 31.

◆ The zone assigned comrade Va as a member of region 30 to add to the leading apparatus. Comrade Va was arrested by the enemy in a riot at Prey Chhor district office in order to liberate some comrades arrested by the enemy. Comrade Va was smashed by the enemy in 1967. (This Va is not the person named Va alias Ket.)

2. Region 31

This region covers Kampong Siem, Stung Trang, Chamkar Leu, Baray and Tang Kork districts. The regional committee consists of the following members:

1. Comrade Kan, alias Ket, was regional secretary, responsible for Chamkar Leu and Stung Trang districts.

2. Ket, alias Leoun, was assigned as deputy secretary of the region, responsible for Baray and Tang Kork districts.

3. Chheang, farmer, alias Sath, was a regional member and secretary of Kampong Siem district.

Notes:

◆ Comrade Chheang (Sath) was assigned as the secretary of Kampong Siem district because the district was his base during the fight against the French.

◆ Comrade Pauk was the secretary of this region during the period of political struggle and internal war.

◆ I (Doeun) was the secretary of this region from 1970 to 1971 during the five-year war.

3. Region 32

This region covers the whole of Kampong Thom province, excluding Baray and Tang Kork districts.

Notes:

◆ Unlike other regions, this new region has no revolutionary base. Moreover, it is located far from the leadership, because comrade secretary stays far from this region. Therefore, the leadership was not as robust as in other regions. Comrade Kun, the secretary, controls this region to ensure the quick accomplishment of tasks.



1. Comrade Yan (teacher), alias Lon, secretary, responsible for Samrong.

2. Comrade Ran (farmer), alias Ngin, deputy secretary, responsible for Sophet and Kambet sub-districts.

3. Comrade Chhun Neary (original name unknown), regional member, responsible for Boeng Lvea sub-district.

4. Comrade San (original name unknown), member, responsible for economics and commerce.

Notes:

◆ This region was created to defend the zone office, because the zone built its office in this region.

◆ In early 1971, the secretary of this region was transferred to be deputy secretary of region 32. Comrade Ngin was assigned as the secretary of this region instead.

II. From 1972 to 1973

During this period, zone 304 changed regional geographies and reassigned some members according to the needs of the zone and regions.

1. Region 30

This region covered Prey Chhor, Peam Chykang and Cheung Prey (Skun) districts, as before. The committee of this region consisted of:

1. Comrade Lean, 3rd grade student [grade 9 present], secretary of the region, secretary of Kampong Cham town and secretary of Kampong Siem district.

2. Comrade Meas (farmer, original name unknown), secretary of Prey Chhor district.

3. Comrade Tang (farmer, original name unknown), regional member and secretary of Peam Chykang district.

4. Comrade Saor (farmer, original name unknown), member and secretary of Prey Chhor district.

Notes:

◆ During this period, comrade Sreng was the secretary of this region for a short time. He was transferred by the zone to work in the zone staff.

◆ Comrade Lean, regional secretary, was not yet a member of the zone.

◆ Because in Peam Chykang there were many upper-class people and a lot of people lived there, the zone reassigned comrade Sot, the secretary of region 32, to be the secretary of this district, because comrade Tang lacked district leadership experience and experience working with upper-class people. Therefore, those upper-class people had chances to conduct activities to disrupt the government, causing more problems to the revolution. The enemy also created psychological war. When comrade Sot controlled this district, the problems were solved. Then comrade Tang was reassigned as a regional cadre.

◆ During this period, region 30 was more difficult to control than other regions because the enemy was all around. Only Peam Chykang district was fully liberated. Because the enemy was still in this district, the situation was not very good. Psychological war and peace alliances were topics of focus. These caused the people to become restless.

2. Region 31

This region consisted of Stung Trang, Chamkar Leu, Prek Brasab, Baray and Tang Kork districts. The regional committee consisted of:

1. Comrade Tik Kim-on (1st grade student), alias Hon, regional secretary, assigned as Chamkar Leu and Tang Kork secretary.

2. Comrade Sath, deputy secretary [of the region], was assigned as secretary of Stung Trang district.

3. Comrade Say, member, was assigned as secretary of Prek Brasab district.

Notes:

◆ Comrade Thuch controlled this region because comrade Hun, the secretary of the region, was not yet qualified to become the secretary. Also, Hun was not a zone member yet.

◆ Hun committed a moral offense by raping many women, causing internal problems. The majority of cadres agreed to make him an ordinary person.

◆ Angkar decided to put Prek Brasab district into zone 304, because its location made it easier for us to



work with cadres in Kampong Cham, without going to region 505 in Kratie.

◆ Region 31 was the richest place in zone 304. It was abundant with rice, vegetables, fruit and industrial products. This region had large rubber and banana plantations. The red soil is rich in nutrients, good for industrial farming.

◆ As for comrade Tol, Angkar assigned him to Baray district because it was his base since the period of political struggle. As a result, he was in full control of the situation and led well.

◆ The zone started to strengthen this region so that it would become a region which other regions in the zone could depend upon. Also it was assigned to defend the zone office because this region was at the entrance to the zone office. From 1972 to 1973, the zone started building offices in plantations and villages, not in the forest anymore.

3. Region 32

This region consisted of Baray, Santuk, Sandan, Kampong Svay and Stung districts. The regional committee consisted of:

1. Comrade Kann, secretary of the region, not controlling districts.
2. Comrade Lon, deputy secretary, responsible for Kampong Svay district.
3. Comrade Tann Try, alias Loeun, professor, regional member, responsible for Stung district.
4. Comrade Hen, alias Hang, teacher, regional member, secretary of Sandan district.
5. Comrade Va (original name unknown), regional member, secretary of Santuk district.
6. Comrade Sann, alias Nguon, priest, regional member, secretary of Baray district.

Notes:

◆ Baray district is located between Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham provinces. To assist the leadership, the zone included this district into region 31. Then the zone assigned comrade Tol as the secretary of this district and assigned comrade Nguon as secretary of

region 130.

◆ Kampong Thom province was a new base. The zone brought Baray district into region 31. In the past, there were no bases established in the countryside. Some were established in schools, like junior high schools in Kampong Thom. From 1970 to 1971, the zone sent cadres and soldiers to control this region. They were comrades Keo (Thaur), Saroeun from the north, Sot, Satom from the north, Chhoeun and Srun. They established leadership of the regime, at the same time they fought against the forces of Vietnam and contemptible Samuth. In 1971, the situation returned to normal.

◆ In Sandan district, which is remote, the group of contemptible Khut Utdom established a base in this district, declaring themselves as the “national united front” to get support from the people. They cheated the people for a short period. Then the zone sent Hang and a group of youth to work in this district before going to other places. A short time later, the people supported us cheerfully, while contemptible Khut’s group had to flee from Sandan to Stung and Kampong Kdei of region 35.

◆ From 1971 to 1973, I organized the region by changing some district secretaries. I removed comrade Va from Santuk district because he did not like base work and lacked base experience. Va was then sent to zone staff and took Hang from Sandan to work as Santuk district secretary, because Hang had a fairly good leadership in base work. He was very experienced. Sandan district, which was small and the leadership had been organized well, was led by comrade Sot from the north [zone] as secretary. Later Sot was sent to Peam Chykang (region 30). Comrade Se from the north replaced him. Later Angkar advised to reduce people from outside to take charge of base works. So comrade Se from Sandan was replaced by comrade Un, formerly a deputy secretary, as the secretary of the district.

4. Region 35

This region covered Siem Reap-Otdar Meanchey

province [Siem Reap and Otdar Meanchey provinces at the present]. The committee of this region consisted of:

1. Comrade Pheng, alias Pauk, secretary
2. Comrade Sot, deputy secretary and secretary of Chi Kreng district
3. Comrade Say, member and secretary of Sotr Nikum district
4. Comrade Seng, member and secretary of Puork district
5. Comrade Oeun, member and secretary of Svay Leu district
6. Comrade Roeung, member and secretary of Varin district
7. Comrade Vann, member and secretary of Kra Lanh district
8. Comrade Pon, member and secretary of Anlong Veng district.

Notes:

◆ Comrade Puok left region 35 in 1973 and worked as secretary of the zone staff. In mid-1974, Angkar Leu assigned Khuon as secretary of zone military and staff, and then assigned Pauk as the secretary of region 35. When comrade Pauk worked in the zone staff, Sot was assigned as secretary of region 106 until mid-1974.

◆ When comrade Sot became secretary of region 106, comrade Seng was appointed as deputy secretary.

◆ Comrade Say, regional member, was removed from region 106 by zone Angkar because he controlled badly and possessed an infirm stance. He would damage base work if he stayed longer.

◆ Comrade Oeun committed moral offenses with women, so the zone decided to remove him as district secretary and no longer allowed him to handle base work.

◆ During this period, region 106 was not yet able to control Otdar Meanchey province; it was just able to keep up with the general situation.

5. Region 130

This region covered Boeng Lvea, Sophet, Kambet and Samraong sub-districts. The regional committee consisted of the following comrades:

1. Comrade Nguon, secretary, responsible for Boeng Lvea and Samraong sub-districts
2. Comrade Sam-At, alias Ven, teacher, deputy secretary, responsible for Sophet and Kambet sub-districts.
3. Comrade San, member, responsible for economic and commerce works.

Notes:

◆ During this period, the zone removed its office from region 130. Thus this region became quieter than in past years because not many cadres came and went through it.

◆ The effort to increase agricultural output to change the face of this region was not improved.

◆ The zone assigned comrade Nguon as the secretary of this region. His leadership stance was not strong, as he still favored factionalism and family-ism. This favoritism was too strong and prevented him from successfully completing his work. The zone removed him from a secretary of large districts and assigned him as secretary of region 130 because there he was easy to observe, examine and educate.

III. From 1973 to 1975

1. Region 30

This region included Kampong Siem, Peam Chykang, Prey Chhor, Cheung Prey and Kampong Cham town. It consisted of the following cadres:

1. Comrade Sreng, secretary and responsible for the town
2. Comrade Ngin, deputy secretary and responsible for Peam Chykang district
3. Comrade Meas, member and responsible for Prey Chhor district
4. Comrade Sien (original name Auy), farmer, member and responsible for Kampong Siem district
5. Comrade Nguon, alias Saor, farmer, member and responsible for Cheung Prey district



1. Comrade Sot, secretary
2. Comrade Keng, deputy secretary and secretary of Chi Kreng district
3. Comrade Seng, member and secretary of Puork district
4. Comrade Roeung, member and secretary of Kra Lanh district
5. Comrade Vann, member and secretary of Varin district
6. Comrade Noeun, member and secretary of Svay Leu district
7. Comrade Nhem Noeun, alias Khoeun, teacher, member and secretary of Sotr Nikum district
8. Comrade Srun, member, responsible for religious work
9. Comrade Sean, member, responsible for economic and commercial works.

Notes:

- ◆ During this period, comrade Pauk also worked as the secretary of region 35.
- ◆ Comrade Lun was removed from being deputy secretary of region 32 and assigned as a member of region 35. He was given some responsibilities in the Otdar Meanchey area.
- ◆ Comrade Sot, secretary of this region, was removed from being secretary. He was later assigned to work in the economic and commercial section of the zone from January 1974 to May 1975. From May 1975, comrade Sot was secretary of region 106, replacing comrade Pauk, because Pauk was promoted to secretary of zone 303.
- ◆ Comrade Pauk was transferred from region 35 to zone staff until mid-1974. In 1974, the zone assigned him as secretary of region 106 because party military tasks were given to the zone. Khuon was responsible for fighting.

5. Region 130 was changed to region 33

This region covered district 130 (formerly region 130), Prek Prasap district, and district 65 (Prek Sangke). The regional committee consisted of the following

members:

1. Comrade Chhoeun, secretary and secretary of district 65
2. Comrade Un, deputy secretary and secretary of Prek Prasap district
3. Comrade Ven, member and secretary of district 130
4. Comrade San, member, responsible for economics.

Notes:

The zone decided to include Prek Prasap district and district 65 into region 130 in order to create a new region named “region 33.” The inclusion of district 65, Prek Prasap district and district 130 together was done so that the districts would complement each other. For example, Prek Prasap had to help district 130.

IV. From April 1975 to February 1977

1. Region 41

This region covered Prey Chhor, Kampong Siem, Peam Chykang, Cheung Prey and Batheay districts. The regional committee consisted of the following members:

1. Comrade Tang, secretary and secretary of Prey Chhor district
2. Comrade Soeun, deputy secretary and secretary of Kampong Siem
3. Comrade Meas, member and secretary of Peam Chykang district
4. Comrade Sob, member and secretary of Cheung Prey district
5. Comrade Saor, member and secretary of Batheay district
6. Comrade San, member, responsible for economics
7. Comrade Khann, member, responsible for the military.

Notes:

- ◆ Comrade Sreng, secretary of region 41, was transferred to the zone office.
- ◆ Comrade Tang, secretary of Peam Chykang, was selected as secretary of region 41 replacing Sreng.



The Dialogue between Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPK and First Minister of the Democratic Kampuchea Government, and a Delegation of the Belgian-Kampuchean Association

Phnom Penh August, 1978

(Document number D00108)

This speech was translated from document D108, held at DC-Cam.

1. Is the army also responsible for security?

The revolutionary army of Kampuchea is not responsible for security, but defense, except on rare occasions when some sectors request assistance for security.

2. Security?

Our security refers to public security. Basically, the people themselves are responsible for this, because our politics aim to prevent insecurity first, which means the people resolve big and small conflicts among themselves first. They have frequent criticism and self-criticism meetings to help resolve on-going conflicts and to live in maximum harmony with each other. Daily mutual criticism will do, no matter how bad the people are.

In Democratic Kampuchea we have few security offices. There is no suppression like in the old regime. The point is that people take care of themselves.

I. Military Training for the People

We do not provide military training to the people. But we advise them to be ready, clear about the revolutionary path, to love the nation and people, to take part in defending the country, and to build the country, as well as to befriend other people in the world. We advise them to despise invaders and expansionists. Based on such a policy, the people are resolutely patriotic. And that is the basis of defending the nation and the worker-peasant revolution.

II. Culture, Sports and Entertainment

1. Culture

The culture of Democratic Kampuchea is rather new. It is based on: 1) patriotism and national perfection and 2) progressiveness. My country's tradition only chose progressive things, which can serve revolutionary causes, and eliminate reactionary and backward elements. Moreover, by embracing nationalist, traditional and progressive elements, we are creating a new culture which serves the construction of the country and purifies and improves the new livelihood of the people, as well as helping in the instillation of politics, ideology, revolutionary stance, patriotic stance, and a love of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We are taking great care to preserve and rebuild the national heritage and anything that is left from the enemy's destruction during the war, in order to serve our revolutionary movement. Progressive foreign books are also kept for the improvement of the revolution.

We embrace all progressive foreign cultures.

2. Entertainment

We are making entertainment little by little, depending our country's ability to afford it. As of now, entertainment is still limited, because there is too much work in the field in the wake of the war. Nevertheless, we have been progressively making more entertainment day by day since 1975. We entertain [ourselves] by being together, listening to melodies and songs on the radio, creating non-professional

democracy.

VIII. Religion

In Kampuchea, Buddhism is attached to the people. Monks come from peasant backgrounds. Peasants have joined the revolution and deeply realized the ideals of the revolution, especially in the national liberation war when the revolutionary movement was very strong. Peasants are actively involved in the revolution; they provide one part of the manpower to the battle field and the other part to the rice fields. Many monks disrobed to join the revolution. From 1973 or 1974 monks were at a maximum number. Now only a handful of old monks exist. Therefore in Kampuchea religion works its way to align with the revolution. We had pagodas but the enemy destroyed them. Today we try to preserve good pagodas.

IX. Former Officials in the Contemptible Lon Nol Regime

Today they live and work just like other people in the cooperatives. [Former] capitalists are also in the cooperatives. Some work in offices and ministries, but most are in cooperatives.

X. Repatriated Persons

Some repatriated persons stay in cooperatives, the others in the farms and offices. My request is to let them take part in cultivation and base works so they can see the inexhaustible source of knowledge in the masses and will believe in their own people and nation. If they have such a belief, they can mix their knowledge with the abundant experience of the masses, taking part in nation building according to the real situation in the country.

Without doing so they will not become creative. Now most of them have faith in the people and wholeheartedly take part in nation building.

XI. Kampuchean People Overseas

They can return to their country any time they want. As long as they follow immigration rules, they can return from any country.

People who went overseas before we liberated

the country and immediately after are sometimes enemy agents. Some left the country because the enemy made them confused. Those who are confused always want to return home. If they decide to do so, we are happy to welcome them. Some have returned. There are many Khmers overseas who are patriotic and courageously defend Democratic Kampuchea against imperialists, expansionists, reactionaries and traitors.

As for traitors and enemy agents, they are few in number. They betrayed their country since they were here. This is not abnormal. All countries have this problem. As far as we know, Democratic Kampuchea does not have many traitors.

XII. Foreign Families

We respect their decision. They can come. Their children can choose foreign nationalities and we do not discriminate against them. We know that some people left the country because they were fed up with war. Now our country is liberated, but still we are in the ruins of the war. We have to work hard. In this situation, though, some people have returned.

XIII. Telecommunications

We are resurrecting this as best we can. Now we have contacted China on telecommunications and through this country we can contact the world. We have just contacted Singapore and will do so with other countries soon.

For those who want to know the condition of their relatives in the country, they can do so by sending letters through our embassy in Beijing.

XIV. Cities

We have returned to live in the cities as our industry grows. For heroin users, prostitutes and their children, we assign them to live with the masses and change themselves with the people. Living with the people, they can learn politics. Most of them have become ordinary people. Their children are also changed.

XV. Coup d'état

Since the liberation the US imperialists have

attempted many coups, but they failed. But the most important coup was made by the Yuon [Vietnamese] and its groups, because the Yuon want to swallow our land. They wanted to persuade and cheat us, but as they failed to do so, they attack us from outside. They also tried to stage a coup by ordering their agents to assassinate Kampuchea's leaders. They did this since 1976. They failed.

XVI. Democratic Kampuchea and the UN

Democratic Kampuchea understands that theoretically the United Nations is a proper organization, but in real practice, the imperialists and expansionists abuse the power of the UN in order to serve their benefits and to justify the invasion and interfering activities of those countries on other countries, especially the poor.

In Democratic Kampuchea, the people have public and political rights, as well as basic economic, social and cultural rights. People have all living rights: the right to have fields to farm, the right to employment, the right to workplace safety, the right to fulfill basic physiological needs and the right to education.

XVII. Public Health

The Communist Party of Kampuchea and the government of Democratic Kampuchea have a plan to increase the population up to 15 or 20 million in 10 to 15 years. Therefore, we have policies to protect our people's labor. We have a policy to prevent workplace accidents. In fact, at this time, we do not have works that could cause serious harm, like huge factory construction, steel manufacturing plants or similar plants.

At the same time, we try to improve people's overall health:

1. Ensuring adequate food
2. Providing medicine
3. We do not force people to work hard like the capitalists, who put people to work for long hours. Our workers have enough rest time in the morning and the afternoon. Our working environment is

desirable; it is spacious, well-ventilated, not stressful, and well it.

We have frequent rests when working under the sun or wait in cooler periods of the day. Moreover, our workers are in a pure society. They don't commit delinquency or have social diseases, which could reduce their productivity. In contrast their health is better every day.

XVIII. Economy

The reasons for eliminating money and future goals

The elimination of money was undertaken for reasons relating to the war. In 1970 or 1971, we liberated from 75 to 80% of the country. During that time we controlled politics and the military, but not the economy. The economy was in the hands of landlords and capitalists. At the same time, in the liberated regions, Lon Nol's money was still used. So the landlords and capitalists collected all the products because they had contemptible Lon Nol's money. People lacked food. The military lacked food. This seriously affected the war efforts. In such a situation we would not win the war. To win we had to control the rice harvest. The only choice we had was to create farming cooperatives all over the liberated regions. In mid-1973 we did that.

When we did that farmers and the revolutionary authorities could control all the harvest. The people's lives were better ensured. The military had food to fight on. In addition, our strategy of cutting the enemy's food supplies was more effective. The government of Democratic Kampuchea controls strategic products such as rice, salt, cloth and oil. In our liberated regions, the role of money rapidly decreased and in 1974 was reduced by 80%. Before the liberation we did not use money. This habit led to the present disappearance of money.

What will the future hold?

It depends on the people. If they want to use money, we will reintroduce it. Today the people do not see that it's necessary to use money.

A 1978 Speech of Comrade Khieu Samphan

(Document number D00128)

Khieu Samphan was the presidium chairman of Democratic Kampuchea and a member of the Communist Party of Kampuchea's Central Committee. This speech has been translated from Khmer Rouge document D00128, which is held at DC-Cam.

Respected Kings, Your Excellencies,

The conference attended by foreign ministers of non-aligned nations in Belgrade in late July 1978 has rejected interfering and divisive activities by the imperialist and expansionist powers and their satellites, causing our movement to break up. In particular, the conference has rejected the attempts of the expansionist powers and their satellites to change the principles of non-alignment, demanding that the non-aligned movement

accept their ideology so that our movement would serve their political bloc.

Unable to do anything in Belgrade, the expansionist powers and their satellites would act again in future summits. They have planned to use Cuba, the country which will host the 6th non-aligned summit and has been the head of the movement for three years, to continue to implement its plan to drag us to join their bloc.

Almost all members of our movement have expressed, both candidly and covertly, their concern about the future of our movement. This concern is based on a clear rationale. These are politics, military, economics and diplomacy. It seems that Cuba has joined in the expansionist bloc. Cuba is no longer a non-aligned



Khieu Samphan



After talking for a short while, we learned that the former cadres, as well as their families, want peace, freedom and justice.

Yen Nou, who lives in Kradas village, told us that she has lost one brother during the revolution. As other villagers do, she sometimes goes to fortunetellers, but hasn't had any sign yet that he is still alive. She and



Thun Than

her husband traveled to Anlong Veng to look for her brother, but without success. In the next house lives Thun Than, who has also been to fortunetellers to ask about his son who disappeared during the Khmer Rouge regime. They

told him he will meet his son when he reaches the age of 80, but he is losing hope that his son is still alive. His wife is constantly sick because she misses her son. Ham Heang, who lives in Chealea village, Chealea sub-district, has been looking for her child since the children of her neighbors who joined the revolution at the same time as hers have returned. She looked at one



Chann Say

of our researchers and said, "this guy looks like my lost child."

Chann Say, who lives in Tuol Chann village, Chba Ampeou sub-district, said that she doesn't believe her son is still alive. "Now the whole country

has peace so people can go everywhere easily, so my son would have come to meet me if he is alive." Chann Say also lost her husband; the Khmer Rouge had taken him away at lunchtime, but she didn't know where. She often goes to the pagoda, lights incense on every holiday, and wishes to have her son and husband returned back home.

Ping Neou, who lives in Taing Kraing village, Chealea sub-district, has lost hope of finding her children, but still misses them. She told us, "When I see my neighbors' children come to visit their parents,

especially on Khmer New Year, I immediately begin thinking about my lost children. I am a mother so I need support from my children. Because I have lost them, I have no one to depend on."

One thing that all of the villagers we spoke to want for their children and themselves is to live in peace, freedom and justice. Huon Chheang, who lives in Kradas district, lost her older brother. She explained, "After the regime was finished, I didn't want anything else besides living in peace and freedom like in the present day. I want to eat what I have and I want to go everywhere freely." Thun Than also wants justice so that he can have the chance to earn a living and do good deeds for the two children he lost. When we asked Ping Noeu whether she wanted anything, she answered, "I miss my children and want them back more than anything else." Responding to the same question, Chann Say said, "Nothing can compensate me; I have lost my son, husband and memory."

Khuon Khoeun, a former Khmer Rouge cadre living in Cheung Prey village, Cheung Prey sub-district, believes that he had spent half of his life for nothing and he wants his children to "live a comfortable life like today, not to face hardship like me when I was a soldier." Hang Huon, a former cadre living in Phnom Del village, also feels regret: "At that time I was stupid. I was educated to love new people and base people, to build up the villages and communes and to dig channels; I thought these were reasonable. But in fact, my life was so miserable that I cannot explain it."

Many in these villages can explain why they entered the revolution, but still don't understand what happened to it and those who disappeared. The answer may be found in the coming tribunal of Khmer Rouge leaders; it will have the authority to help determine what happened, and the cadres, their families and other victims of the regime can play an important role in providing evidence at the tribunal.

Sorya Sim is a head of DC-Cam Research Department.

was asked.”

In 1976, Aon attended a meeting with thousands of people in Kork sub-district. The meeting was presided over by a district chief named Ta Kab. Mentioning what Ta Kab said during the meeting, Aon said, “I just heard he talked about being economical in cooking and to look at the bones in the forest. I don’t remember more.”

In late 1976 or early 1977, Aon was pregnant with her fifth child. In her seventh month she was no longer permitted to work. She stayed in a hospital waiting for the baby to be born. But her husband was not allowed to visit her and her food ration was cut in half. Aon said, “They gave me very little to eat. The cooperative gave more. They gave me half a bowl of rice two times a day. Like it or not, I said nothing. I couldn’t complain.” Aon was given wine mixed with tree roots and herbs daily. Two weeks after giving birth, she returned to the cooperative. The chief told her to work with the cooks until her baby was 2 months old.

When the Vietnamese troops arrived in Kampong Chhnang province, the Khmer Rouge told the people that the Vietnamese would kill anyone who stayed behind. Believing them, the people followed the Khmer Rouge into the jungle. Aon’s children traveled with

her. In the journey her five-month old daughter died of disease. Many months later, the Vietnamese troops caught up with the people and told them to return to their villages.

After she returned home, Aon’s family did not live in their village. The new government allocated land and houses for the farmers. Her husband climbed palm trees to collect palm juice, while Aon sold snacks to children. In the early 1980s her husband died of an illness. About a year later her daughter died during the “K-5” campaign. A daughter and son survived. Her daughter got married, while her son lives with her. She said, “I am happy though poor, because no one restricts me. You didn’t have such freedom during the Khmer Rogue regime.”

Aon did not ask for reparation because it would not bring back the life of her daughter. She said, “It’s a life, nothing equals life.” Because Aon is unable to seek justice herself, she rests her hopes on the government.

Kalyan San is a Searching for the Truth staff writer and the editor of the Khmer edition.



Sras Aon with her son

people always called this place Ta Saur village and I know why. Other Cham villages had a Cham name and a Khmer name. During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum, 400 families resided in my village. The Khmer Rouge killed almost all of them. In 1979, only 50 families lived in the village. Today the village has 100 families, including newly arrived and old residents. That is less than half the population in Sangkum Reastr Niyum.

In 1972, the Khmer Rouge took control of my village. They upheld Islam just like they did Buddhism. I heard them say that Islam, Buddhism and the revolution were of the same ideals. In 1973 when most people trusted the revolution, the Khmer Rouge turned against the Cham. The Khmer Rouge cadres reproved my village chief, saying “Why didn’t you give people enough food to eat? Why did you tear down people’s houses? A village chief has the duty to heighten the living conditions of the people and build new houses for them.” The villagers were delighted to hear those words. Some listed their names in a collective complaint against the village chief. But they were arrested and executed for not being satisfied with the revolution. That year the Khmer Rouge sent about 20 families in my village to other provinces. All of them were educated and religious leaders in the village.

In 1974, the Khmer Rouge tightened its grip on us. They declared that Chams were the first enemy, whereas Khmer were the second. I did not know what we did wrong that led them to think of us as their enemies. Those who were arrested and killed were said to have stolen something of Angkar’s.

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge evacuated the villagers again. This time it was a mass evacuation. Only 30 families were left. The Khmer Rouge intended to send the people to their deaths through starvation and disease, while the 30 families would also die sooner or later. The Khmer Rouge feared that if we lived together we would rebel against them like Koh Phal village. I heard that the Khmer Rouge surrounded

Koh Phal with armored vehicles and pounded it with artillery fire, but the residents persevered. Eventually the Khmer Rouge captured the religious leader. They tortured him, forcing him to order the villagers to surrender. The villagers did. The Khmer Rouge burnt the village to ashes.

My family was among the remaining 30 in the village. Later the Khmer Rouge began to scatter them throughout all of the villages in the district. Two families were allowed to stay in the village. One was my family of three: my mother, younger brother and me. My father had died of a disease in 1973. The Khmer Rouge married me to a Cham woman, who is my present wife. Fifty couples were married on the same day; they made their vows in the revolutionary style.

The Khmer Rouge prohibited religions. Praying and speaking the Cham language were banned. Pork was to be eaten. Those who rejected it would be killed. Often the Khmer Rouge declared that “Now we don’t have Cham or Khmer. We are the same people, eating the same food.”

One day in 1978, the Khmer Rouge told all Cham people to stay home, that they did not need to go to their work sites. Including my wife, my house had four members. At about 3 p.m. the Khmer Rouge began gathering the people in all of Kang Meas district, hundreds of them. Most of these were former villagers living in Sach Saur, Antong Sar and Angkor Ban villages. Those who looked healthy and strong were tied up; they escorted them along the village road, with soldiers along the road. When the head of the procession arrived at my house, a soldier called me to come down. All of us went down as they called. Because I looked weak, I was not tied up. Some people were without shirts or wore only short pants, because they had no time to dress. Children who lost their parents ran about aimlessly. The Khmer Rouge held the legs of these kids and crushed them onto tree trunks. They led us to O Trakuon village to be killed.

My wife and I walked faster toward the head of

An S-21 prisoner



**Kingdom of Cambodia
Nation Religion King**

General Prosecution of the Appeals Court
No. 85/04

Phnom Penh, 9 April 2004

**General Prosecutor of the General Prosecution
of the Appeals Court**

Inform

**Prosecutors of Battambang, Banteay
Meanchey and Siem Reap Courts**

Re: Charging former leaders of Democratic Kampuchea: Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Nuon Chea.
Ref:

- ◆ Articles 4 and 6 of the law outlawing former leaders of Democratic Kampuchea from the law of the Kingdom of Cambodia 1NS/94, dated 15 July 1994.

- ◆ Letter of General Prosecution of the Appeals Court 12/95, dated 13 January 1995.

I would like to send you a petition, issued on 5 April 2004, by Their Excellencies, Chumteav, and gentlemen who are representatives of the National Assembly and heads of various non-governmental organizations asking you for charges to be laid against and arrest warrants be issued for three ex-DK leaders: Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary, as they are concerned that the three may go into hiding abroad, given that all three are in possession of passports.

Articles 1, 2 and 4 of the “Law Outlawing the Democratic Kampuchea Clique” create crimes and punishments thereof, whereas Article 5 disallows clemency, according to the clear specifications of Article 6.

Therefore I would like to ask you, prosecutors, to lay charges, and ask the magistrates to issue arrest warrants, in accordance with the rule of proceedings. As for Ieng Sary, it is necessary first to examine the royal decree of amnesty.

Please accept my highest regards.

General Prosecutor

[Signed] and [Sealed]

Hangrot Raken

Announcement

Khmer Rouge History Preservation Forum Essay Contest

On April 2, 2004 DC-Cam and the Khmer Writers' Association (KWA) announced the four winners of an essay competition for survivors of Democratic Kampuchea. Contestants submitted narrative essays on their lives during the regime or their thoughts on issues related to the Khmer Rouge. (See p. 37 for the winning essay.)

Because of the important role this contest can play in preserving the history of the Khmer Rouge period for future generations and in giving a voice to its survivors, DC-Cam and KWA are holding another essay contest. It is open to students, survivors of Democratic Kampuchea, and other Cambodians, both those living in Cambodia and abroad. The winning essays will be announced in April 2005. The winners will be given cash awards. The winning essays will be published in *Searching for the Truth* and in a forthcoming DC-Cam book on the experiences of victims of the Khmer Rouge.

Please submit your narrative essays by mail to P.O. Box 1110, Phnom Penh, Cambodia or email: dccam@online.com.kh. The deadline for submissions is February 28, 2005. For details please contact Mr. Sophearith Chuong at (855) 23 211 875 or by email: truthsophearith@dccam.org. Thanks!

Searching for the Truth

Radio Broadcast on FM 102

DC-Cam has partnered with the Women's Media Center to produce *Searching for the Truth*, a local radio program on FM 102. We cordially invite you to tune in to FM 102 every Wednesday and Thursday afternoon from 3:30-45, as Ms. Rachana Phat and Ms. Sophal Ly broadcast selected articles from the DC-Cam magazine, *Searching for the Truth*.



permitting the police to arrest a person in the absence of exigent circumstances such as those set forth, by way of illustration, in article 18. The key point to note is that arrest without a warrant is the exception, and is intentionally limited to exceptional circumstances.

Without doubt article 19 was poorly written, in that subsection (1) should have expressly noted that the “substantially incriminating evidence which is exact and consistent and indicates that the suspect participated in the commission of a crime or misdemeanor” represents the standard of evidence that the police would be required to present to the court in order to justify the issuance of an arrest warrant.

Unfortunately, this careless drafting has resulted in an interpretation of article 19 that grants unlimited authority to the police to effectuate arrests without judicial oversight. Although article 19(1) on its face requires a certain minimum level of evidence before

an arrest can be made, it is left to the police alone to determine when that level is met. As a result, according to UNTAC Law article 19 as interpreted by the courts in Cambodia, arrest warrants are never required.

It can be noted that the basic rule of statutory interpretation, *holding that an interpretation of one part of a statute that renders another part of the statute meaningless is to be avoided in favor of an interpretation that gives reasonable effect to all portions of the statute*, is directly contravened by the above-noted interpretation of UNTAC article 19(1) that has been applied by the courts in Cambodia, which renders article 18 and its limitations on the police power of arrest without a warrant meaningless.

Raymund Johansen is a legal advisor to the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

Reply to Raymund Johansen

Bora Touch

This is what I usually argued in the Cambodian courts, when I was practicing law there. It never worked. The argument was ignored by both the judge and the prosecutor. The trial judge never ruled on the argument, so you ended up not knowing whether your argument was right or wrong.

The UNTAC Law was drafted by a French judge who was the head of the UNTAC Civil Administration Component. The law was poorly drafted, cut and pasted rather, and very poorly translated. In some instances, you can't even understand what the translator(s) wanted to say.

Because the law was cut and pasted from various provisions of French laws, to understand what they mean, one needs to go and read the French laws and their legal literature. For example, Article 63 of the UNTAC Law, the Criminal Defamation and Insult,

was a “photocopy” of article 29 (?) of the French Freedom of Press Act 1881 (The Khmer Law on Press (1994), too, is a summary of the French Act 1881). The article has been fully used/misused by the Khmer authorities (Mat Reed of *The Cambodia Daily* recently became one of its victims, convicted for saying that Svay Sitha was Hun Sen’s advisor while he’s not); while France has not used it since 1969, when De Gaulle resigned. Perhaps the French came to believe that the law was a danger to civil liberty in a democratic society such as France. The Khmer authorities have a lot to thank the French judge for bringing the law back to life in Cambodia and not explaining its applicability in France.

Bora Touch is an attorney and writer who works for Legal Aid-Australia.



The Shadow of My Husband

Heng (Nang) Sokphanna



This is the first-prize winning essay in the 2003 contest created and sponsored by the Khmer Writers Association and DC-Cam called the History Preservation Forum.

Forward

For the essay entitled *The Shadow of My Husband*, I do not wish to stir up everything. I only wish the next generations to become aware and to believe that bloodbaths, mountains of bones and rivers of tears did exist in Cambodia over a quarter of a century ago.

I believe that I would die with my eyes open if I did not write and tell the bitter story of the great sufferings during the rule of the ruthless and blood-thirsty Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, and their clique. *The Shadow of My Husband* describes only my life, and those of my family and close friends during the Khmer Rouge regime.

Acknowledgements

With my good deeds, which I have saved over time, I would like to dedicate *The Shadow of My Husband* to my parents, grandparents, and three children. Especially, I wish that the soul of my dear husband, Huot, and the two million innocent people who lost

their lives in the black-clothed regime go to Heaven.

My dear husband! The pain which I describe in this essay is my medal and garland of flowers for your courage and honesty while we were living together in the sweet and sorrowful times.

Phnom Penh, October 31, 2003; 3 a.m.

Chapter 1

The Tragedy on April 17, 1975

Between 1970 and 1975, I was married to Huot. We had a three-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. I was then a military nurse at Preah Monivong hospital. The medical personnel at the hospital were Dr. Thaong Boran, chief of the hospital; Dr. Tea Kimhy in charge of the x-ray department; Dr. Tim Mam, who specialized in the respiratory system; and my team leader Dr. Ing Poleng, who specialized in the digestive system and general illnesses. I forgot the names of several other doctors. I do not know where they are now.

April 17, 1975 was a black day in Cambodia. Young black-clothed comrades with ruthless faces forced people to leave Phnom Penh at gunpoint and go to the countryside. We were told to leave quickly without taking along too many belongings, because we would return home in the next three days. My husband, my son Pheak, my daughter Srey Sros, and I also went out of the city with many people. We brought along with us pans, ice cans and a few clothes. I also took along four or five sacks of my mother-in-law's clothes which she had left with us.

Before the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh, my father-in-law visited us for ten days. He said that our country would be peaceful and we should no longer be worried; then he went to his farm as usual. We were waiting for his return. But we could not see him, even his shadow. We decided to leave without him. Before



pagoda. My husband said that we needed to sleep in the car on the edge of the street. At midnight, a few A2 Jeeps drove from the east to the west honking loudly, which indicated there was an emergency. A group of young Khmer Rouge soldiers stood on a truck and screamed with savage faces, ordering people to get off the streets quickly. In the meantime, the young soldiers shot and killed four or five people when they stood blocking the way. We were very fearful after seeing such a scene that we had never seen before.

Three days later, we stopped at a sapodilla farm in Kien Svay district [Kandal province]. I stared at the April 17 people who were staying in huts or making

cottages. [People who were evacuated from cities to the countryside were called April 17 people. They were also classified as parasites]. Some people looked sad, some seemed happy, some had meals with the hope that they would return home after three days. In the evening, some ladies wearing sarongs and holding shampoo went down to the river. Young men and women looked carefree. After staying there for ten days, four or five young soldiers with rifles, black caps and clothes, and shoes made from car tires announced, “Brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts who used to work for the Lon Nol regime, please list your names. Angkar would send you to work as you had done in the Lon Nol regime.”

About two weeks later most people in that area disappeared. Only three or four families were left. An uncle who was staying next to us told us that he was waiting for his relatives to go to his birthplace the next day. He added that they [the Khmer Rouge] would not allow us to enter the city so we could avoid the B-52 bombing by the US air force.

My family decided to go to my husband’s birthplace, Tani district, Kampot province to return my mother-in-law’s luggage which she kept with us. The next morning we backtracked to the river, but we could not cross the bridge. We decided to negotiate with a man to exchange our car for a boat. I also took some rice to exchange for fish for making a meal.

After we reached the other side of the river, our family walked on the dusty road without knowing the direction. We often asked people for directions to Tani district. They only told us it was several kilometers away. We got the same answer ten times, but we still did not reach the district. On the way to Tani, we met young soldiers who slept in hammocks under the trees. They checked our belongings. While checking, they saw some canned fish. However, they did not dare take the cans because they thought they were grenades. We thought they wanted only a watch. I kept some medicines and a syringe in a sack of rice, so they didn’t find them and take them from us.

We continued our journey as directed by the

The rest of the people who did not list their names as Vietnamese had already been brought to villages. About 30 to 40 Vietnamese families remained. We continued to stay there for two months and they questioned us once every half month. The rice ration was the same, except that other food was not plentiful. One night I dreamt that I walked to a village near a mountain; it was scattered with tall palm trees and the breeze was warm. I was relaxed.

Sres Village, Preah Net Preah District, Battambang Province

Early one morning when I was still in bed, the Khmer Rouge announced on a loudspeaker: “Everybody, pack up, the trucks have arrived, hurry.” We were happy. We packed up our belongings in a hurry, taking some and leaving some, as long as we could leave. A few trailer trucks took us across the endless golden rice fields. On the truck, we sang. The real Vietnamese sang Vietnamese songs aloud in joy. The trucks drove up a dirt road from the rice field until we reached a mountain. They dropped us one family at a time from the beginning of the village to the end. My family was among 10 others to be dropped at the end of the village. A few comrades stood welcoming us. A rather old comrade, who perhaps held the highest rank, told me, “All Vietnamese brothers have to stay here and help the people farm for a year. Later you’re sure to be brought to your home country; don’t worry you’ll meet your relatives!” Our faces changed colors. Some wanted to cry, some were unable to speak.

The village where I stayed was called Sres Khang Cheung. Its scenery was like that in my dream the night before. The village was in Preah Net Preah district, Battambang province. In the old regime, the villagers earned their living by breaking off large chunks of rock from the mountain to make hand-powered mortar and grinding equipment. We stayed in a pagoda near the mountain, as we were not allowed to go into the village right away. We were told to be patient and stay there several days before they found accommodation

for us. We stole a look at the large Buddha statues in the pagoda and prayed with our eyes wide open.

That morning two or three comrades, wearing black pajamas, cotton scarves and rubber-tire sandals, walked up to where we were staying. Each of them held a bag. I recognized one of them as a Lon Nol first lieutenant. He used to receive medical treatment at my hospital. His name was Ly. Just as he saw me, he winked at me, to let me know I should not indicate that I knew him. He brought us some traditional medicine to prevent us from being sick because we were unable to adapt to the new forest environment. Mr. Ly came close to me, explained how the medicine should be used, and whispered, “Don’t say you know me.” I nodded in appreciation. A week later, Angkar gave each of the families a piece of land on which to build a cottage. We helped each other building the cottages. They were not easy to build.

Go to Study or Nirvana?

Angkar had not yet ordered the Vietnamese families to work. Perhaps they wanted us to regain our strength. In fact, only a few families were Vietnamese; the rest were of Chinese origin.

One morning, several young comrades walked about holding a book to record the names of young people who wanted to be educated. My younger sister, who was digging soil behind the cottage, enrolled with joy. After she enrolled, she prepared her clothes. I secretly said to her, “Don’t go sister, stay here with me.” She declined: “No, I want to study. You see, they don’t close down schools.” She handed me a piece of soap and said, “Keep it for Pheak and Sros, goodbye, sister.” She boarded the Camion waiting outside, already filled with about ten youths. She never returned; I don’t know where she went.

Because we were free, my husband prepared soil behind the cottage to grow potatoes and some mint, which we had asked from the villagers. I was asked by a female chief to screen rice. I was yelled at for spilling rice on the ground and they ordered me to pick up all

Thus, having a comb was like having a fishing rod. Eng was a careful person; she brought along a few combs. Everyone borrowed hers. Sometimes she lent happily; other times in discomfort. Soon she had an idea. The borrower had to give her some food before taking her comb. If base people tried to borrow from her, she did not lend her comb. One day Angkar brought her away to be educated; they said her brain was filled with capitalism.

Elderly Woman of the “Absolute Group”

One day my husband told me that he found a place a kilometer from the village where people made sugar from palm juice. The place was occupied with people from Takeo province. The houses were surrounded with thorny sticks, and about twenty families lived there. It was like a fortress. They ate separately, not with base or new people. They were called the “absolute group.” My husband said they had plenty of medicine and were looking for a physician to them.

The next morning, under the glaring sun, I walked along the dam behind the house to the “absolute group.” The elderly woman who was the chief of the group had a hard-looking face, gray hair and was in good physical condition, which indicated that she had enough to eat. She brought out a few large bottles of medicine to show me and asked what the medicine was for. The bottles contained medicine for malaria, building strength, healing wounds, etc. The group members wanted me to inject them with colorful ampoules. I had only a glass syringe and a few needles. The other medical equipment I brought from Phnom Penh was confiscated by Angkar after I left the train. I boiled the syringe and needles in a metal pan and used hot water instead of alcohol to clean them. After I gave the injections, the chief woman ordered the younger people to prepare a meal for me. The rice, processed in factory, was as white as coconut flesh. I brought the rice close to my eyes because I had not seen it for a long time. They made a fish and vegetable soup. The fish was large, and perhaps was brought from Tonle Sap lake. How delicious it

was. I ate until my stomach almost burst, although I had eaten something before I came. The chief did not permit me to bring rice home, fearing Angkar might learn about it. But I still kept dried fish and a few lumps of rice and hid them in my cotton scarf for my children and husband at home. I kept coming to the “absolute” place and the chief liked me. She gave me food and dessert, but not to take home. I did this anyway.

Field Rats, Special Food

Rats were a delicious food for all in the district. During the noon break, each of us shouldered a hoe to the middle of a harvested field to look for rat holes. The holes were large enough for the children to put their hands in. First we had to check if the hole was occupied. Then we needed to locate nearby escape holes. When a rat ran out, we had to be quick to catch it. I could not catch one, but the children wanted me to go with them. A grilled rat was better than roast pork by far. My husband was punished and made to work overtime because he searched for rats instead of going to work. Some people disappeared because of this kind of crime.

Elderly Say was an April 17 person. She knew a lot of stories because her husband was an ox-cart driver who traveled a lot. One morning when uprooting grass in the field, she whispered to me, “Last night my husband told me that when he was loading rice onto the cart, he heard people talking about a person named Seung Phoeuk Thar, the editor of *Meatophoum* newspaper. At first he was a very prestigious person in the village. He even had a bicycle (having a bicycle was a luxury). He and his family were taken away on a truck.”

Nightfall Reminding of Love in Youth

Night was a good time for me and my husband, because we could recall our old memories together. Under the moonlight and a palm-leafed roof put up unskillfully by my beloved husband, I leaned on his shoulders and he recollected our first meeting. It was when we were playing a traditional game, called *angkugn*, at the end of the school year. My husband

was very brave. He rode his bike back and forth in front of my house. It was three years before we lived together. My husband complained that my father was too mean. Then I talked about eating nice food. I told him I was hungry for the coconut cake sold behind the Royal Palace, which he bought for me. If the cake was not nice, I would throw it away; if it was otherwise then I ate. I told him, “I repent throwing those cakes away, husband.” He stroked my hair and said, “Tomorrow I’ll collect ripe palm fruit to make a cake for you.” He always spoke as though everything was easy to do. But with only that, I felt satisfied. Only at night could we speak caressing words to each other. My husband put palm leaves around the house as an alarm bell when someone came to eavesdrop on us.

The Death of My Daughter

Half a year later, my daughter fell seriously ill. She vomited every time she ate. In one unforgettable night, my daughter died as thunder and lightning were striking outside. I cried aloud to win over the sound of the rain. “O my beloved daughter, if it was at our house, I would not let you die,” I murmured. I husband covered my mouth and cried as well. He felt equal sorrow, but he controlled himself better. The next day, the neighbors helped us to bury her. When the ritual was complete, we had to look for a chicken to make food for them to express our gratitude. Three months after my daughter died I was pregnant. Oh god, my beloved daughter, how could you come to his hell again? Day by day my belly grew larger. The group chief forbade me from going to work. They said I was nine months pregnant, but I knew it was just eight. Having nothing to do, I went with the children to collect water spinach in the ponds. In the evening I carried home a large bunch of the vegetable on my head, but I was careful not to trip. I complained to my husband that he gave too many vegetables to other people. He told me we should be kind to our neighbors because in the future if I was a widow, they would help me. I never realized his words would come true.

Giving Birth without a Midwife

One night I felt a little pain after dusk. By midnight the pain peaked. My husband quickly went out to look for a midwife. Luckily an elderly woman was staying in my house after she returned from the field. She gently massaged my belly. My son sat nearby, not knowing what to do. Another woman living close to my house made a fire to boil water. A while later my husband returned alone. He said, almost wanting to cry, that the midwife had gone to the village chief’s home to look after the chief’s wife. When she returned she said my husband invited her with bare hands. It was the midwife’s norm to receive something; otherwise the delivery would not be successful. The neighbor cursed at them in anger. She boiled a scissors and comforted me, “Don’t worry neighbor, neighbor, I will deliver for you. I also know how to be a midwife.” At dawn I gave birth to a baby son. He was heavy. Perhaps I had eaten a lot of water spinach. The next morning my husband slaughtered a chicken for the two women to eat. I am very grateful to them, although I do not know where they are. My house was filled with smoke from the fire under my bed. The eyes of my husband and children reddened. My husband was able to obtain a three-day leave from work. I did not understand why I was hungry for coffee. I told my husband I wanted to drink coffee. He went out not knowing where to look for it. When he returned he was happy.

He began to make fire and fried a few spoonful of dried rice until it became rather overcooked. Then he poured water in and boiled it with the rice. Last he put some palm sugar and some kind of medicinal grass. He then poured the solution into a coconut shell and told me, “Wife, this is my most delicious coffee, drink it up.” After drinking I was energetic. I did not know how he came up with such an idea. My son drank some. At that moment we seemed to forget that we were in hell.

The next day rain water flowed into my fire pit, putting out all burning embers. That was great because I had been on fire for a long time. My husband boiled tree roots for me to drink. Three months later my



newborn son died because I had no milk for him.

Tire Sandal Soup

Soon I had to return to the field. I felt a little better when meeting and talking with other people. I met Sauy once again. We secretly called him C.I.A. One morning when uprooting grass, he whispered to me: “Last night my friend secretly turned a radio on and he heard Samdech Ouv [King Sihanouk] speaking.” Then he turned his eyes up and down to recall what he heard.

A few elderly women moved close to me to listen. Then a woman walked to me and gave me a hoe, and reprimanded us, “Everybody, why don’t you work, or do you want to eat nothing this evening?” We walked away and continued our work.

In the evening, we tried to walk close to Sauy, asking him about what was said on the radio. “How could I hear anything since the bad radio shut itself off as the King said ‘My beloved people...’”

We were disappointed to know nothing. I headed into the cottage. On the fire pit, a pan was boiling with water and in the water there were a few black objects which I could not see clearly. My husband might have some cow bones to make a soup, I thought. Delighted, I sat down and added more wood into the fire to speed up the cooking. A while later my husband returned from the pond. I did not ask him at first, waiting for him to give the buckets back to the neighbor. Then I asked, “What’s in the pan?” “What do you think?” he asked. I answered, “It’s buffalo meat, because it’s black.” My husband burst out laughing. He said, “It’s a rubber tire. I’m boiling it to make shoes for you and our children. It’s hard to find.” He boiled the tire for many hours to make it more supple and made shoes for me and our children. It was better than being barefoot.

Bakkprea Village

One day the village chief summoned all people—old and new—to a meeting. He wanted to choose two families in a village to do work in the fish business in Bakkprea. They chose families with few children and

who had a mosquito net, since Bakkprea was said to be infested with mosquitoes. My husband was the first to volunteer. The chief asked him, “Can you use a fishing net, Comrade Huot?” “Yes I can,” he answered. I signaled him that I didn’t want to go, since the newly grown mints at the back of our house would die if they were left unattended. “Don’t care about such unimportant things,” he replied.

That night, the village chief allowed my family and the other one assigned to Bakkprea to kill our chickens as food for the journey. We had only two chickens, but we slaughtered almost twenty of our neighbors’ chickens. That night it was like we were having a party almost until daybreak. I dreamt that we were allowed to go home. The next day, after saying farewell to the other villagers, we left on an oxcart track with a combatant escorting us. We did not know how far Bakkprea was. We stopped on the road to have a meal. We turned left on a road along the river. In the evening we arrived at Bakkprea, where long boat-houses were made for fishermen to come and rest. These houses could be moved at will as the water rose and fell. The village was magnificent. It was warm; the scenery was nice. A famous classical singer, named Ruos Serey Sothea, composed a song about Bakkprea village: “Oh, Brakkprea in the twilight...”

In Bakkprea, men went fishing in 10 or 20 boats. My husband left with others, though I did not know if he could handle the fishing. When the boats returned, a ring was struck to signal the women to go down to the river with large pans and knives for scaling and cleaning the catch. Whenever the boats arrived, at one or two in the morning at times, women had to clean the fish.

This place was full of mosquitoes. People made many fires to produce smoke to drive them away, but they came in swarms. I scaled the fish with one hand and slapped the mosquitoes with the other. When the work was complete, my skin was full of rashes. I was not good at scaling fish. I could fill only half the bucket with fish, while others could fill it to the rim. We ate

boats they were on were sunk in the river. After that we said we were a Khmer family. I was called Neang Nang or Me Pheak, while my husband was called Huot as usual. A few days later, we met Um Ry, one of my husband's relatives. He was living in the village. He was delighted to meet us. He wanted us to live in the village and we agreed after we got permission from the village chief.

Puk Krak, the Cooperative Chief

The village we were living in was nicknamed “the widow village” because the men who were technicians and doctors had been taken away. I met my old friend Saophea, who had worked with me at Preah Monivong hospital in Phnom Penh. Saophea specialized in illnesses relating to organs from the neck up. Her husband Tork Kan, who was also a doctor, had been taken away. Saophea now lived with her five-year-old son. In the village, only three men had returned home. First was Mr. Dina who was an electrical technician. Second was Dr. Chy, who was able to convince Angkar to let him return. His wife was Bang Samlei who was very polite and had been a teacher in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum. Third was Um Saret who had worked in the railway station. He returned after two days. He advised his three children that “If you are asked to give an opinion, tell them you don't have any and call them politely ‘Comrade Brothers.’ If you request that a school, market or pagoda be built, you won't live to return home from the meeting. You understand?”

His three children nodded in wonder. Angkar let me live in a large house with widows Me Tou (who had two children) and Soda (who had three). Me Tou liked the company of my family. Her children liked my children as well.

Me Tou had a very pleasant accent. Almost every night we sat on the front stairs listening to her singing songs from the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime, like “Letter under the Pillow” and “Night Window,” which was sung by the famous female singer Huoy Meas. Me Tou was a good singer. My husband rested his head on

my shoulders and I felt like I was in a restaurant. I laughed and cried with her, but we knew that a few unidentified people were watching us.

One afternoon, an older woman in her 40s, with no front teeth, announced roughly in the dining hall, “We will have a meeting on the pagoda terrace after dinner.” After everyone was there, the meeting began. First the chief who presided over the meeting saluted fathers, mothers and brothers. Then he talked about working hard to achieve the yield of five tons of rice per hectare, so that everyone would not be hungry, have electricity and adequate clothes without the need to use money. The participants applauded. After the glorious vision, he turned to education and morality issues. He threatened and terrorized his listeners. He mentioned, “A few woman comrades do not forget feudal and capitalist culture. They still find time at night to sing and discuss movies and plays which are bad (at this point Me Tou signaled me). Some woman comrades wore improper clothes while dining. Some wore open-necked shirts to seduce the chefs. No, don't ever think about that. Our comrades won't be fooled by your beauty. Work hard to change yourself and dress properly.”

On the way home, Me Tou joked with me, “They're good with their mouths, but base men always peek at us women...”

I asked her who wore open-necked shirts to dinner. She said, “It's no one beside Kalyan. She's a widow with one child. Um Ry who lives with her looks after her child. Kalyan was a student from Decartes high school. The base men were fooled because of her many times.

Early one morning, we took a meal with us to the potato field. The field was on a mountain and about 2 kilometers away from the village where we lived. My husband was assigned to build a dam with the men. On the road to the field I met a lot of new friends, including Kalyan. We got together very quickly. We talked and joked around about the Sangkum Reastr Niyum. That's why they criticized us in the meeting! On

out, “Pou Barang, may I have some juice?” Without looking down, he replied, “Yes, but what will you give me in return?” Kalyan said, “A ‘Kiss!’” “Ok, a lighter is good.” Pou Barang did not understand.

After drinking to our fill, we ran straight to the field. From then on whenever we met him, Pou Barang asked for the lighter. Kalyan liked to joke and was not afraid. Returning from the field, she bathed and dressed in an open-necked and sleeveless shirt, as though she had never been warned. At the dining hall, there was a long table with two rows of chairs. A bowl of soup was for four people. The soup had no meat, except some vegetables and oil floating on top.

At dinner time, we would not wait for husband or wife to be ready to dine together. Those who arrived first ate first. My son, Pheak, went with other boys. A chef put the porridge into each bowl. Before harvest season we ate porridge. The chef would give us an unwelcome look if we brought our bowls to him many times. If one was good at flattering like Kalyan, one or two small fish could be found in the bowl.

I ate with Che Mom for two days. She always used a ladle, which almost drained the soup in a single dip. The three of us looked at her. Embarrassed, she said, “My spoon was broken, so I use this instead...”

The next day, I used a ladle (one had to be clever to survive the regime!). Puk Krak always uttered a proverb: better make the line droop than snap.

One morning Angkar assigned women to build a dam near the village. In the afternoon, Me Tou’s foot was severely cut with a hoe. We used grass to stop the bleeding, but to no avail. I took her home. On the way we saw a few rows of onions. We asked the owner for one to use to stop the bleeding. The owner said, “I’ve never known anyone to do that before. If you want it to eat, tell the truth.” Me Tou continued to walk and cursed the owner, “What a black-hearted man, I’ll destroy his onions in a few days.”

Ten days later her foot improved. Then she asked me to uproot the onions with her. At first I hesitated, but agreed eventually. We uprooted a row of onions

and put them in a cloth bag. We cut the bulbs and put them in fish sauce to make pickles. We buried the leaves in the ash. That night we stayed with Sauda, but could not sleep.

The next day we went to the dam as normal. At noon, Tou the son of Me Tou, dashed to his mother telling her that a few soldiers were searching each house for onions. Me Tou and I ran to the house. We took the onion leaves from the ash and put them into a cloth bag. Then we hung the bag through the window on the wall behind the house. The smell was still hanging in the air; we were nervous. After that, Me Tou told me to massage her as if she were sick, as the reason for not going to the work site at the moment. The soldiers inspected our kitchen where we boiled water. Luckily, they did not notice anything. Maybe god was on our side. We escaped from danger once again.

Oeun, Porter of Human Fertilizer

In this village, people who carried human fertilizer were most reviled by others. People did not want to let them in their houses or sit near them in the dining hall. But their lives were more secure, since they did not need to join a mobile work unit or work far from home. Oeun, 18, long-faced and light, was a former 1st grade student [12th grade at the present] and the first child of Um Saret. He did not show his knowledge and did not talk much to the base people. He pretended to be deaf and mad sometimes. When away from the base people, he spoke a lot. He said, “I am not crazy enough to carry other people’s shit. I put soil into the toilet and put it back into the basket.” Sometimes he walked back and forth through the village so that Angkar would say he was an active person. In the regime, pretending to be crazy saved your life. Now Oeun is a doctor.

14 Most Deceitful Women

At midnight one night, Me Tou tickled my leg to wake me up. She whispered, “Do you want to listen to a song?” My foolish mind never satisfied itself. I turned

soldiers came from the opposite direction, we would collide with them. As a non-smoker, I thought when we ate vegetables we chose the shoots, so we picked the tobacco shoots.

Early the next morning, I took the tobacco shoots to the old woman. She told me to take her salted fish the following day. In the evening, people talked about a stupid thief who stole the shoots of the tobacco plants. I felt ashamed of myself to be that foolish.

The Death of Thy, the Medical Man

Now the rice was ripe. Angkar assigned us to harvest the rice around the village. At noon men and women walked back to the village to dine. After the meal, we had to go back to where we worked and rest for half an hour. Under the hot sun, we piled up rice bundles, then sat close to each other and talked only about Sangkum Reastr Niyum. Kalyan, who was good at talking, said that when she was a student, boys followed her and that she always found a letter or a rose in her drawer in the class. The quieter, younger Samphoas had been a first-year medical student. Her husband was called Det; he was a very skillful fisherman. Angkar assigned Det to fish for the cooperative. Every day when he returned from fishing, Det visited his sister and cooked a big fish, before handing the small ones to the cooperative kitchen. He never brought the fish to his wife because too many relatives were living with her. Samphoas knew it too, but she did not say anything. She uttered in tears that some nights when she rejected having sex with Det, he informed the village chief. The village chief punished her by forcing her to sit outside all night for the mosquitoes to bite her. She said if the country was changed she would divorce her husband who she did not love and continue studying medicine.

Samlei talked about her husband named Thy, who had not completed medical school when they were married. She said she and her husband went through thick and thin together. At school she waited for her husband to complete his studies until midnight.

Sometimes, they burnt sausages with alcohol to eat with left-over rice. At this point, she said, “I’m hungry for sausage; I don’t want to talk anymore!”

We were always reprimanded for talking about good food and happy times in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum.

Rice near the village was harvested. Angkar began assigning us to harvest further and further away, but husband and wife could not go together. We had to sleep in the field and a chef came with us to cook food for the workers.

Thy, who was big and tall, wore short, spiky hair and had a smiling face. Angkar sent him with us. One night in the open field, I sat and thought of my husband and son at home.

In the harvest season, we ate solid rice and the soup consisted of some fish. As the morning sun cast its rays on the top of the trees and the cottages, I was still lying lazily. Then I heard a voice: “Help, help, Thy is dead!”

Everyone dashed to his cottage. His pale face and body were cold like ice. An old man named Duong who slept with him did not know when he died. Duong said Thy had a headache in the evening. A soldier ran back to the village to inform Thy’s wife and he told the other soldiers to wait for her to arrive before burying him. Perhaps he died of cold and humidity, since we all slept on the ground using just a thin leaf mat. After waiting too long for his wife to arrive, the people did not work, so the soldiers decided to bury Thy on a small hill. Just as that was done, Samley arrived. She knelt down, crying and digging the tomb. But we prevented her from doing so. She told her story about her life with her husband in Khmer, English, and French, as she wished, ignoring the soldiers. We wept, “Farewell Thy, may you rest in peace.” The soldiers looked sorrowful, since Thy had cured many people when he was alive.

Region 3

Starvation forced April 17 people to flee to region



open!” I took out medicine for him, but it was nothing beside “rabbit dung” tablets.

We waited until 2 p.m. when the truck returned. All were hungry. Two soldiers standing on the trucks told us, “You know comrades, the people in the morning were used as fertilizer.” I did not understand right away. They were killed, I learned later. At about 5 p.m. the truck took us to Serey Sophorn district. Many houses were abandoned there. They told us to rest in any house and wait for dinner. Some wondered what Angkar would do to us for running away from home like that. A moment later, a few comrades called us to eat. In the tin-roofed dining hall, a kerosene lamp was hung on the roof to light up the night. The rice was as white as cotton. The sour soup with banana trunk was delicious. It was the first meal of the day and everyone ate their fill. We were even told to pack up the remaining rice for tomorrow’s journey. We began to think our lives could be better than in the village we had just left in the morning.

The Flood

As light began to fill the horizon and dew fell, we were ordered to get up and go to the truck quickly. The truck took the main road; we did not know the name. A man called out, his village was there, but the truck kept going. Goodbye Cheung Wat village (my old village); I did not know where we were going this time. At noon the truck stopped at a small road. Then the young soldiers told us to get off. We walked with our belongings banging around to a village a hundred meters away. My son carried the rice pan and I carried the rest. I cried when it was too heavy. My husband was frustrated to see me crying. He said, “Don’t cry, we are not separated.” I cried louder as though there was something bad going to happen to us. This was the only time when he yelled at me. We stayed in a large hall, when half an hour later a few comrades arrived. One comrade was the oldest, had gray hair, large eyes, and a cigarette in his mouth. We squatted and were quiet, awaiting his words.

He spoke with a stern look, “You have been assigned

to live here. This village is called Tik Chaur. You have to change yourselves and work hard to impress Angkar, because you committed a serious crime of running away from home. If you refuse to change yourselves and run for the second time, the nearby mountain will be your resting place.” A chill rushed through my spine. The mountain was called Phnom Chhun Cheang. It was where criminals were detained, tortured and given little food to eat. They were also chained.

A few hours later a female comrade arrived to call us to eat porridge. I had fled from porridge, now I met porridge again. My husband did not go and asked me to bring some food to him if possible. Then I pulled out two spoons from our luggage. I walked toward river to clean the spoons. Just as I put them into the water, the spoons fell from my hand as though they were attracted by a magnet. I thought this was a bad sign; perhaps two of us could go away like the spoons. I prayed for my family’s happiness.

Angkar let us stay in a storehouse. We arrived in the village when the rain came. So it was time to farm. One morning, a female comrade arrived to tell us to transplant rice in a field about a kilometer from the village. She told us to bring plates and spoons along. I asked for my husband’s permission not to work. They gave him permission, but only after a lot of reproach. The village chief accused my husband, “You all are unconscious people. Sick all the time. I should not let you eat.” In the field, we could hardly work, since the base people kept staring at us.

Sour Soup with Cow Skin

Half a month had passed. My beloved husband recovered, maybe because of “rabbit droppings” medicine or something else. He was assigned to plow with other men, who were in the strongest group. About ten Cham families lived in this village. On rare occasions when there was pork, the Cham people were forced to eat it. A woman named Brahim, in her mid-20s, secretly told me in tears that the Cham families had arrived in the village nearly a year ago and were given only porridge.

forget this sympathy. If I survive for the next three days, I'll repay your help." We wept and wished him good luck. He left. We did not know what happened to him next.

Becoming a Miserable Woman Unconsciously

Our legs swelled. This was torture. It was a prison without walls. The name of the village Tik Chaur means high tide, because water could flood the field overnight. One morning my husband and I went to the field. Comrade Kan [the village chief] sent a few soldiers with us. With his face set, Comrade Kan talked to my husband, "I'd like to ask you to plow in another village for a few days and stay there." My husband hurriedly wrapped a scarf around his neck and left with him. Walking a few steps, he reached into his shirt pocket, took out a lighter, and gave it to me in case I needed it to make a fire at night. I rejected his offer, saying, "You keep it. Maybe you'll need it to light your cigarette." It took a while until he put it back into his pocket.

The same morning a soldier who was transplanting rice near me asked, "How old are you?" I answered, "I'm 27." The soldier laughed, "What a pitiful young widow." I quickly clarified, "Are you confused, Comrade? My husband is still alive!" He laughed and left. I do not remember the date, but I know it was a full moon day. At night I was restless. I sat and looked at the moon on the door until I fell asleep there. I dreamt I broke one of the two knives I had tried to preserve since we'd been evacuated from Phnom Penh. My body shook like a chick when I woke up. Thinking about my husband and the soldier, I cried. I prayed to God to look after my husband. I unconsciously pleaded: "Husband, may you be free from all troubles. Please don't leave your wife and son in this sea of blood."

Saleh heard what I said and advised me, "Nang, don't speak to loud." Our lives seemed to be the most fragile thing of all. We loved each other through good and bad times. When we had food we thought about each other. When we stole food, we hurried home so that we could share.

High-Nosed Visitor

One day, two days, three days passed.... One morning I saw comrade Kan with about 10 young soldiers carrying rifles; they were walking toward my house. Comrade Kan said to me, "Comrade Nang, if you want your husband to come home, give us all that you have." I was shocked and bewildered, as I tried to think what my husband had possibly done wrong. "He went to plow, why is he accused of a crime now?" I asked. Comrade Kan advised me, "You don't need to wonder. Angkar knows what your husband did; Angkar has the eyes of a pineapple." As Comrade Kan spoke, the soldiers were ransacking my few belongings. They checked the salt jar, squeezed the pillows, spilled the kitchen ash.... They found nothing. I began to realize that my husband must be in danger. Without hesitation, I reached into the chicken's nest to take a few pieces of gold. Then I handed them to comrade Kan without saying a word. As the soldiers walked away, I took out US \$200, which was wrapped in many layers of plastic; I had hidden the bundle in a silk reel for a long time, saving it for a bribe. Kan did not know what it was, so he asked as he held it, "What money is this?" I dared not say it was American money, fearing I could be accused of being an imperialist, CIA or KGB. "You can use this money anywhere you go. I don't want to keep it any longer. Please take it and help my husband."

He did not answer. He grabbed the money and walked away. I waited for my husband day by day. One morning I was assigned to transplant rice near the main road (I later learned that it was on the border with Siem Reap province). On the road, comrade Kan inspected us. He seemed to be serious, as though there were problems. Kan told us, "Today there are many French and foreign people coming through our village. Therefore, if you see cars, just keep working, don't stand idle."

Before noon, we saw three white Mercedes on the road. The cars stopped about 50 meters from us. Several foreigners got down, aiming their cameras at us transplanting rice. A woman close to me and I stood

watery porridge, everything that we did together during these times, my three children, and the river.

As I walked I seemed to hear my husband calling me from behind. I looked back many times in case he had returned. Three days turned into forever. I walked with hundreds of others on the road. Other families were happy because they were together. Some lost a few children, but they were better, since they still had relatives with them. I walked alone amidst unknown faces. How could this happen to us like this when we were almost through? We walked about 2 kilometers a day.

We crossed a bridge and arrived in Kra Lanh district, Siem Reap province. The people there were much healthier than us from Battambang province. They came out to look at us as if we were aliens. They pitied us because our knees were larger than our heads, our faces were bloodless, our bodies had protruding bones, and our clothes were ragged. I squatted under a shed. Wondering why I did not prepare food like the others, a few villagers came to me.

An old man asked, “What is your name? Where is your home village? Why are you alone?” I answered, “I...” I did not know what to say. I did not know who I was. I shook my head, could not think of what to say. The man said, “You can stay here with me for a while. When you feel better you can leave.” I did not respond. His child pulled me up by the hands. Some others carried my things. His home was 50 meters away. He told me three of his children died; only one remained. Another man named Sok, 60, had been a monk in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime. He used a monk’s garment to make curtains and a pillowcase for me. He tied each of my wrists with white thread and blessed me with his holy water, so that my soul would return to my body. Three days later, I felt bright, remembering my name, but not my birth name, my job or my home village.

A Heart-Breaking Wedding Song

I left the family of elders, Sok and Yoeun, and their neighbors who were always sympathetic to me. With them food was plentiful. The villagers loved me and

wished for me to meet my relatives. So my adventurous journey began again. Even at this time, many April 17 people were still on the road. I walked after them, from one village to the next, but I could not remember their names. I met a few people living in my home village. I met a woman who was crossing a river. She spent nights under a villager’s house. She had a newly-born chubby son. The house owner was kind, giving her food during her stay. As a woman, there is no more difficult moment than during the period of birth, especially when the husband is not there. I asked where her husband was. She cried immediately, barely able to speak, “He was lost at the [KR] village; they said he was assigned to build the dining hall for a short time, but he never returned.”

She cried and cried, hugging her son, as if he was the symbol of her husband. I continued my journey with a small bag containing a few clothes, a small pan, a mosquito net and a blanket.

I traveled from one village to another, like a backpacker (except I was very dirty). I always stopped at places where funerals and ceremonies were held, guided in by the songs of famous singers like Sin Sisamot, Ruos Sereysothea and Huy Meas. I was not a special guest. I usually sat in a corner under a tree. Sometimes, as my feeling drifted away with the songs, a hand touched my shoulder and a bowl of hot rice with soup was given to me. I am now very grateful to those compassionate people during that period of misery. A month later, I arrived in Siem Reap provincial town, where returnees were told to stay in one place in the suburbs. The place stank of human feces; everyone closed their noses.

Every morning, several GMC trucks arrived to take the returnees home. The trucks were tall, I could not climb quickly enough to find a space, but nobody helped. They cared for their relatives. Thus I had to live in this province longer and longer. I had to ask people for food. One morning I determined to climb up on the truck without holding any belongings. I had given all my belongings to a woman. But I couldn’t. The truck was leaving, but I was still on the ground, sweating

Letter from a reader:

February 22, 2002

H.E. Youk Chhang, the Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia

Your Excellency,

On behalf of myself and the local authorities, I would like to express my genuine admiration for your research achievements—finding photographs and information as well as other types of evidence—to publish in a magazine for Cambodian people, inside and outside of the country, to see and understand the Khmer Rouge tragedy brought about by the Democratic Kampuchea leaders. The pictures and information in the magazine keep alive the memory of our people about the three-year, eight-month, and twenty-day experience. They are also beneficial to the young generations who were born after the regime. Most importantly, although they do not tell everything, the contents of the magazine are important for the prospective Khmer Rouge tribunal.

Your Excellency! Before *Searching for the Truth* was published I thought that the mysteries and crimes that occurred during the Pol Pot regime were barely recorded by anyone and that they would quickly fade from history. Thus the world will not learn about it. Fortunately for the Khmer people, most events, documents, photographs and other evidence are carefully and meticulously collected and preserved by the Documentation Center of Cambodia led by Your Excellency. After that, these findings are spread widely and free of charge to people all over the country.

I believe that our fellow compatriots who perished and the survivors will receive justice when a Khmer Rouge tribunal is created in the near future.

Proem Ratha

Prasat Balang District Chief

Kampong Thom Province





Ieng Sary

The Documentation Center of Cambodia would like to appeal to governments, foundations and individuals for support for the publication, *Searching for the Truth*. To contribute, please contact (855) 23 211 875 or (855) 12 905 595 or email: dccam@online.com.kh. Thank you.

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